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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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<i>Minister</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
<b>Baroness Evans of Bowes Park</b>	Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal
<b>Earl Howe</b>	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
<b>Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
<b>Baroness Anelay of St Johns</b>	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<b>Lord Ashton of Hyde</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Whip
<b>Lord Bates</b>	Minister of State, Department for International Development
<b>Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, Wales Office
<b>Lord Bridges of Headley</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
<b>Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen</b>	Whip
<b>Earl of Courtown</b>	Deputy Chief Whip
<b>Lord Dunlop</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scotland Office and Northern Ireland Office
<b>Lord Freud</b>	Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Lord Gardiner of Kimble</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>Baroness Goldie</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Henley</b>	Whip
<b>Lord Keen of Elie</b>	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
<b>Lord Nash</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
<b>Baroness Mobarik</b>	Whip
<b>Baroness Neville-Rolfe</b>	Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
<b>Lord Price</b>	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
<b>Lord Prior of Brampton</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health
<b>Baroness Shields</b>	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office and Department for Culture Media and Sport
<b>Lord Taylor of Holbeach</b>	Chief Whip
<b>Baroness Williams of Trafford</b>	Minister of State, Home Office
<b>Lord Young of Cookham</b>	Whip
<b>Viscount Younger of Leckie</b>	Whip

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## Written Statements

*Friday, 2 December 2016*

### Government Grant Standards

[HLWS306]

**Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen:** My Honourable friend the Minister for the Constitution (Chris Skidmore) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today I am publishing new standards which will ensure the effectiveness of grant management across Government. These standards will be adopted by all departments to make sure that taxpayers' money, awarded through government grants, is properly agreed and spent.

The grants improvement programme aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of grant making across government. The programme includes incorporating recommendations from the Public Accounts Committee and Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee inquiries into Kids Company as well as reviewing grant programmes already underway.

The standards are a transparent, robust, and proportionate solution to manage risks in the government grants process.

We need to make sure the UK taxpayer is getting value for money and grants are awarded with sufficient scrutiny and more accountability. The detailed work we have undertaken since February with government departments, research organisations and the voluntary sector has enabled us to develop these standards through a constructive and collaborative process. They will protect taxpayers' money whilst at the same time, delivering key policy outcomes through our many partners.

The Government has engaged with a broad range of key partners, including those in the academic and research community, to understand the effect these standards will have on all sectors and to avoid any unintended consequences. Standards will also include a requirement for departments to ensure that grant agreements provide a clear outline of what the funding is to be spent on and how this would be monitored. They would put an end to grant money being wasted on activities not specified in the grant agreement, such as political lobbying.

Government grants are an important part of the funding mix for many charities. These new grants standards will protect the role of charities to speak out on behalf of the communities and people they benefit, whilst ensuring public funds are used as intended. They will help create new opportunities for the sector to work in partnership with government, increasing their social impact.

Copies of the associated documents will be placed in the Library of the House and published on gov.uk. Any future updates to the guidance will be published on gov.uk.

## Local Newspapers

[HLWS308]

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** My Hon Friend the Minister for Local Government (Marcus Jones) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

This government remains committed to protecting the independent press from unfair competition. A healthy local democracy requires the accountability that comes from scrutiny of councils by the press and the public.

The government has sought to take action against the practice, by a small number of local authorities, of publishing local authority newspapers, which given the frequency of their publication, can push out and undermine that independent press. A small number of councils continue to breach the recommendations of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity about the frequency of publication for council newspapers.

Further to the Written Statement of 10 March 2015, Official Report, Column 8WS we have warned a small number of local authorities about their continued failure to comply with the provisions of the publicity code.

Today I am announcing the conclusions to date of the review into the actions of three of those authorities; the London Borough of Hackney, the London Borough of Newham and the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

In each case my Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State is minded to exercise his powers under the Local Government Act 1986 to direct the local authorities to comply by no later than [31 January 2017] with the provision in the March 2011 Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity that: "Where local authorities do commission or publish newsletters, news sheets or similar communications, they should not issue them more frequently than quarterly". Accordingly, the Secretary of State is today issuing to each of the three authorities a written notice of the direction he proposes to issue in each case.

