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**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

# **HOUSE OF LORDS**

## **WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS**

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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
<b>Baroness Smith of Basildon</b>	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
<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

Tuesday, 1 April 2025

## Cyber-security and Resilience Policy

[HLWS570]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** I am repeating the following Written Ministerial Statement made today in the other place by my Honourable Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP:

Today the Government has published a policy statement on proposed legislative measures to bolster the UK's cyber security and resilience.

Our digital economy and essential services are increasingly being attacked by cyber criminals and state actors, threatening essential public services and infrastructure. This not only poses a serious risk to UK citizens, with core services like hospitals being targeted, but also of the performance of our economy. UK businesses lost around £87 billion from cyber attacks between 2015 and 2019 – that's £87 billion taken from our economy, much of which went into the hands of cyber criminals.

Enhanced cyber security is an essential pillar not only of our national security, but also the UK's economic growth. We cannot have economic growth without stability, and we cannot have stability without national security.

The UK's only existing cross-sector cyber legislation – the Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations – was introduced in 2018 when the UK was still an EU member state. The rapidly evolving threat landscape and changing nature of digital services mean that these regulations need to be updated, and we no longer have powers in primary legislation to make the amendments needed.

That is why we committed to introduce a Cyber Security and Resilience Bill in the King's Speech in July last year. As set out in the policy statement published today, the Bill will strengthen the UK's cyber defences and make sure that the critical infrastructure and digital services UK citizens and business rely on are more secure. This will enhance the UK's level of cyber security and resilience at a time when similar steps are being taken by our international counterparts, such as the EU, who have updated the NIS framework through their own updated directive.

The policy statement provides more detail to the Bill's measures announced in the King's Speech:

- Expanding the scope of regulations to protect more digital services and supply chains. The Bill will bring managed IT service providers that provide digital services into the scope of the regulatory framework. The Bill will allow individual regulators to designate a small number of important suppliers to regulated entities as 'Critical Suppliers', including those that

would otherwise be exempted from regulation as SMEs. This, in addition to embedding supply chain security requirements directly into our regulatory framework, will address supply chain vulnerabilities and reduce the threat of significant disruptions to critical services. This will build a better picture of the threats facing our critical national infrastructure and protect a broader range of services from cyber attacks.

- Empowering regulators and enhancing oversight. Regulators will be better equipped with the tools they need to perform their duties effectively, including enhanced oversight of cyber incidents affecting regulated entities and improved cost recovery powers. The Information Commissioner's information gathering powers will be strengthened, to improve its understanding of the landscape of cyber security threats affecting the expanded portfolio of digital service providers that it will oversee.

- Ensuring the regulatory framework can keep pace with the ever-changing cyber landscape. The Bill will allow the Government to update the regulatory framework in the future via secondary legislation, if necessary. For example, the Government would be able to bring new sectors into scope of the regulations, if necessary to do so. The Bill will enable the Government to update the security requirements for regulated services in line with best practice, improving clarity for service providers in terms of what is expected of them.

In addition to the policy proposals outlined in the King's Speech for inclusion in the Bill, we have identified a number of additional cyber security and resilience proposals, as set out in the policy statement. The appropriate legislative vehicle for these has yet to be determined.

The Government proposes bringing data infrastructure into the scope of the regulatory framework, recognising their new status as critical national infrastructure and essential role in ensuring the stability and growth of our digital economy. Additionally, to ensure our regulatory framework is implemented with a consistent understanding of the Government's cyber security and resilience objectives, we propose enabling the Secretary of State to publish a statement of strategic priorities. This will establish a unified set of objectives and expectations for regulators. Finally, we intend to provide new powers to the Secretary of State to direct a regulator, or regulated entities, to take action when it is necessary for national security. This will be invaluable in responding to the constant evolution of both the cyber landscape and the changes in tactics used by cyber threat actors.

The Government has listened to the views expressed to the previous government in the 2022 consultation on cyber security to develop the Bill's measures. The measures set out in the policy statement build on what we have learned from our engagement with key international partners, including learnings from the European Union on the implementation of the NIS2 Directive (Directive (EU) 2022/2555) and 2023 data infrastructure consultation. We

will continue to engage with and learn from the actions taken by other nations to improve cyber security.

These cyber security and resilience measures represent a significant step forward in our efforts to protect the UK from the growing threats of cyber attacks. Cyber security is a critical enabler of economic growth, and by protecting our digital assets and ensuring the resilience of our critical services we are creating a stable environment that fosters innovation and attracts investment.

My officials and I will engage with parliamentarians, regulators and industry groups to thoroughly test the proposals before the Bill is introduced to Parliament this year.

## Defence Reform

[HLWS571]

**Lord Coaker:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (John Healey) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today this Government is bringing in the deepest reforms in UK Defence for 50 years, which will fundamentally change the way defence operates.

Defence must change to make Britain secure at home and strong abroad. The Government's recent announcement of the largest sustained increase to defence spending since the Cold War – rising to 2.5% of GDP in 2027, with an ambition to reach 3% in the next Parliament – is crucial for our national security. It is also a huge opportunity, and responsibility, for UK Defence.

Alongside this significant investment, must come serious reform: to speed up our decision making, focus on outcomes, secure faster delivery and achieve the best value for money for our troops and taxpayers.

Under the Secretary of State and Ministers, UK Defence will now be led by a strengthened Department of State, a fully-fledged Military Strategic Headquarters, a new National Armaments Director Group, and the Defence Nuclear Enterprise.

Our new leadership “Quad” – the Permanent Secretary, Chief of the Defence Staff, National Armaments Director, and Chief of Defence Nuclear – will drive a defence which is more concentrated on strengthening warfighting readiness and deterrence. They will shift an organisation which too often has been obsessed with process to one focused on outcomes – in which information flows quickly, individual accountabilities are clear, and results are demanded.

The key features of our new system will be:

i) The Permanent Secretary will lead a more agile Department of State. In line with wider Civil Service Reform, this area will be lean and highly skilled, unleashing the exceptional capabilities within Defence by making the systems and processes around us more efficient and empowering. This area will be responsible for providing policy muscle and clear strategic direction to ensure that the Defence is focused on outcomes and

delivery. The Department of State will contain a streamlined set of four DG roles reporting to the Permanent Secretary, focused on strategy and transformation, people, policy and finance.

ii) Our Armed Forces show great courage and collaboration in the work they do on operations to keep our country secure at home and strong abroad. The UK Armed Forces' most senior officer, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), will, for the first time since this role was created, now command the Service Chiefs and head a newly established Military Strategic Headquarters as the single point of force design and delivery of the Armed Forces. The new MSHQ will support the journey from a ‘joint’ to an ‘integrated’ force that better harnesses all five domains of maritime, air, land, cyber and space. They will be supported by a small central team integrating across activity and force design, prioritising investment to improve warfighting readiness and lethality.

