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Tuesday
20 December 2016

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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Ministers and others who make Statements or answer Questions are referred to only by name, not their ministerial or other title. The current list of ministerial and other responsibilities is as follows.

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

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 20 December 2016

Afghanistan: Locally Employed Civilians

[HLWS389]

Earl Howe: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Rt Hon Mike Penning) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The UK remains committed to supporting our current and former local staff in Afghanistan. They played a vital part in our efforts towards a more secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, and our well-established redundancy and intimidation schemes recognise their contribution and the debt of gratitude we owe them.

During the past 12 months, our cross-Government ex-gratia redundancy scheme has continued to see real progress, with around 130 former local staff being relocated to the UK with their immediate families. Since the start of the scheme, we have relocated around 350 former local staff and their families, more than 900 people in total, and there are a number of cases currently going through the relocation process. Around 20 Local Authorities across the UK have supported the relocation of these families.

There are fewer than 100 local staff still to be made redundant as a result of the drawdown of UK Forces. We expect these redundancies to be complete by the end of 2017. It is estimated that around half of these will be given the option to apply for relocation to the UK, with the remainder being eligible for the in-country training or finance options.

There are currently over 100 local staff who are benefitting from our in-country option which offers up to five years of training and financial support. These scholars are undertaking a range of courses such as High School diplomas, and qualifications in Engineering and Law. Around 20 former staff have gifted the training and support to eligible family members, in many cases to daughters who would not have otherwise had the opportunity to attend higher education.

Under a separate Government initiative, a dedicated in-country team has supported almost 400 local staff who have raised concerns about intimidation as a result of their employment with us. This has ranged from providing bespoke security advice, to providing financial support to over 30 staff to help them relocate to safer areas within Afghanistan. We have also provided interim payments in a number of cases to allow individuals assessed to be at high risk to move to a safe location whilst a full investigation is completed. The levels of intimidation faced in these cases has not so far been such that we have had to relocate individuals to the UK to ensure their safety, but we keep the security situation in Afghanistan under careful review.

Over the past year, we have seen the number of claims of intimidation reduce from around 15-20 cases to about

six cases per month. Notwithstanding this, I am still committed to ensuring that investigations into claims of intimidation are conducted in an effective and professional manner, and the safety of our former staff remains the paramount consideration.

A Danish military legal adviser has provided a non-UK perspective to the decision-making process. In addition, we have put in place a number of measures to provide outside assurance of the intimidation policy: a randomly selected 20% of case decisions are subject to legal review to ensure that the policy is working as it should; and, as announced in November last year, a Committee has been established to provide additional external assurance of the delivery of the policy.

The Locally Engaged Civilians (LEC) Assurance Committee, which I chair, has oversight and scrutiny of the intimidation policy. We have held four meetings this year. Each Committee member has been selected to ensure they can provide expert, independent and impartial advice on the application of the policy. They include advisers drawn from the House of Lords; the Intimidation Investigation Unit in Kabul; and HM Forces. Additionally, I am pleased to confirm the appointment of a former LEC as an adviser to the Committee. He brings with him a first-hand perspective of the issues, and provides invaluable insight into the genuine threat faced by local staff in Afghanistan, as well as the viability of the proposed mitigation measures. These Committee members are supported by representatives from the Government Departments involved in the policy.

The Committee has agreed a robust set of terms of reference that empower us to identify areas where the administration of the policy could be improved. We have so far reviewed the application of the policy in three closed cases, and some areas for improvement are being addressed as a result. These include a review of the guidance provided to those involved in the decision-making process, to clarify inconsistent or ambiguous language.

We believe our schemes compare well with those provided by other nations that have operated in Afghanistan. On termination of employment, other nations generally offer either a financial lump sum or a relocation package. However, unlike our ex-gratia redundancy scheme, most nations also require staff to prove they are at risk in order to relocate. The UK is the only nation with a permanent team of trained investigation officers in country to investigate claims of intimidation.

I am confident that the UK's arrangements meet our commitment to protecting our locally employed staff when their safety is at threat as a result of their work for us.

Avian Influenza

[HLWS384]

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs (Andrea Leadsom) has today made the following statement.

The Chief Veterinary Officer has confirmed a case of avian flu in a turkey farm in East Lindsey, Lincolnshire.

Test results have confirmed the presence of a high pathogenicity H5N8 strain of the disease. This is the strain currently circulating in Europe. As a result, the Animal and Plant Health Agency has raised the risk of an incursion into wild birds in the UK from medium to high and into poultry from low but heightened to low to medium, dependent on geographic location.