In deciding to take this action, the Secretary of State has carefully considered the representations each of these local authorities has made in response to a notice given to it on 10 March 2015 of a proposed direction relating to frequency of publication of council newsletters, news sheets or similar publications. He has also considered other information available to him about each of the three council's publicity, and had regard to an Equality Statement about enforcing the 2011 Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

Each authority now has 14 days to make written representations to the Secretary of State about the proposed direction. Following this, the Secretary of State will take his final decision in each case about whether or not to issue the local authority with a direction. Each decision will be taken on its own merits.

I will be placing copies of the documents associated with these announcements in the Library of the House.

## London Borough of Tower Hamlets

[HLWS307]

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth:** My rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Sajid Javid) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

On the 17 December 2014, my predecessor the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government confirmed that, having considered the report of the inspection by PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets was failing to comply with its best value duty. He therefore concluded that it was both necessary and expedient for him to exercise his intervention powers. A team of Commissioners were appointed to exercise functions of the Authority in relation to the making of grants, and the appointment of persons to and the removal of persons from the statutory offices of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer for Local Elections. The Commissioners were also tasked with overseeing an improvement plan of the Council covering steps to strengthen the Council's core governance arrangements, publicity, contracting, property disposals to third parties and organisational cultural change.

Almost two years on, a number of challenges remain but there have been areas of significant progress. Following receipt of the Council's third six-monthly update against its Best Value Action Plan on 20 September and a report from the Commissioners on 11 October, I am today proposing, on the recommendation of the Commissioner team, my intention to return certain functions to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

After careful consideration of the Commissioners' report, I am satisfied that the Council is now able to exercise some of functions identified by the Commissioners in compliance with the best value duty, and that the local residents of Tower Hamlets can have confidence that this will be the case. I am therefore considering exercising my powers under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 to return to the Council functions in relation to grant-making, although I consider it necessary for the Commissioners to retain an oversight role over how this function is exercised for the remainder of the Direction period. Establishing new oversight arrangements in relation to grants will enable the Commissioners to advise and scrutinise the Council without clouding where ultimate responsibility lies. Finally, I am considering exercising my powers under section 15 of the 1999 Act to end the role the Commissioners have held in overseeing the Council's processes and practices for entering into contracts. Returning these functions represents a clear milestone on Tower Hamlets Council's road to recovery.

The Commissioners will provide oversight of the returned functions to ensure that they are exercised in accordance with the best value duty. In addition they will continue to oversee the Council's rigorous programme of improvement in relation to strengthening its core

governance arrangements, publicity, property disposals to third parties, organisational cultural change and grants. I am inviting the Council to make representations on the proposals, which will be considered as part of my final decision.

I am placing a copy of the documents associated with these announcements in the Library of the House and on my department's website:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tower-hamlets-intervention-proposed-return-of-grants-function>.

## Payment Practices and Policies

[HLWS309]

**Baroness Neville-Rolfe:** Today my honourable Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has made the following statement:

Successful businesses create jobs, and are essential to economic growth. Late payment harms business cash-flow, hampers investment and in extreme cases can risk businesses' solvency. This puts a strain on any organisation, but is especially difficult for small businesses. As of June 2015, the overall level of late payment owed to small and medium sized businesses was reported as £26.8 billion. This is why it is crucial for Government to take action to create a more responsible payment culture, which enables all businesses to thrive and develop.

Today, Government will publish its response to the *Duty to Report on Payment Practices and Policies* consultation, and draft regulations to implement section 3 of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 for large companies and large limited liability partnerships to report on their payment practices and performance.