iii) The National Armaments Director Group will fix the broken procurement system and make defence an engine for economic growth in every corner of the UK. It will bring together teams delivering the national ‘arsenal’, the Government’s Defence Industrial Strategy and end to end acquisition under one leader, the National Armaments Director. This new structure will enable collaboration by bringing together Defence Equipment & Support, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Defence Digital and parts of Defence Support. The Group will also include roles focused on International Collaboration and Exports, Commercial and Industry, Options and Commissioning, and Corporate, with the Enterprise CIO moving to the Group by 1 July 2025. These roles will work together, and with industry, academia, international partners and allies to develop and deliver innovative solutions to departmental problems.

iv) The Chief of Defence Nuclear is responsible for cohering across the Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE), in addition to leading the Defence Nuclear Organisation (DNO) and its Arms-Length Bodies. The DNE unites the Royal Navy, Strategic Command and DNO, with its ALBs including the Submarine Delivery Agency and AWE – the partnership of organisations that maintain, renew, and sustain the UK’s nuclear deterrent which keeps us and our NATO allies safe 24/7. The financial nuclear ringfence ensures nuclear spending is prioritised and allows a focus on delivery and outcomes. Under Defence Reform, CDN will act as the clear point of accountability for the ringfence, working closely with industry and the MSHQ finance teams to ensure effective management.

We will have four new budget holders, one for each of the Quad. Funding and spend will be categorised into Invest, Readiness and Operate – with the NAD holding the Invest budget and MSHQ responsible for the Operate budget and the Readiness budget of the frontline commands. Balance of investment decisions will be made

across the whole department, set against Ministers' strategic priorities to ensure resources match ambitions. The Principal Accounting Officer will delegate multi-year budgets, in line with HMT's Departmental spending settlement, to each area. Financial Year 2025-26 will be a transitional year, with quarterly reform programme milestones through the year and the bulk of the transformation complete by Financial Year 2026-27. The drive to reform Defence will continue throughout this parliament.

The far-reaching changes in this Defence reform programme will help cut waste, boost British growth and jobs, and fast-track the technologies of the future into the hands of our frontline forces.

This is the start of a new era of UK Defence.

### **New Further Education College Condition Allocation**

[HLWS569]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government's first priority is economic growth, that requires a strong skills system ensuring businesses have the expert workforces they need to grow. This government is clear through its opportunity and growth missions that ensuring a consistent, skilled pipeline of workers is essential to the delivery of the Plan for Change. We need to ensure young people and adults have the opportunity to access pathways made available through education and learning. This will in turn help to drive productivity and economic growth – giving all people the opportunity to upskill and reskill to meet employer needs, fill skills shortage vacancies, and improve living standards.

Our ambition is a world class Further Education (FE) system which delivers for the whole nation and supports these missions. A key part of this is ensuring FE colleges

are fit for the future - with better facilities and good quality sustainable buildings.

Following the Autumn Budget, I am today announcing details of the investment of £302 million of capital funding to improve the condition of the Further Education (FE) College estate in England. An allocation of £302 million will be provided in financial year 2025 to 26 to all FE colleges and designated institutions in England. The aim of the investment is to ensure the FE estate is high quality and supports our skills pipeline. All FE colleges and designated institutions will receive a share of the £302 million, which will be directly allocated to them.

FE colleges are given the discretion to decide how to invest the funding in condition improvement priorities across their estates in line with guidance which the department will publish here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-college-capital-allocation-2025-to-2026>.

This funding is part of the £6.7 billion capital allocation the Department for Education received at the Autumn Budget. This is a 19% real-terms increase from 2024 to 25 demonstrating the government's commitment to protecting education priorities against a tough fiscal context. Of this funding, £950 million is to support our skills system and provision across England in delivering the skills that will drive economic growth. As part of that investment, I am announcing today that further capital funding will be made available in 2025 to 2026 to support capacity for rising numbers of 16-19 year olds in Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Leeds City Council, which will each receive £10 million of Post 16 capacity funding. This additional capacity will ensure young people continue in their education and training spreading opportunities across the country.

# Written Answers

Tuesday, 1 April 2025

## Africa: Armed Conflict

Asked by *Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure sustained medical and psychosocial support for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Africa, particularly through the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative; and how they are working with international partners to strengthen long-term policy provisions for survivors in conflict-affected regions. [HL5873]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** We put survivors at the heart of everything we do, including through regular collaboration with the Survivor Advisory Group and Survivor Champions. Since 2019, the UK has committed up to £7.85 million to the Global Survivors Fund (GSF) to support the delivery of interim reparative measure projects globally. Through this support, GSF has enhanced access to health and psychosocial care, education and financial support for over 1000 survivors in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Sudan, we are working with United Nations and Non-Governmental Organisations partners to provide safe spaces, mobile clinic treatment, dignity kits and psychosocial services for survivors. We will continue to work with international partners, including through the International Alliance on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence and to provide the holistic support survivors need.

## Armed Forces: Children

Asked by *Lord Blunkett*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they plan to provide military families with priority for school admissions when parents are transferred from one place to another. [HL5877]

Asked by *Lord Blunkett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty as it applies to schools; and whether they plan to update the school admissions code (1) to give priority to children of Service families, and (2) to provide for siblings, where appropriate, to attend the same school. [HL5878]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government has policies in place to support schools and local authorities to fulfil their duty to give due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant. This includes in specific areas of education provision, including school admissions.

The school admissions code already contains a number of measures to support service children in relation to school admissions.

These measures include requiring admission authorities to allocate school places in advance of a service family moving into the area, where a place is available, provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a re-location date. Children of UK service personnel can also be admitted as exceptions to the infant class size limit if they move outside the normal admission round.

Furthermore, admission authorities are able to give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children in receipt of the Service Pupil Premium, and publicly funded boarding schools must give service children who qualify for Ministry of Defence financial assistance with the cost of boarding fees priority after looked after and previously looked after children.

Admission authorities are already able to give priority to siblings in their admissions criteria where they feel that is appropriate to their local circumstances, although they are not required to do so.

Through the Children's Wellbeing and School Bill, this government is taking further steps to ensure a more robust safety net for children who struggle to secure a school place via the usual in-year admissions processes, by giving local authorities the levers they need to secure places for children more quickly and efficiently, when the usual in-year admissions processes fall short.

## Assessments: Mathematics and Science

Asked by *The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to reduce the gender achievement gap in science and maths in secondary schools in England. [HL5787]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** All children and young people should have the opportunity to succeed, no matter who they are or where they are from, which is why our mission is to break down barriers to opportunity.

High and rising standards are at the heart of this mission, delivered through excellent teaching and leadership, a high-quality curriculum and a system which removes the barriers to learning.

The department remains committed to ensuring all children and young people have a strong foundation in mathematics to thrive in the modern economy, regardless of gender.

The department has a number of initiatives in place aimed at helping schools to improve their curricula and to drive up mathematics attainment, such as the Maths Hub programme. This department-funded, school-led network aims to improve the teaching of mathematics for all pupils in publicly funded schools. The Maths Hubs programme focusses on reducing attainment gaps, which may be associated with disadvantage, gender or other factors, by providing school-to-school support focussed on mathematics subject knowledge and pedagogy training for teachers.