While this disease affects birds severely, the advice from Public Health England is that the risk to public health from this strain of bird flu is very low with no human cases ever reported, and the Food Standards Agency has said there is no food safety risk for consumers.

We have taken robust action, imposing a 3 kilometre protection zone and 10 kilometre surveillance zone last Friday to limit the risk of disease spreading. The birds on the farm have either died or were humanely culled. All carcasses have been removed and rendered under strict biosecurity standards. Cleansing and disinfection of the site has commenced.

We have tried and tested procedures for dealing with such animal disease outbreaks and a strong track record of controlling and eliminating previous outbreaks of avian flu in the UK. We are working closely with operational partners, devolved administration colleagues and the industry to deal effectively with this outbreak.

My Department continues to carefully monitor the situation in the UK and Europe. Following my statement of the 7th December where I announced the mandatory housing of poultry and other kept birds, and as a result of the increased risk to UK poultry, I have today announced a change to the licensing of bird gatherings including sales and auctions. This prevents until further notice, gatherings of domestic poultry, and places enhanced biosecurity requirements on gatherings of other species including aviary birds, pigeons and raptors. This follows veterinary advice on the risk of disease spread through such gatherings.

I continue to urge bird keepers to be vigilant for any signs of disease, ensure they are maintaining good biosecurity on their premises, seek prompt advice from their vet and report suspect disease to their nearest APHA office.

Decommissioning Relief Deeds

[HLWS392]

Lord Young of Cookham: My hounourable friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jane Ellison) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

At Budget 2013, the government announced it would begin signing decommissioning relief deeds. These deeds represent a new contractual approach to provide oil and

gas companies with certainty on the level of tax relief they will receive on future decommissioning costs.

Since October 2013, the government has entered into 76 decommissioning relief deeds. Oil & Gas UK estimates that these deeds have so far unlocked more than £5.9bn of capital, which can now be invested elsewhere.

The government committed to report to Parliament every year on progress with the deeds. The report for financial year 2015-16 is provided below.

1. The number of decommissioning relief agreements entered into: the government entered into no decommissioning relief agreements in 2015-16.

2. The total number of decommissioning relief agreements in force at the end of that year: 72 decommissioning relief agreements were in force at the end of the year.

3. The number of payments made under any decommissioning relief agreements during that year, and the amount of each payment: no payments were made under any decommissioning relief agreements in 2015-16.

4. The total number of payments that have been made under any decommissioning relief agreements as at the end of that year, and the total amount of those payments: no payments had been made under any decommissioning relief agreement as at the end of the 2015-16 financial year.

5. An estimate of the maximum amount liable to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements: the government has not made any changes to the tax regime that would generate a liability to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements. HM Treasury's 2015-16 accounts recognise a provision of an aggregate £327m in respect of decommissioning expenditure incurred as a result of a company defaulting on their decommissioning obligations. The majority of this is expected to be realised over the next five years.

Economy

[HLWS393]

Lord Young of Cookham: My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Philip Hammond) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today I can inform the House that I will deliver my Spring Budget statement on Wednesday 8 March 2017.

Foreign Affairs Council: 12 December 2016

[HLWS391]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My right Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Alan Duncan), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 December. The Foreign Affairs Council was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. The meeting was held in Brussels.

Foreign Affairs Council

A provisional report of the meeting and Conclusions adopted can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2016/12/12/>

EU–Africa relations

The Council discussed EU-Africa relations in preparation for the EU-Africa summit in November 2017. Ministers discussed priorities in the EU's relations with Africa, as well as how those relations should evolve in the light of emerging economic, security, demographic and migration challenges. I encouraged the EU to fulfill its security commitments, whilst supporting capacity building and African ownership of African challenges in the longer term.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Council adopted restrictive measures against seven DRC officials, and had a short discussion on the situation in the country. Ms Mogherini set out the clear aim of the measures: to deter a violent response to likely protests on 19 December when President Kabila's mandate would come to an end.

Syria

Over lunch, Ministers discussed the situation in Syria in view of the latest developments, in particular in Aleppo. I stressed the severity of the situation in Aleppo, underlining the role of Russia and Iran as well as the Syrian regime, and the importance of holding to account those responsible for the appalling situation.

Migration

Ministers discussed migration issues ahead of the European Council on 15 December. The Council took stock of the progress made on the migration partnership framework approach; and on the country-specific compacts with the five priority countries (Mali, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria and Ethiopia).