The duty to report on payment practices and performance

Following consideration of views received from stakeholders, large companies and large limited liability partnerships (LLPs) will be required to publish information about their payment practices and performance twice per financial year on a Government web service. They will be required to report on the following:

Narrative descriptions of:

- the organisation's payment terms. Including - standard contractual length of time for payment of invoices, maximum contractual payment period and any changes to standard payment terms and whether suppliers have been notified or consulted on these changes
- the organisation's process for dispute resolution related to payment

Statistics on:

- the average time taken to pay invoices from the date of receipt of invoice

- the percentage of invoices paid within the reporting period which were paid in 30 days or fewer, between 31 and 60 days, and over 60 days

- the proportion of invoices due within the reporting period which were not paid within agreed terms

Statements (i.e. a tick box) about:

- whether an organisation offers e-invoicing
- whether an organisation offers supply chain finance
- whether the organisation's practices and policies cover deducting sums from payments as a charge for remaining on a supplier's list, and whether they have done this in the reporting period
- whether the organisation is a member of a payment code, and the name of the code

If a company fails to publish a report as required, or publishes false information this will be a criminal offence, punishable by a fine on summary conviction.

I would like to draw Parliament's attention to two matters:

#### *Interest owed and paid*

The regulations do not include a requirement to report on the amount of interest owed and paid, which the previous Government committed to include. Businesses have suggested that this metric could be difficult to understand and implement. The Government will keep this metric under review, taking into account any lessons that the introduction of similar metrics to public sector reporting can teach us.

#### *Pay to Stay and Supplier Lists*

During the passage of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act through Parliament the previous Government committed that these regulations would tackle so-called 'pay to stay' practices. These practices include instances where businesses require payments either for joining or for remaining on a supplier list.

The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act allows the Government to require reporting on practices relating to payment of suppliers. As such, the draft regulations require businesses in scope to report on whether they deduct sums from payments to suppliers as a charge to remain on their list of suppliers. This does not cover all payments required from suppliers for joining or remaining on a supplier list. The Government will keep reporting on 'pay to stay' under review. The Small Business Commissioner, who will be in post from next year, will be able to tackle such unfair payment practices.

#### *The benefits*

This new reporting requirement for the UK's largest companies and limited liability partnerships (LLPs) will shine a light on payment practices. It will increase transparency and make payment behaviour a reputational boardroom issue. The large businesses already treating suppliers fairly and paying on time can use the data to highlight their track-record. Poor payment practices and

performance will be exposed, alerting organisations to issues and encouraging them to improve.

## **Rail update - Southern**

[HLWS305]

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Right Honourable friend, the Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling), has made the following Ministerial Statement.

My Department has previously announced that 'Delay Repay 15' will be introduced first on the Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) franchise, and this will be available to customers from 11 December 2016. Passengers will be entitled to claim compensation if their train is delayed by 15 minutes or more, rather than 30 minutes as is now the case. This is recognised as one of the most generous compensation schemes in Europe, and this change means an even better deal for passengers. 'Delay Repay 15' will be included in the specification for all new franchises in future.

Southern passengers have suffered from unprecedented and sustained disruption to their journeys during 2016 through a combination of factors, including RMT industrial action, track and signal failures, and operator poor performance. In recognition of this unprecedented disruption, passengers will be able to claim one payment against their 2016 season tickets from early next year. This one-off compensation scheme recognises that passengers have suffered, and demonstrates that the Government is on their side. This will be administered by GTR.

Passengers with a Brighton to London annual season ticket, for example, will get £371 back. Quarterly, regular monthly and weekly season ticket holders will also qualify for a one-off compensation payment.