The government is supporting schools to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related subjects and careers through programmes such as STEM ambassadors. Volunteers who are registered for this initiative actively engage with children and young people to spark their interest in STEM subjects and raise their awareness of the pathways into STEM careers through their personal experiences. Of these volunteers, 48% are women and 17% are from an ethnic minority background.

The department is a partner signatory to the Tomorrow's Engineers Code pledging to work with the engineering community to improve the quality, targeting, inclusivity and reach of engineering inspiration activities. The Code is a framework for organisations working to increase the number and diversity of young people pursuing engineering careers.

### **Bracken: Weedkillers**

*Asked by **The Earl of Caithness***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to resume the chemical control of bracken to protect human health, biodiversity and the historic environment. [[HL5986](#)]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** The Government recognises the challenge that bracken presents to land managers, particularly in upland regions. Mechanical control and chemical control using glyphosate can be useful tools in controlling bracken, though the government recognises their limitations. It is for individual land managers to decide how to control bracken within safe and legal means.

The Government encourages industry and other external partners to develop new tools that will help to address the challenge of managing bracken. Any herbicides not currently allowed for bracken control would require authorisation for that purpose by the Health and Safety Executive.

### **Cabinet Office: Bloom Procurement Services**

*Asked by **Lord Agnew of Oulton***

To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to procurement notice Review on the State of Digital Government (2024/S 000-039897) published on 11 December 2024, why this contract was awarded via Bloom Procurement Services rather than through a direct Cabinet Office procurement; and what assessment they made of the cost of conducting this procurement via the Central Digital and Data Office. [[HL5866](#)]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The contract was awarded via Bloom Procurement Services as part of the government's commitment to ensuring value for money and efficiency in procurement processes. Bloom operates as a neutral vendor, providing a pre-approved supplier network that enables access to specialist services through

a streamlined and competitive procurement route. In this case it was assessed that using Bloom facilitated access to a broad pool of suppliers with relevant expertise, whilst reducing administrative overheads and ensuring competitive pricing. Conducting this procurement via the Central Digital and Data Office would have required additional time and resources, potentially delaying delivery. The use of Bloom allowed for a more agile procurement approach, balancing cost-effectiveness with the need for timely delivery.

### **Cabinet Office: Procurement**

*Asked by **Lord Agnew of Oulton***

To ask His Majesty's Government, following the publication on 11 December 2024 of the procurement notice Review on the State of Digital Government (2024/S 000-039897), why the evaluation criteria were weighted 85 per cent on quality and 15 per cent on price; and whether the Cabinet Office or Bloom Procurement Services was responsible for setting the evaluation criteria. [[HL5868](#)]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Cabinet Office set the evaluation criteria, with an 85 per cent weighting on quality and 15 per cent on price, to ensure that the contract was awarded based on expertise, capability, and the ability to deliver high-quality outcomes. Bloom Procurement Services acted as a neutral vendor facilitating the procurement process but was not responsible for determining the evaluation criteria.

This weighting aligns with standard industry practice for procuring highly complex and strategic services, where the ability to deliver effectively is more critical than cost alone. In such procurements, a high emphasis on quality ensures that suppliers are assessed on their technical expertise, delivery methodology, risk management, and ability to provide value beyond minimum requirements.

### **Cardiff University: Music**

*Asked by **Lord Watson of Invergowrie***

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on English students from under-represented backgrounds of the planned closure by Cardiff University of its School of Music. [[HL5486](#)]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** This government believes that access to higher education should be based on ability and attainment, not background.

As education is a devolved matter, impacts following the closure of provision at a Welsh university are a matter for the Welsh government.

### **Children: Disadvantaged**

*Asked by **Lord Elliott of Mickle Fell***

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to address falling school readiness, following the

findings of the Kindred Squared School Readiness Survey, published on 30 January. [HL5243]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government welcomes the focus from the Kindred Squared School Readiness Survey. Preparing children for school should be a partnership between parents, early years settings and schools.

That is why this government has set a milestone of a record proportion of children starting school ready to learn in the classroom. We will measure our progress through 75% of children at the end of reception reaching a good level of development in the early years foundation stage profile assessment by 2028.

This is an increase from 67.7% currently and would mean an additional 40,000 to 45,000 children a year hitting developmental goals.

To achieve this milestone, we will:

- Roll out government-funded childcare entitlements and support 3,000 new and expanded school-based nurseries, increasing the availability of high-quality childcare places.
- Offer sustained professional development and work with providers to help spread evidence-based programmes, such as Maths Champions, as part of comprehensive plans to drive high quality early education and care.
- Ensure that the reception year sets children up for success, by rolling out evidence-based programmes that boost early literacy and numeracy skills, including the Nuffield Early Language Intervention.
- Strengthen and join up family services to improve support through pregnancy and early childhood. This includes continuing to invest in and build up Family Hubs and Start for Life programmes to support early child health, parenting and home learning programmes, strengthen health visiting services for all families and improve early identification of special educational needs and disabilities.

We will continue to work closely with parents and teachers as we deliver our ambitious reforms to break down barriers to opportunity and give every child the best start in life.

### China: Uyghurs

*Asked by Lord Dodds of Duncairn*

To ask His Majesty's Government what actions they are considering to address the persecution of Uyghur refugees in China, including coercive birth control measures; and what steps they are taking to engage with international partners to address these concerns. [HL5988]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** This government stands firm on human rights, including in Xinjiang, where China continues to persecute and arbitrarily detain Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities.

We raise our concerns at the highest levels: the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor and Energy Secretary all raised human rights recently with their counterparts (President Xi, Foreign Minister Wang, Vice Premier He and Vice Premier Ding respectively). We continue to coordinate efforts with our international partners and work in multilateral fora to hold China to account for human rights violations. Most recently we raised the persecution of Uyghurs within our Item 4 statement at the Human Rights Council.

### Climate Change Convention: Azerbaijan

*Asked by Lord Spellar*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many civil servants attended COP29 in Baku in November 2024. [HL5935]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The full list of UK delegates who attended COP29 was 448 and was published by the UNFCCC, along with other country delegations. It can be found on the UNFCCC website. The number of UK delegates that attended COP28 was 674.

### Climate Change: Finance

*Asked by Lord Elliott of Ballinamallard*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have for financing a 'just transition' for climate change. [HL5898]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** The net zero transition is not only the economic opportunity of the century, but it will also support the creation of hundreds of thousands of good jobs across the UK, protect our economy from future price shocks that reliance on fossil fuels create, while delivering a range of social and health benefits.

### Coroners

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the average time from death to inquest in (1) England and Wales and (2) the Isle of Wight. [HL6111]

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many inquests are yet to be concluded in (1) each coroner area in England and Wales on average and (2) the Isle of Wight specifically. [HL6112]

*Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many inquests have been heard in the Isle of Wight in each year from 2022 to 2024. [HL6113]

**Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede:** In 2023 (the most recent year for which data is available), the average time to complete an inquest across all coroner areas in England and Wales was estimated to be 31.5 weeks. In the Isle of Wight coroner area, it was 66.8 weeks.