Any Other Business (AOB)

France raised the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, noting the importance of swift implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2270 and encouraging consideration of further EU autonomous measures.

In the margins of the Council, Ms Mogherini, EU Foreign Ministers and the Cuban Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, signed the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. After the Council meeting, Ministers had an informal discussion with President Santos of Colombia. The EU and participating Member States then signed the constitutive agreement of the EU Trust Fund for Colombia.

Ministers agreed without discussion a number of measures:

- Council Conclusions on South Sudan.
- Council Conclusions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
- A protocol to the framework agreement on comprehensive partnership and cooperation between the

EU and Vietnam, to take account of the accession of Croatia.

- The EU position for the 3rd meeting of the EU-Ukraine Association Council in Brussels on 19 December 2016.
- Prolonging the mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia for a further period of two years (until 14 December 2018) and allocating to the mission a budget of €18 million for the period 15 December 2016 to 14 December 2017.
- Prolonging the mandate of the two Common Security and Defence Policy missions in Somalia, the civilian capacity-building mission (EUCAP Nestor) and the military training mission (EUTM), until 31 December 2018. The Council renamed EUCAP Nestor capacity-building mission 'EUCAP Somalia'.
- Renewing for two years the declaration on the common funding of the deployment of EU battlegroups, until December 2018.

Future Nuclear Deterrent

[HLWS381]

Earl Howe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

On 18 May 2011 the then Defence Secretary, the Right Hon. Member for North Somerset (Dr Liam Fox), made an oral statement to the House (Official Report, column 351) announcing the approval of the Initial Gate investment stage for the procurement of the successor submarines to the Vanguard Class ballistic missile submarines. He also placed in the Library of the House a report "The United Kingdom's Future Nuclear Deterrent: The Submarine Initial Gate Parliamentary Report".

As confirmed in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, and in accordance with the motion approved by this House on 18 July 2016, this Government is committed to publishing an annual report on the programme. I am today publishing the fifth report, "The United Kingdom's Future Nuclear Deterrent: 2016 Update to Parliament". A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Lord Speaker's Committee

[HLWS386]

Lord McFall of Alcluith: Following the debate on the size of the House of Lords on 5 December, the Lord Speaker has today announced the establishment of a cross-party Lord Speaker's committee of backbench peers to explore methods by which the size of the House can be reduced, commensurate with its current role and functions. The committee will be chaired by Lord Burns. Lord Beith, Baroness Browning, Baroness Crawley, Baroness Taylor of Bolton and Lord Wakeham have also agreed to serve on the committee.

The Lord Speaker has asked the committee to examine practical and politically viable options that might lead to

progress on this issue; analyse their implications; and set out any outstanding questions that may need to be answered in order for any proposals to command broad consensus across the House. The committee will then offer advice to the Lord Speaker as to potential next steps.

Parliamentary Delegations

[HLWS387]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Rt Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made the following statement to the House of Commons:

The Hon. Member for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (Simon Hart) and the Hon. Member for North Warwickshire (Craig Tracey) have been appointed as Full Members of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in place of the Rt Hon. Member for Clwyd West (David Jones) and the Hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes). The Hon. Member for St Helens North (Conor McGinn) has also been appointed as an Alternate Member in place of the Hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Nick Smith)

The Rt Hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Cheryl Gillan) has been appointed as a representative member of the United Kingdom Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in place of the Hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb). The Hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) has been appointed as a substitute member of the Delegation in place of the Hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Virendra Sharma), who has been appointed as a representative member in place of the Hon. Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler). The Rt Hon. Member for Doncaster Central (Dame Rosie Winterton) has been appointed as a representative member of the Delegation in place of the Hon. Member for Dewsbury (Paula Sherriff). The Hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and the Hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) have been appointed as substitute members of the Delegation in place of the Hon. Member for Newport East (Paul Flynn) and the Hon. Member for Perry Bar (Khalid Mahmood). Lord Wilson of Tillyhorn has also been appointed as a substitute member of the Delegation in place of Lord Wright of Richmond.

Policing and Crime Bill

[HLWS385]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My rt hon Friend the Minister of State for Fire and Policing (Brandon Lewis) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I will shortly be placing in the House Library the Department's analysis on the application of Standing Order 830 of the Standing Orders of the House of

Commons relating to public business in respect of the Lords amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill.

Public Bodies 2016

[HLWS382]

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

Public Bodies are a crucial part of how Government delivers its priorities. Well-governed, effective and efficient public bodies help contribute to building public trust in Government at a time when this has never been more important.