Annual, quarterly, monthly and weekly season ticket holders using any Southern routes will be able to claim through the following process:

- In early January 2017 Southern will contact all customers on its database it believes qualify for a refund to confirm the amount due and the method of payment
- Pre-identified customers will need to login to a web portal to provide bank details, credit card details or web account details
- Customers do not need to contact Southern directly at this stage
- After customers who have been pre-identified have been contacted a web portal will be made available allowing:
  - pre-identified customers to confirm the method of payment they wish to use, and;
  - customers who believe they qualify to provide details for Southern to check and, if appropriate, make payment



**Telecommunications Council: Correction**[\[HLWS311\]](#)

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** This statement is to replace today's earlier statement which should have included Matt Hancock's name.

My Rt Hon Friend the Minister of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Matt Hancock) has made the following Statement:

The Telecommunications Council will take place in Brussels on 2nd December 2016. I will represent the UK at this Council. Below are the agenda items and the positions I intend to adopt.

The first item is a policy debate on the two legislative instruments and two communications that form the just published EU Commission's Connectivity package - the European Electronic Communications Code (First reading - EM 12252/16) and Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (First reading - EM12257/16) and "5G for Europe: An Action Plan" (EM12279/16) and "Connectivity for a Competitive Digital Single Market - Towards a European Gigabit Society" (EM12364/16). My intervention will confirm that the UK supports the plan for a Gigabit Society and emphasise the importance of the Connectivity Package in stimulating investment by the private sector in fibre-based networks and 5G. I will also set out the UK's other priorities for the Electronic Communications Code, including respecting Member States' competence and retaining Member States'

discretion over consumer protection and funding of the Universal Service Obligation. The Council will then be invited to adopt a General approach on Amending Regulation (EU) No 531/2012 as regards rules for wholesale roaming markets (First reading - EM). We will agree to the adoption of this general approach.

The Council will then be provided with an update from the Slovak Presidency on the Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on cross-border parcel delivery services (First reading - EM9706/16). We do not expect a debate on this item and I do not intend to intervene.

Finally, Member States will be invited to adopt a partial general approach on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations as regards the promotion of Internet connectivity in local communities (First reading - EM 12259/16). The UK intends to agree to the adoption of this partial approach. This will be followed by three items under AOB led by the Commission, the first being on fair use policy in the context of roaming services, followed by information on Digital Single Market initiatives and finally under AOB, current Internet Governance issues. We do not currently intend to intervene on any of these items.

Finally, the Maltese delegation will inform the Council of their priorities for their forthcoming Presidency before Council adjourns until the next meeting in Q2 2017.

# Written Answers

Friday, 2 December 2016

## Bahrain: Human Rights

Asked by **Lord Hylton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the Amnesty International report concerning Bahrain Window-dressing or Pioneers of Change, published in November, in the light of the UK's connection with, and aid to, Bahrain; and what assessment they have made of the report's recommendations to the Bahrain authorities including the Ombudsman of the Ministry of the Interior and the Special Investigation Unit. [\[HL3401\]](#)

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) received a copy of the report from Amnesty International on Monday 21 November. We note that they have made a series of recommendations to the UK Government which we will look at closely.

The FCO undertakes a number of projects to assist our Bahraini partners including with the Ministry of Interior's Ombudsman and the Special Investigations Unit. We believe that the UK support to Bahrain's reform programme is the most constructive way to achieve long lasting and sustainable reform in Bahrain. While it will take time to see the full results, UK support is having a direct, positive impact on areas of concern.

## Burma: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Asked by **Baroness Nye**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of recent events in Rakhine State, when the UK's Ambassador in Burma last discussed with the new administration there the opening of a full country office for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. [\[HL3543\]](#)

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The Ambassador last raised the opening of a country office for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in August.

## Cybercrime

Asked by **Lord Wigley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the cost of consolidating existing criminal law relating to digital and cyber crime. [\[HL3413\]](#)

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office has not carried out any estimates on the cost of consolidating these aspects of criminal law.