At 31 December 2023, the average of number of incomplete inquests across all coroner areas in England and Wales was 242. In the Isle of Wight coroner area, 311 inquests were incomplete on 31 December 2023.

In the Isle of Wight coroner area, 105 inquests were completed in 2022; and 158 were completed in 2023.

Coroners statistics for 2024 will be published on 8 May 2025.

### **Customs: Northern Ireland**

*Asked by Lord Weir of Ballyholme*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total cost of customs declarations from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in the past 12 months. [HL6087]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government has not made an estimate of the total cost of declarations for goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in the past 12 months.

The latest available information relating to declarations for goods moved on this route is for the calendar years 2022 and 2023. This information can be found on GOV.UK.

Businesses moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland can access free to use support from the Trader Support Service.

### **Darfur: Crimes against Humanity**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are aware of any organisations collecting and preserving evidence of atrocity crimes in Darfur. [HL5801]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UN Human Rights Council Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), established following UK-led Security Council resolution, is the most effective mechanism to support accountability in Sudan. The FFM published its first report in September 2024 and concluded there are reasonable grounds to believe that violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by both warring parties constituted war crimes and, in the case of the Rapid Support Forces, additionally crimes against humanity. The UK is also supporting the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), a research body gathering open-source evidence about the conflict in Sudan with a view to supporting future accountability. The CIR has been able to assist the FFM in verifying reports of violations through its use of digital information. The UK also strongly supports the International Criminal Court's (ICC) active investigation into the situation in Darfur, including allegations of crimes committed since April 2023. We welcome the ongoing cooperation between the ICC and the FFM and the significant progress made by the ICC in investigating and prosecuting past and current crimes in Darfur. The conclusion of the Ali Kushayb trial in December 2024 marks a historic milestone as the first trial concluded based on a Security Council referral.

### **Department for Education: Public Consultation and Reviews**

*Asked by Baroness Barran*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many policy reviews and consultations the Department for Education 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. [HL5710]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** 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, the 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.

### **Developing Countries: Children**

*Asked by The Earl of Dundee*

To ask His Majesty's Government what further incentives they will offer to UK businesses to help deliver, through investment, joint venture or partnership, education and children's safety programmes, such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, including programmes supported by the FCDO, Unicef, the British Council, the Commonwealth of Learning, and the World Bank. [HL5893]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is increasingly working alongside the private sector and philanthropies to deliver Sustainable Development Goal 4. We are a founding donor of the new International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd), which unlocks additional finance from multilateral development banks, amounting to \$7 for every \$1 of Official Development Assistance. IFFEd is also similarly partnering with philanthropies to unlock further funding. In addition, the Girls' Education Skills Partnership (GESP) programme is another UK-funded initiative working with the private sector to provide high-quality skills training to young women aged 13 to 24 in Nigeria and Bangladesh. GESP draws on resources of the private sector (including companies such as Unilever, Pearson, Price Waterhouse Coopers, Microsoft, Accenture, Standard Chartered, Vodafone and Cognizant) combined with the technical experience of UNICEF to support girls' learning so that they can earn a living.

### **Digital Technology: Cybersecurity**

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the significance of data intermediaries for the digital economy, and of the potential for cyber attacks to disrupt their services. [HL5939]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** As the government outlined in the Industrial Strategy Green Paper, there is significant potential for data to support economic growth. Our evidence indicates that improved data access and use could contribute to UK productivity growth by 0.23% to 1.26% annually.

Achieving these productivity gains requires greater data maturity across the economy. Data intermediaries are likely to play an important role in enabling individuals to get more out of data they generate and stimulate growth through increasing access to data in trusted and secure ways.

The government is currently inviting evidence on the activities of data intermediaries to understand this potential and any risks.

Cyber security is a priority for the government, which is why we are taking a range of action to protect organisations and services against cyber attacks, including through the forthcoming Cyber Security and Resilience Bill.

### Driverless Vehicles: Public Transport

*Asked by Baroness Eaton*

To ask His Majesty's Government what body will hold responsibility for the issuing of permits for operators of automated passenger services under the Automated Vehicles Act 2024. [[HL5953](#)]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** Section 82 of the Automated Vehicles Act 2024 gives the appropriate national authority the power to grant an Automated Passenger Services (APS) permit. The appropriate national authority is defined in section 90 (4) and (5) as the Secretary of State for the provision of any taxi and private hire-like service in England and for the provision of a service in a public service vehicle across Great Britain. In relation to a permit for the provision of a taxi and private hire-like service in Scotland, this is Scottish Ministers, and in Wales, this is Welsh Ministers. The Act further sets out that the appropriate national authority can provide for its functions to be exercisable by Traffic Commissioners instead of or in addition to the appropriate national authority. Consideration is still being given to whether these functions will be exercised by Traffic Commissioners.

*Asked by Baroness Eaton*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether, in implementing the Automated Vehicles Act 2024, they plan to give local authorities the right to withhold consent for an automated passenger services operator permit to be granted; and if so, which tier of local government will be responsible for providing consent. [[HL5954](#)]

**Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill:** The Automated Vehicles Act 2024 provides the right for specified local authorities to withhold their consent for an automated

passenger services (APS) operator permit to be granted. This right protects local decision-making.

For services resembling taxis or private hire vehicles, section 85 outlines that an APS permit may not be granted without the consent of each licensing authority in whose areas the service may be provided under the permit. A "licensing authority" is where responsibility sits for the issuing of taxi or private hire licenses, and currently is typically a lower-tier authority, unitary authority or Transport for London.

For services resembling buses where a bus franchising scheme exists, section 86 outlines that an APS permit may not be granted without the consent of each relevant franchising body. Where an automated passenger service is proposed to operate under an APS permit in an area which sits outside of a bus franchising scheme, the legislation does not require consent from local authorities.

To withhold consent, the licensing or franchising authority must provide written reasons within six weeks of receiving a formal request, beginning with the day on which the request is made.

### Drugs: Crime

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Hanson of Flint on 13 March ([HL5375](#)), whether the National County Lines Coordination Centre coordinates with the National Rural Crime Unit and dedicated rural crime taskforces. [[HL5928](#)]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC) was created to monitor the intelligence picture and co-ordinate the national law enforcement response to county lines.

The NCLCC, which is funded through our County Lines Programme has been vital in strengthening the law enforcement response and enabling police forces to work together to tackle this complex issue.

The NCLCC also has a role in sharing best practice and manage a dedicated fund which supports local police forces tackle the scourge of county lines. Whilst the NCLCC does not have a dedicated role in working with the National Rural Crime Unit and dedicated rural crime taskforces, NCLCC routinely works with a range of law enforcement and wider partners to tackle the county lines threat across England and Wales.