CO is collaborating across Government, engaging with senior leaders and Non-Executive Directors from departments and arm's-length bodies to promote good governance, disseminate best practice and drive reform. Together, we aim to deliver a more cost-effective, transparent and simplified landscape that is better able to meet the needs of the people it serves.

Public Bodies 2016 is an annual Directory which provides a single source of top-level cost and non-cost data on all executive agencies, non-departmental public bodies and non-ministerial departments. It also sets out the government's strategy for public bodies reform for the remainder of the Parliament.

The Cabinet Office will today publish Public Bodies 2016 and I am also placing it in the Library of the House.

Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

[HLWS383]

Earl Howe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence (Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of a letter that I have sent to Lt Gen (Retd) Brims, the Chair of the Future Reserves 2020 External Scrutiny Team to update him on the programme, and particularly on the recommendations that his team's report made. I am grateful for their work.

Road Freight

[HLWS390]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Honourable Friend, the Minister of State for Transport (John Hayes) has made the following Ministerial Statement.

I chaired a round table on 2nd November about roadside facilities and parking for lorry drivers. This followed an adjournment debate, secured by Helen Whately, the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent, on 7th September about fly-parking in Kent.

Key issues identified at the round table, which could be considered in the Kent context and which will have wider applicability and interest, are:

- the join up between national and local planning frameworks;
- provision of lorry parking facilities
- minimum standards at such parking facilities;
- payment systems for facilities; and
- when facilities are supplied ensuring there is enforcement against lorries stopping in the wrong place (including achieving that without a proliferation of signs and lines).

In due course I will set out actions to tackle each and all of these.

Some of these issues as they relate to Kent, in particular, were discussed at a meeting of the Kent Strategic Freight Group on 2nd December, chaired by the County Council. I am urgently considering how they can be progressed, including how enforcement against fly-parking can be made to work better.

A contract was awarded last week for an extensive national survey of lorry parking to be completed by the Spring will add to the evidence about what should be done where.

Work is also underway to encourage private sector distribution centres to allow drivers to have access to decent facilities when supplying them.

I chaired another round table on 17th November about recruitment into the logistics sector. Better lorry parking and facilities can contribute to improving the recruitment and retention of drivers. However it is one of many issues where Government working with the private sector can contribute.

Already waiting times for lorry driving tests have been reduced substantially at a time of increasing demand for tests, through the recruitment of more examiners. Processes for licence renewals are being streamlined. Apprenticeships for lorry driving and other jobs in the road haulage and logistics industry start early next year through the new Trailblazers scheme.

I look forward to working with Members of Parliament (including the All Party Parliamentary Group on Freight), local authorities, the haulage industry, the trade unions and all other interested stakeholders to develop our plans.

Schools Revenue Funding Settlement 2017 to 2018

[HLWS394]

Lord Nash: My right honourable friend the Minister of State for School Standards (Nick Gibb) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

Today I am announcing details of schools revenue funding for 2017-18. This announcement includes the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the Education Services Grant (ESG) Transitional Grant and the Pupil Premium.

The distribution of the DSG to local authorities will continue to be set out in three spending blocks for each authority: a schools block, a high needs block and an early years block.

The schools block has been allocated on the basis of the schools block units of funding announced in the Secretary of State's statement to the House on 21 July 2016. To protect schools from significant budget reductions, we will continue with a minimum funding guarantee that ensures no school loses more than 1.5% per pupil in its 2017-18 budget (excluding sixth form funding and ESG) compared to 2016-17, and before the Pupil Premium is added.

We have been able to provide an additional £130 million for the DSG high needs block. The high needs block supports provision for pupils and students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), up to the age of 25, and alternative provision for pupils who cannot receive their education in schools.

The DSG early years block comprises funding for the 15 hours entitlement for three- and four-year-olds; the additional 15 hours for three- and four-year-old children of eligible working parents from September 2017; participation funding for two-year-olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds; the early years pupil premium; and the disability access fund. The provisional allocations for this block were announced in the Secretary of State's statement of 1 December 2016.

The ESG Transitional Grant for local authorities will be set at a financial year rate of £66 per pupil and paid for the period April to August 2017. We will also continue to provide a protection to limit the reduction of academies' budgets as a result of the ending of ESG from September 2017.