## Developing Countries: Females

Asked by **Lord Alton of Liverpool**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they consider that the mainstreaming of gender-related issues within the Department for International Development has been successful; what priority is given to it; what funding and how many officials are specifically dedicated to working on it; and what assessment they have made of whether it can be used as a successful model for the mainstreaming of support for minorities suffering persecution on grounds of freedom of religion or belief. [\[HL3419\]](#)

**Lord Bates:** The UK is recognised as a global leader on promoting the rights of girls and women and DFID reviews progress on gender equality in the Annual Report. DFID's Strategic Vision on Girls and Women has put gender equality at the heart of UK Aid, and the Department is successfully implementing the 2014 Gender Equality Act.

Best practice and lessons learned are regularly shared across DFID by the Gender Equality team, including with those working on support for people facing persecution on grounds of freedom of religion or belief.

## Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme

Asked by **Baroness Barker**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much money has been claimed under the Small Charitable Donations Act 2012 in each year since 2013. [\[HL3346\]](#)

Asked by **Baroness Barker**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the cost to HM Revenue and Customs of administering the Small Charitable Donations Act 2012 in each year since 2013. [\[HL3347\]](#)

Asked by **Baroness Barker**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many instances of malpractice associated with the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme have been recorded since 2013. [\[HL3348\]](#)

Asked by **Baroness Barker**

To ask Her Majesty's Government in what ways HM Revenue and Customs promotes the Small Charitable Donations Scheme to small charities. [\[HL3349\]](#)

**Lord Young of Cookham:** The Government maintains close and constructive links with charity sector representatives and is in regular dialogue with the sector. HM Revenue and Customs has set up an outreach team which is particularly focused on responding to the needs of smaller charities.

This team regularly makes visits to small charities and has provided face-to-face presentations to over 650, raising awareness and helping charities to receive support through the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, as well as

the full range of available tax reliefs to which they are entitled.

Amounts claimed under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme since 2013 are £6 million in 2013/14, £21 million in 2014/15 and £26 million in 2015/16. Figures for 2016/17 are not currently available.

The costs of administering the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme and instances of malpractice are not available as they are included in the figures for the wider Gift Aid scheme, and cannot be separately extracted.

### **Government Departments: Languages**

*Asked by **Baroness Coussins***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to extend participation in the cross-Whitehall language focus group to more government departments. [[HL3284](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The cross-Whitehall Language group was re-launched on 10 November and we are keen to include other government departments who have an interest in, or need for, foreign language skills.

### **Israel: Palestinians**

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by Unicef in February 2013 Children in Israeli Military Detention, what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the arrest and interrogation of Palestinian children without a lawyer or family member present. [[HL3392](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv most recently raised this issue with the Israeli authorities on 10 October. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), also raised the wider issue of Palestinian minors in detention with the Israeli Ambassador to London on 10 November. The treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention remains a human rights priority for the UK. We remain committed to working with the Israeli authorities to encourage further changes in practice.

### **Malawi: Overseas Aid**

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action is being taken to ensure the improvement of lives of the poorest in Malawi, and especially persons in vulnerable categories such as women and children. [[HL3412](#)]

**Lord Bates:** In line with the Government's manifesto commitments, we are supporting over 70,000 girls in Malawi this year to receive an education, we will have saved 6,000 women's lives from childbirth related deaths by 2018, and we are providing support in food security, agriculture and economic development, so that those most

in need have an opportunity to escape poverty. Furthermore, the UK has been working with the police, lower level courts and community based organisations to increase access to justice and improve safety and security at the community level for 400,000 women.

During his recent visit, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, James Wharton MP, lobbied the Government of Malawi to ensure that reforms are delivered to maximise the impact of UKAid on the vulnerable, including maize market reform so that poor families have access to affordable food. He also announced additional UK humanitarian support for over 750,000 vulnerable people.