### Education: Vetting

*Asked by Lord Bradley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what restrictions are placed on people convicted of a criminal offence who seek employment in education. [[HL5880](#)]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government has a robust safeguarding framework in place in the form of the 'Keeping children safe in education' (KCSIE) statutory

guidance, which all schools and colleges must have regard to when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The KCSIE guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>.

This guidance clearly sets out the requirements regarding safer recruitment checks, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks, that schools and colleges should undertake for all staff, including external staff, and visitors, to ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are in place.

Employers must assess whether a conviction deems an individual to be suitable for a role, taking into account the nature of the offence, its relevance to the role and any safeguarding risks.

However, KCSIE stresses the importance of creating a culture of safer recruitment, ensuring that schools and colleges have robust processes and policies in place to ensure people who might pose a risk to children are not employed in education.

### **Ekrem İmamoğlu**

*Asked by Lord Blencathra*

To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey and President Erdoğan about the arrest of the mayor of Istanbul; and what information they have about the legitimacy of the reasons for which he has been detained. [HL5984]

**Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** As a close friend and ally of Turkey the Government is closely monitoring the situation. Recent arrests are subject to ongoing domestic Turkish legal process. The UK expects Turkey to uphold its international commitments and the rule of law, including swift and transparent judicial processes. We regularly engage with the Turkish government and there has been Ministerial contact with counterparts in recent days to raise these issues. The UK supports democracy, human rights and the rule of law across the world and will always support the fundamental rights to freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and peaceful protest.

### **Electronic Government**

*Asked by Lord Agnew of Oulton*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the publication of the State of Digital Government Review on 21 January (CP 1251), what methodology they used to calculate the estimate that full potential digitisation could deliver over £45 billion in annual savings and productivity benefits; what the projected savings are by department and public body; what proportion of savings is expected to be cashable; and what level of investment is required to achieve these efficiencies. [HL5869]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Government's £45 billion estimate is based on a detailed, bottom-up analysis employing three levers: automating routine tasks (£36 billion), migrating services online (£4 billion) and reducing fraud via digital compliance (£6 billion). This work scaled bespoke analysis conducted on the Civil Service to the wider public sector, with overlaying case studies. A sizable proportion of these benefits is expected to be cashable, although exact figures vary by domain and profession. Achieving these efficiencies will require substantial, bespoke investment, and we are working to ascertain that in the largest opportunity areas. A more detailed methodology will be published online in due course.

### **Employment: Disability**

*Asked by Baroness Thomas of Winchester*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to assist employers whose premises are inaccessible to potential employees with disabilities. [HL5940]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) runs the Access to Work Scheme which provides grant funding to disabled people, as well as those with a health condition. The grant supports workplace adjustments that go beyond what would normally be expected from an employer through their duty to provide reasonable adjustments as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. This can include grants to make appropriate changes to a place of work, to make them more accessible for the customer.

In addition, as set out in the Pathways to Work Green Paper published on 18 March, DWP are consulting on the future of the Access to Work scheme.

### **Energy Intensive Industries: Staff**

*Asked by Lord Elliott of Mickle Fell*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch on 11 March (HL5240), what is the turnover and gross value added for each of the 73 industries covered in their definition of energy-intensive industry. [HL5899]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Data from the latest [ONS Annual Business Survey](#) on energy intensive industries (EIIs) for turnover and GVA in 2022 was published in 2024 and can be seen in full as an attachment.

In 2022, the EIIs with the highest turnover were manufacture of refined petroleum products (£56.2 billion), manufacture of basic iron and steel and of ferro-alloys (£9.2 billion), and manufacture of prepared feeds for farm animals (£8.0 billion).

EIIs with the highest GVA in 2022 were manufacture of refined petroleum products (£5.4 billion), manufacture of other plastic products (£2.7 billion), and manufacture of plastic plates, sheets, tubes and profile (£2.3 billion).

The Answer includes the following attached material:

EII GVA Data [EII GVA Turnover.xlsx]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2025-03-18/HL5899>

## Ethiopia: Eritrea

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the risk of conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the implications for Tigray; and what diplomatic steps they are taking to prevent further escalation. [HL5872]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are taking steps to ensure the Tigray peace process is not undermined by infighting between the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray and the Tigray People's Liberation Front; and whether they are monitoring the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and threats to political stability. [HL5874]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of illegal gold mining and human trafficking in Tigray, and of the impact of divisions between the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray and the Tigray People's Liberation Front on law and order. [HL5875]

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government, following concerns raised at the UN Human Rights Council's 58th regular session about the continued presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray, what steps they are taking to ensure that Eritrean and other non-Ethiopian federal forces honour the terms of the 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and fully withdraw. [HL5876]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The UK is working with partners to prevent a return to conflict in the region by supporting the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. On 13 March, the UK issued a joint statement with the EU and 23 countries emphasising our support for the agreement and urging all parties to refrain from violence and engage in urgent dialogue. We regularly engage with all parties and the African Union guarantors, to reiterate the importance of implementation and encourage political dialogue to overcome obstacles on the return of internally displaced persons and other outstanding issues.

The UK provides support for the demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration process, funds international and Ethiopian human rights monitoring and supports investigatory capacity building across the

country. The UK is aware of reports of illicit trade contributing to tensions in the region.

## Farmers: Mental Health

*Asked by The Lord Bishop of St Albans*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the end of the Farming Resilience Fund on farmers' mental health. [HL5280]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** An evaluation of the Farming Resilience Fund is underway. This will be completed after the scheme concludes. The survey includes a question on impact of the scheme on farmers' mental health.

## Floods: Warnings

*Asked by Lord Wigley*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of storm and flood warning systems in the UK following Storm Bert and Storm Darragh. [HL5796]

**Baroness Hayman of Ullock:** Defra is the Lead Government Department in England for flooding and works with the Environment Agency (EA) and Met Office to maintain a flood warning system for England.

The responsibility for flood warning systems in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland rests with the equivalent organisations to Defra and the EA in the Devolved Governments. The responsibility for storm warning systems in the UK is held by the Met Office.

Between September and mid-January 2025 over 1,400 Flood Warnings were issued in England. Defra, the EA and the Met Office regularly assess the effectiveness of their flood warning systems in England including after major events like Storm Bert and Storm Darragh. These assessments take various forms, including working with Local Resilience Forums in post incident reviews as well as annual performance reports under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010.

Defra, the EA and the Met Office continuously work to improve flood warning services, including by developing the capability of world leading Flood Forecast Centre. Examples of this work include a trial of Rapid Flood Guidance which took place in 2024, and which is currently being evaluated.

## Football: Racial Discrimination

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the level of racial abuse directed at Premier League footballers on social media and whether it is increasing or decreasing; and what steps they are taking to ensure repercussions for such behaviour. [HL5938]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Although the government does not hold this specific information centrally, we remain extremely concerned by online racism and will continue working with the sports sector to tackle this.

The Online Safety Act offers better protections for public figures online. Public order offences including harassment are priority offences under the Act, requiring companies to proactively search for, remove and limit people's exposure to such content and activity. The Act also introduced a threatening communications offence, capturing communications conveying a serious threat of harm or death, with a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, a fine, or both.