### **Malawi: Prosperity Fund**

*Asked by **Baroness Tonge***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Foreign and Commonwealth Office spent £30,000 from the Prosperity Fund on a project supporting the government of Malawi in developing the country's oil and gas sector; and how they intend to ensure that future spending from the Prosperity Fund in Malawi meets the stated aim of promoting economic reform and development. [[HL3464](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is supporting a £28,000 needs assessment, through its Bilateral Programme Fund, on the prospects for oil and gas exploration in Malawi. This will highlight the potential environmental impact as well as the various economic, legislative, social and political factors. Any decision on the potential future exploitation of oil and gas reserves will be for the Government of Malawi to decide. All parties, including the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, want to ensure that any exploration is done in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. Exploring such opportunities will help eradicate poverty, create jobs, increase revenue and reduce dependency on aid. This, and any future UK Government spending, will be firmly in the interests of Malawi.

### **Oxford University: Antisemitism**

*Asked by **Baroness Deech***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Viscount Younger of Leckie on 17 November (HL2972), whether they will ask the Higher Education Funding Council for England, in its role as regulator, to engage with the University of Oxford to ensure that their policies and procedures were implemented appropriately following reports of anti-Semitic incidents involving students which led to the resignation of a student club chairman in February. [[HL3397](#)]

**Viscount Younger of Leckie:** The Government condemns antisemitism wherever it occurs, including on



university campuses. Universities and student societies need to be robust in tackling these kinds of issues. Universities are autonomous and have processes for dealing with concerns and complaints where they are raised, unless there are regulatory issues to be addressed.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) holds ongoing discussions (both formal and informal) with institutions, including the University of Oxford, on a regular basis. As the regulator, HEFCE has established procedures for following on up concerns raised about universities. No concerns have been raised with HEFCE about the implementation by the University of Oxford of its policies and procedures on this issue.

### Personal Independence Payment

*Asked by **Baroness Thomas of Winchester***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Personal Independence Payment mobility assessors are entitled to carry out a walking distance test of claimants. [[HL3380](#)]

**Lord Freud:** The Personal Independence Payment Assessment Guide highlights that any examination should be tailored to the individual claimant. There is no specific guidance on walking tests as this does not form part of a routine PIP assessment.

*Asked by **Baroness Thomas of Winchester***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the current guidance on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) mobility tests allows PIP assessors to take account of a claimant's means of arrival at the assessment centre when deciding on the distance that the claimant can walk. [[HL3381](#)]

**Lord Freud:** The Personal Independence Payment Assessment Guide (PIPAG) highlights that any examination should be tailored to the individual claimant. There is no specific guidance on taking account of a claimant's means of arrival at the assessment centre as this does not form part of a routine PIP assessment. The PIPAG is clear that the health professional should explore how the claimant manages their mobility needs on a "typical day", which might include the day of the assessment, and should explore both "good" and "bad" days.

### Pre-school Education: Census

*Asked by **The Earl of Clancarty***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will be collecting data on birthplace and nationality for the early years census in January 2017; and if not, whether relevant regulations will be amended accordingly. [[HL3424](#)]

**Lord Nash:** At this time, we are not extending the collection of country of birth and nationality data to the early years census. Therefore, there are currently no

amendments required to the relevant regulations underpinning the early years census.

### Refugees: Children

*Asked by **Lord Hylton***

To ask Her Majesty's Government why, of unaccompanied refugee children in France and elsewhere in Europe, they have excluded certain age groups and countries of origin from consideration for asylum in the UK. [[HL3403](#)]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Our criteria under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 is intended to ensure that we are focusing on the most vulnerable children.

In France, we will be considering those aged 12 and under of any nationality, children referred to us by the French authorities as being at a high risk of sexual exploitation of any nationality, and those nationalities most likely to qualify for refugee status in the UK, aged 15 and below.

All unaccompanied minors with close family in the UK will continue to be considered for transfer under the Dublin Regulation, regardless of age or nationality.

### Refugees: Homelessness

*Asked by **Baroness Smith of Basildon***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 1 November (HL Deb, col 540), what initiatives are available to prevent homelessness amongst the refugee community. [[HL3385](#)]

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute are supported by the Home Office. If they are granted refugee status this support ends 28 days later because they are given permission to work and can apply for any welfare benefits and local authority housing assistance for which they may be eligible.