### Government Departments: Business Disability Forum

*Asked by Lord Shinkwin*

To ask His Majesty's Government which government departments and bodies are (1) members, and (2) partners, of the Business Disability Forum. [HL5929]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The Cabinet Office is a partner of the Business Disability Forum. Information on which other government departments and bodies are members or partners is not held centrally.

*Asked by Lord Shinkwin*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much each government department or body that is (1) a member, or (2) a partner, of the Business Disability Forum has paid in subscription fees in each year of its membership or partnership. [HL5930]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** The Cabinet Office is a partner of the Business Disability Forum and has been a member since 2020. The Cabinet Office paid £26,400 for 2024/25. The annual cost varies each year.

Information on which Government Departments and bodies are members and the subscription fees paid is not held centrally.

The Business Disability Forum (BDF) provides support and guidance to the Cabinet Office on accessibility and disability-related issues, including reviews of procedures and policies, guidance on accessible training materials, and training for staff.

*Asked by Lord Shinkwin*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment each government body or department has made of the value for money of the subscription fees paid to the Business Disability Forum for (1) membership or (2) partnership, and what criteria were used for each assessment. [HL5932]

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent:** This information is not held centrally. Government departments are responsible for decisions about whether

to buy services from third sector organisations to support equality, diversity and inclusion in their organisations.

Cabinet Office procured the Business Disability Forum (BDF) subscriptions as a partner following a review of market options. This included looking at both the technical offering and price. Any future subscriptions will be subject to updated market analysis and value for money considerations.

The BDF provides support and guidance to the Cabinet Office on accessibility and disability-related issues, including reviews of procedures and policies, guidance on accessible training materials, and training for staff.

*Asked by Lord Shinkwin*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether the Business Disability Forum has shared with Ministers or officials the research informing the Forum's decision to oppose the introduction of mandatory employment and pay gap reporting, and whether they will place a copy of any such research in the Library of the House. [HL5933]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The Government welcomes views from disabled people, businesses and their representative organisations on our proposals for disability pay gap reporting to help make sure they work for everyone. Being open to a wide range of views, experiences and concerns will support a more successful implementation of disability pay gap reporting.

Research conducted by the Business Disability Forum with their members has been shared with policy officials, as has other relevant research such as the Institute of Directors' report *Progress through transparency: the case for mandatory disability employment and pay gap reporting*.

Since both reports mentioned are publicly available and can be found online at their respective organisations' websites, we do not plan to place them in the Library of the House.

### Health Services: Artificial Intelligence

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to introduce regulation to ensure the safe use of artificial intelligence technologies in healthcare. [HL6156]

**Baroness Merron:** Ensuring technologies are safe is a top priority. To ensure the regulatory pathway is clear for both developers and adopters, the Department has supported the launch of numerous regulatory projects such as the AI and Digital Regulation Service (AIDRS) and the AI Airlock.

The AIDRS collaborates between the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the Health Research Authority, and the Care Quality Commission. The service, by providing a collaborative 'one stop shop' of information, advice, and guidance,

allows adopters and developers of artificial intelligence (AI) to easily understand what regulatory and evaluation pathways need to be followed before an AI tool can be safely deployed across health and care.

The AI Airlock is an MHRA-led initiative, supported by the NHS AI Lab, designed to create a controlled testing environment where developers can rigorously validate AI tools in real-world clinical settings before full-scale deployment, ensuring they meet National Health Service standards for safety, efficacy, and integration into existing healthcare workflows. The AI Airlock fosters collaboration between developers, regulators, and healthcare providers, and reduces the risks associated with early-stage implementation while providing valuable feedback for developers to refine their products.

### Immigration

Asked by *Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by Lord Hanson of Flint on 12 February (HL Deb col 1255), what estimate they have made of the number of refugees who have arrived by unauthorised routes who will (1) apply for citizenship, and (2) have their application for citizenship accepted on the basis that their circumstances are 'exceptional, compelling and mitigating'; and whether these data formed the basis of assumptions that informed the changes made to the Nationality: good character requirement guidance in February 2025. [HL5915]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** No such data is available, and no such estimates have been made.

### Internet: Women

Asked by *Lord Cameron of Lochiel*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the projected impact of new powers granted to Ofcom under the Online Safety Act 2023 on the level of online abuse against women and girls. [HL5887]

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch:** Under the Online Safety Act, platforms must proactively tackle illegal content, much of which disproportionately affects women and girls.

Services likely to be accessed by children must also protect children from harmful and age-inappropriate content including abuse.

Category 1 services will also need to remove legal misogynistic content, where their terms of service prohibit it.

As of 17 March Ofcom can take robust enforcement action against those failing to comply with their illegal safety duties. The effectiveness of the Act will be kept under review.

### Lifelong Education

Asked by *Lord Aberdare*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether providers which currently receive educational oversight from Ofsted for their level 5 and 6 provision will have a proportional third category route to registration with the Office for Students during the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. [HL5759]

Asked by *Lord Aberdare*

To ask His Majesty's Government what support they will give to the Office for Students (1) to allow more providers to complete the registration process ahead of the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, and (2) to support submissions from small specialist providers that currently receive educational oversight from Ofsted for their eligible level 5 and 6 provision. [HL5760]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** I refer the noble Lord to the answer of 18 March 2025 to Question 36617.

### Listed Buildings: Energy

Asked by *Lord Mackinlay of Richborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Twycross on 13 February (HL4762), what routes are available to owner-occupiers of listed buildings that are exempt from requiring an energy performance certificate to access the Boiler Upgrade Scheme. [HL5916]

**Lord Hunt of Kings Heath:** A property must have a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) to be eligible for the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) as they support property owners to understand how energy efficient their building is, enabling them to make an informed choice on whether to proceed with an installation.

While completing an EPC is generally not a requirement for listed buildings, they can still be obtained from an accredited EPC assessor, to meet BUS eligibility requirements. The Government will continue to review scheme eligibility criteria, and consider changes to drive further demand, making low carbon heating accessible to a wider range of households.

### Ministry of Defence: Research

Asked by *Baroness Wolf of Dulwich*

To ask His Majesty's Government how much the Ministry of Defence spent on research contracts and grants in (1) 2022–23, and (2) 2023–24; and what proportion of that spending went to UK universities. [HL5980]

**Lord Coaker:** The Ministry of Defence (MOD) works to support a secure and prosperous United Kingdom (UK) through allies, industry and academia to ensure the UK has the right capabilities for defence and security. MOD records all contracts on its Contracting, Purchasing and

Finance system. However, it is unable to distinguish which contracts cover research due to a lack of relevant metadata within this system.

In the time available, the following organisations within MOD have confirmed their spend (Extra-Mural Research) on research contracts and grants for the years 2022-2024:

*Financial Year (FY)2022-23 Research Contracts*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Total Spend</i>	<i>Proportion with Universities</i>
Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl)	£387.6 million	4.7%
Navy Command*	£80.06 million	0.03%

*FY2022-23 Research Grants*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Total Spend</i>	<i>Proportion with Universities</i>
Dstl	£0.4 million	100%

*FY2023-24 Research Contracts*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Total Spend</i>	<i>Proportion with Universities</i>
Dstl	£461.1 million	4.8%
Navy Command	£130.85 million	1.3%

*FY2023-24 Research Grants*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Total Spend</i>	<i>Proportion with Universities</i>
Defence Science and Technology (DST)	£10 million	100%

*FY2023-24 Research Grants*

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Total Spend</i>	<i>Proportion with Universities</i>
DNO (Rolls Royce)	£3.2 million	100%

\* The figures provided include Navy Command spend delivered by Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), £32 million in FY2022-23 and £70.03 million in FY2023-24.

## Music and Dance Scheme: VAT

*Asked by The Earl of Clancarty*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to make fees under the Music and Dance Scheme exempt from VAT. [HL6034]

**Lord Livermore:** Performing arts schools that offer full-time education to children of compulsory school age and/or 16-19 year olds for a charge will remain in scope of this policy, this includes the Music and Dance Scheme. This is to ensure fairness and consistency across all schools that provide education services and vocational training for a charge. The Government has no plans to exempt further schools from this policy.

However, the Department for Education has decided to adjust its Music and Dance Scheme bursary contribution for families with a relevant income below £45,000 to account for the VAT that will be applied on fees, ensuring that the total parental fee contributions for families with below average relevant incomes remain unchanged for the rest of the 2024/25 academic year.

## National Wealth Fund

*Asked by Baroness Penn*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Livermore on 25 March (HL5735), in what way they plan to broaden the National Wealth Fund's legislative remit beyond infrastructure. [HL6135]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government will introduce legislation when Parliamentary time allows to broaden the National Wealth Fund's (NWF) legislative mandate beyond infrastructure to enable it to better support the Government's growth and clean energy missions.

At that point, and subject to Parliamentary consent, the NWF will focus on enabling investment in capital intensive projects, businesses, or assets. For example, the NWF will have the scope to invest in a broader range of supply chains and critical sectors, such as Artificial Intelligence and quantum, where access to finance gaps exist.

## Offences Against Children: Reviews

*Asked by Lord Cameron of Lochiel*

To ask His Majesty's Government on what date the national audit on group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse, led by Baroness Casey, will be published. [HL5987]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The audit will conclude within three months of commencement and Baroness Casey will submit a written report, which will detail the evidence and findings across the areas detailed at section 2 of the Terms of Reference (which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-audit-on-group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-terms-of-reference/national-audit-on-group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-terms-of-reference>).

The report will provide recommendations on what further local, regional or national work may be necessary, and it will be made publicly available by the Home Secretary in due course.

## Ottawa Convention

*Asked by Lord Spellar*

To ask His Majesty's Government what evaluation they have made of the ongoing utility of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention following recent developments in Eastern and Northern Europe. [HL5936]

**Lord Coaker:** The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (also known as the Ottawa Convention) continues to play an important role in protecting civilians from harm caused by anti-personnel landmines. As a State Party to the Ottawa Convention, the UK's commitment to it remains unwavering. We continue to encourage countries to join the Ottawa Convention, subscribe to its provisions; and discourage States from using anti-personnel landmines.

His Majesty's Government has noted that Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have stated their intention to withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty. The UK acknowledges and shares concerns about the security environment in the region as a result of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. We also acknowledge that it is the sovereign right of those countries to make this decision. The UK will work to mitigate impacts on vital arms control and disarmament norms, while continuing to engage bilaterally on the actions States plan to take.

### Parcels: Northern Ireland

*Asked by Baroness Hoey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the additional costs to Post Offices of person-to-person parcels going from Great Britain to Northern Ireland and requiring documentation under the Windsor Framework. [HL6114]

**Lord Livermore:** The Government has not made a specific estimate of any costs to the Post Office of adapting to the arrangements set out in the Windsor Framework.

### Pathways to Work: Employment

*Asked by Baroness Penn*

To ask His Majesty's Government how many people they expect to move into employment as a result of the £1 billion employment package announced on 18 March. [HL6256]

**Baroness Sherlock:** The DWP published an impact assessment which explained how employment interventions can have a significant and enduring impacts on peoples' employment prospects and showed the substantial savings associated with supporting disabled people into work. For every 10,000 additional people in full time work, there would be fiscal savings of around £180m per year, with societal savings around £280m per year, (£80m and £150m respectively if in part-time work).

The Department has extensive evidence on what works, which includes the evaluation of Work Choice, a specialist employment programme for disabled people and those with health conditions, that showed people receiving tailored support were 40% more likely to be in work eight years later. We will be developing more detailed assessments of the potential impacts of the employment measures proposed in the Green Paper as

these are developed in detail. The Office for Budget Responsibility has also stated that it intends to assess the labour supply impacts of the Green Paper measures in their Autumn forecast.

### Prisons: Staff

*Asked by Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of prison staff in England and Wales in each of the past three years were born outside the United Kingdom. [HL6078]

**Lord Timpson:** The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

*Asked by Lord Swire*

To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of staff in HM Prison Service speak English as a second language. [HL6079]

**Lord Timpson:** The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

### Refugee Convention

*Asked by Lord Empey*

To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with European and other allies with a view to updating the 1951 Refugee Convention. [HL5901]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** The Government remains committed to ensuring that all asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered in accordance with our international obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention. This means that we do not remove anyone who faces persecution or serious harm on return to their country of origin.

### Schools: Computers

*Asked by Lord Knight of Weymouth*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost to schools in England of replacing computers due to the requirements of new Windows 11 operating system. [HL5134]

**Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The department is aware that Microsoft are ending support for Windows 10 in October and are working with Microsoft to manage the impact on schools, including with regard to cost. Devices that meet the specification requirements for Windows 11 will be able to be updated for free. Many schools may have devices which are not able to upgrade to Windows 11 and we are keen to support these schools.

We have validated with Microsoft a more affordable rate for schools for extended security updates on Windows 10 devices, so schools can continue to use these devices safely for the next three years and do not need to purchase new devices. Extended security updates for



Windows 10 will be offered to education institutions at the cost of \$1 per device in the first year, \$2 the following year and \$4 the third year. More details about the transition to Windows 11 can be found here: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/blog/2024/04/windows-10-end-of-support-updates-for-education/>.

Schools have the flexibility to choose how they spend their money in relation to technology to best suit their needs and there is no ring-fenced funding for technology. Some services offered through the department's school resource management collection may also be helpful to schools in managing their budgets. For example, the 'Get help buying for schools' service includes the opportunity to get free help from procurement specialists to help those in schools responsible for buying goods and services to get the best value for money. It provides specific advice on buying specific goods and services for their school through a department approved framework. The service is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-buying-for-schools>.