We are working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions and others to ensure that newly recognised refugees engage promptly with Jobcentre Plus and the local authority about these matters. Other refugees brought to the UK from abroad under our various resettlement schemes move into accommodation already arranged for them.

### Saudi Arabia: Capital Punishment

*Asked by **Lord Scriven***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 21 November (HL3058) concerning the selling of arms to Saudi Arabia, and in the light of reports of torture to extract confessions from those who have been given a death sentence in Saudi Arabia, what specific action they will take. [[HL3433](#)]

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** The UK Government is firmly opposed to the death penalty.

Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign & Commonwealth Office human rights priority country, particularly because of the use of the death penalty, limited access to justice, women's rights issues and restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion or belief.

We have raised our concerns with the Saudi authorities and our Ambassador in Riyadh continues to make representations on the UK Government's behalf.

### **Syria: Armed Conflict**

*Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the identity of those responsible for the death of 10 people, including children, during the bombing of a school in western Aleppo in the third week of November. [\[HL3453\]](#)

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** We are aware of reports from pro-regime media outlets of the shelling of a school in al-Furqan (regime-controlled western Aleppo) on 20 November, which resulted in 10 casualties. The attack was alleged to be the responsibility of armed opposition groups. We watched the opposition offensive in western Aleppo closely, and we deplore any breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL) by all parties. We continue to underline to opposition groups over whom we have an influence that any operations must be conducted within the bounds of IHL. The plight of civilians in Aleppo is desperate. The vast majority of atrocities are perpetrated by the regime – it is only the regime and its backers who have the capacity to conduct air strikes, which result in extensive damage to civilian infrastructure and cost civilian lives. 275,000 people face potential mass starvation in east Aleppo, besieged and under daily bombardment by the regime.

### **UNRWA: Finance**

*Asked by Lord Judd*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the statement by the Commissioner General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to the second bi-annual UNRWA Advisory Commission meeting for 2016 held in Amman, stressing the case for UNRWA to be placed on a more stable financial footing. [\[HL3352\]](#)

**Lord Bates:** The UK is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), providing over £60 million in 2015/16 in Gaza, the West Bank and the region. We regularly discuss with UNRWA how it can resolve its financial situation.

As a major donor, we encourage UNRWA to implement reforms to put it on a more sustainable financial footing and we press for other donor contributions.

### **Visas: Overseas Students**

*Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 15 November (HL3024), whether they will now answer the first part of the question asked: whether nationality or country of origin is a factor taken into account to assess the potential level of risk that an international student applying for a visa might pose. [\[HL3367\]](#)

*Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 15 November (HL3024) about international students applying for a visa to study in the UK, whether they will now answer the last part of the question asked: whether an equality impact assessment has been carried out. [\[HL3368\]](#)

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** A range of different factors and attributes are taken into account to assess the potential level of risk that an international student applying for a visa might pose to the UK border. In considering the entire Tier 4 visa application, an individual's nationality can be a factor in assessing the level of the risk.

A Policy Equality Statement was undertaken to accompany the new provision under the Immigration Rules from 30 July 2012, for an Entry Clearance Officer to be satisfied that an applicant is a genuine student before granting entry clearance under Tier 4.

### **Zimbabwe: Human Rights**

*Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the treatment of Zimbabwean citizens by the government of Zimbabwe. [\[HL3440\]](#)

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** In recent weeks we have noted with increasing concern the heavy-handed response of the authorities to peaceful and lawful demonstrators, and violence against opposition parties and social activists. We regularly call upon the Zimbabwean Government to end human rights abuses and restore internationally accepted standards. On 18 November our Ambassador and EU Heads of Mission in Harare issued a statement expressing concern at the increase in incidents, in violation of the fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in Chapter 4 of the Constitution.

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