### **Stonewall: Finance**

*Asked by Lord Jackson of Peterborough*

To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 26 February (HL5029) on Stonewall funding, what steps they are taking to ensure the efficacy and utility of each project mentioned in respect of value for taxpayer money. [HL5912]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's LGBT+ rights programme aims to transform the lives of millions of LGBT+ people around the world. This is done by tackling systematic violence, persecution, and exclusion by addressing outdated discriminatory laws, promoting protective legislation, empowering civil society organisations, and supporting the most vulnerable LGBT+ people in conflict and crisis. All programme proposals are required to set out how they will deliver and measure value for money. Successful partners are required to submit reports for the rigorous monitoring and evaluation process. These reports include a results framework or log frame to track progress against targets of the project alongside quarterly and annual progress reports, which allow us to look at the effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy, and utility of any work supported. All the information received from the partner and ongoing conversations throughout the years which the project is active allows us to track value for money.

### **Sudan: Children**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of children in Sudan who are

(1) affected by malnutrition, and (2) no longer in education, due to the war. [HL5805]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The conflict in Sudan is having a devastating impact on children. In 2024, admissions for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rose by nearly 44% compared to 2023 with an unprecedented 431,000 children treated by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Actual numbers of SAM are likely to be higher, but access constraints and insecurity complicate the ability of relief organisations to assess needs and deliver aid. In late 2024 UNICEF assessed that nearly 90% of Sudan's school age children (17 million against a population of 19 million) were no longer in school with armed violence a key driver. Both malnutrition rates and the number of children out of education will continue to rise whilst the fighting continues.

This financial year (2024-2025), the UK will provide £226.5 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. As part of this, we support UNICEF who are providing lifesaving nutrition programmes to some of the most vulnerable children in Sudan. The UK also supports Education Cannot Wait, providing safe learning spaces and psychological support to 200,000 vulnerable children in refugee and host communities in Chad, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, Central Africa Republic and Uganda. We are also one of the largest donors to the Global Partnership for Education who are delivering urgent support to children across Sudan.

### **Sudan: Humanitarian Aid**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether UK aid to Sudan will include support for refugees who flee Sudan into other countries in the region. [HL5804]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The conflict has created a displacement crisis with more than 3 million Sudanese refugees seeking safety in neighbouring countries, and a further 8.8 million people internally displaced within Sudan. In November 2024, the Foreign Secretary announced a £113 million aid package, which doubled the UK's aid commitment to £226.5 million. This package will assist over 600,000 people in Sudan and 700,000 people in neighbouring countries who had fled the conflict, including Chad and South Sudan. Education Cannot Wait will also receive UK support to provide safe learning spaces and psychosocial support for 200,000 vulnerable children in refugee and host communities in Chad, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Uganda.

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the percentage of UK aid to Sudan that (1) reaches recipients via emergency response rooms, and (2) supports emergency response rooms. [HL5806]

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** The Sudan conflict has created the worst humanitarian crisis in the world with over 30 million people in need of assistance. This financial year the UK will provide £226.5 million in life-saving aid towards the crisis. Since the conflict started more than 2.5 million people have received UK funded humanitarian aid. As part of this, we are one of the largest donors of the UN-led Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF) which provides support to local and national responders, Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) and a consortium of international non-governmental organisations. Last year, we provided £23 million to the SHF. We continue to diversify our funding to ensure it reaches local responders such as the ERRs. We are unable to provide more detailed information around how many people the UK's aid reaches through the ERRs specifically.

### Undocumented Migrants

*Asked by Baroness Lister of Burtersett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what is the purpose of the changes made to (1) illegal entry, and (2) arriving without a required valid entry clearance or electronic travel authorisation, having made a dangerous journey, in the Nationality: good character requirement guidance. [HL5914]

**Lord Hanson of Flint:** There are already rules that can prevent those arriving illegally from gaining citizenship.

On 10 February 2025, the Home Office strengthened measures to make it clear that anyone who enters the UK illegally or who arrives without a required valid entry clearance or electronic valid authorisation having made a dangerous journey, including small boat arrivals, now faces having a British citizenship application refused on the basis that they will not normally be considered to be of good character. This change means that:

- any person applying for British citizenship on or after 10 February 2025, who previously entered the UK illegally will normally be refused, regardless of the time that has passed since the illegal entry took place; and
- any person applying for citizenship before 10 February 2025 where illegal entry is a factor, will continue to have their application reviewed to determine whether that immigration breach should be disregarded for the purpose of the character assessment.

However, each citizenship application will continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Secretary of State may choose to apply discretion to grant citizenship on an exceptional basis where there are particularly exceptional, compelling, or mitigating circumstances.

### Unmanned Marine Systems: Minesweepers

*Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of autonomous maritime mine-hunting

vessels; and what plans they have to use similar technology to patrol the English Channel. [HL6015]

**Lord Coaker:** The Royal Navy has been using a range of unmanned underwater vehicles to detect sea mines since 2005 and is investing in several autonomous mine-hunting capabilities. The Royal Navy does not routinely comment on future operational plans due to operational security reasons.

### VE Day: Anniversaries

*Asked by Lord Blunkett*

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to involve Service families and their children in the official celebrations announced for the 80th anniversary of VE Day. [HL5879]

**Baroness Twycross:** The Government has announced an ambitious programme for the entire nation to commemorate the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day. Communities across the country will come together to mark the commemorations - by participating in the official government programme and by organising their own events and activities. Everyone across the UK is invited to participate in events and activities designed to honour the contributions and experiences of the Second World War generation.

Service families and their children will be included in the official celebrations and at the centre of nationwide, locally led commemorations. Furthermore, the Imperial War Museums' Letters to Loved Ones initiative encourages children to share wartime letters, fostering intergenerational connections and learning.

DCMS has launched an interactive website - [ve-vjday80.gov.uk](https://ve-vjday80.gov.uk) - which offers key information and resources, including ways to get involved in the commemorations. The site features downloadable digital materials and an interactive map of events.

### Water Supply: Fluoride

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the cost to water companies of adding fluoride to the water supply. [HL6061]

**Baroness Merron:** My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is responsible for reimbursing water undertakers for the reasonable costs associated with water fluoridation schemes. In the financial year 2023/24, these costs were £4,109,521 in revenue and £348,351 in capital for the estimated six million people in England covered by such schemes.

*Asked by Baroness McIntosh of Pickering*

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have undertaken an impact assessment of adding fluoride to the water supply which takes account of (1) the

financial cost, and (2) the possible health risks.  
[HL6062]

**Baroness Merron:** An impact assessment was completed as part of the proposals to expand the existing water fluoridation scheme in the North East of England, to a further 1.6 million people. This sets out a net present social value of the proposal of £201 million over 40 years, and accounts for estimated benefits through dental health care cost savings, productivity gains, and quality of life

benefits to individuals. My Rt Hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has a duty to monitor the effects of water fluoridation schemes on health, and to publish reports at intervals no greater than four years. The findings of monitoring reports published in 2014, 2018, and 2022 are consistent that water fluoridation, at levels recommended in the United Kingdom, is a safe and effective public health measure to reduce dental caries.

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