The pupil premium per pupil amounts for 2017-18 will be protected at the current rates, which are:

<i>Pupils</i>	<i>Per pupil rate</i>
Disadvantaged pupils: Primary	£1,320
Disadvantaged pupils: Secondary	£935
Pupil Premium Plus: Looked After Children (LAC) ¹ and those adopted from care or who leave care under a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangements Order (formally known as a residence order).	£1,900
Service children	£300

¹ A looked after child is defined in the Children Act 1989 as one who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English or Welsh local authority.

Pupil premium allocations for financial year 2017-18 will be published in June 2017 following the receipt of pupil number data from the spring 2017 schools and alternative provision censuses.

Details of these arrangements have been published on GOV.UK.

Travel Advice

[HLWS388]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: My right Honourable Friend, the Secretary for State for Foreign and

Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

Travel Advice is one of the most important public services which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) delivers. Its purpose is to give British nationals the best possible understanding of the context, threats and hazards they face overseas, in order for them to make informed decisions about travel. It draws on a range of sources, including intelligence assessments, open source and media reporting, the local knowledge of our overseas posts and their diplomatic reporting. Travel Advice is, however, precisely that. A decision on whether to travel to a specific country or area has to be for the individual concerned.

The FCO provides Travel Advice notices for 225 countries and territories worldwide. There were more than 40 million individual hits on the online travel advice service in 2015. The FCO in London and all posts throughout our diplomatic network overseas actively monitor safety and security issues on a 24-hour basis and we made 2,200 updates to our Travel Advice in 2015. Where possible, we publish country maps to help communicate this advice. In some cases we will advise against travel or all but essential travel to a country or region as a result of terrorism, security concerns or other risks. We know that when we advise against travel it can have an impact on individuals and business, but the safety of British nationals is our overriding concern.

The threat from terrorism is evolving. Despite the pressure of military action in Syria and Iraq and concerted and sustained counter-terrorism action globally, the main terrorist groups – Daesh, Al Qaeda and groups associated with them – continue to pose a threat to UK interests globally, including British travellers. Since 2012, there have been more than 25 major terrorist attacks resulting in the deaths of at least 300 tourists around the world, including 31 British nationals. In particular, we have seen the growth of so called “lone wolf” attacks, which are difficult to predict and disrupt and could take place in almost any country.

In response to the changing nature of the threat the former Foreign Secretary, my Rt hon. Friend, the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), commissioned a review to assess whether changes in how we present travel advice might help us reflect the evolving threat from terrorism, whilst providing the clearest possible advice to the public. This included a public consultation to help consider potential improvements to the Travel Advice service. 1,009 people responded to the online consultation in March and April 2016. The consultation team met stakeholders, including the travel and insurance industries; encouraged written

feedback; and consulted other government departments, including the Department for International Development and UK Trade & Investment, as well as several other countries whose travel advice systems are comparable with our own. The aim of the public consultation was to make sure British nationals continued to have information that was readily accessible and easy to understand so they could make informed decisions whenever and wherever they travel. The consultation sought to find out how people used the Travel Advice service; whether they found it useful; and whether the way information was presented could be improved to make it more accessible. It also looked at whether changes could be made to provide a greater level of detail and better understanding of the level of risk travellers face in any given country.

Taking all of this in to account, I have decided to make a number of improvements to the Travel Advice service. I want British nationals to be able to travel abroad for business, study or pleasure, but with a clear personal understanding of the risks entailed in doing so.

While the principles of Travel Advice set out in the 2004 Review (*Review of Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel Advice, Cm 6158*) in relation to the threat from terrorism remain unchanged, we shall now describe the threat in greater narrative detail, moving away from simple descriptors (e.g. “there is a high threat from terrorism”). This is to provide a greater level of information to the public, helping them to understand better the levels of risk in their travel plans. The new expanded text will describe the threat in terms of its predictability (whether attacks are likely to happen), extent (targets and locations of previous attacks and methodologies employed), context (which groups are responsible, and the history of attacks) and, where appropriate, mitigation (where host nations are actively countering the threat, including through publicly avowed counter terrorism measures and arrests). During the consultation, the public and travel industry said they would welcome this approach. We will also make design improvements to Travel Advice pages so that users can more easily find the information relevant to them. These changes will be introduced over the coming months, building on work that officials have already begun to increase the amount of detailed information about terrorism in our advice.

I am confident that these changes will ensure our Travel Advice continues to provide effective information to help British travellers make informed decisions about their personal travel plans and security overseas. Our Travel Advice will continue to reflect the best judgements we can make on the information available to us at the time.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 20 December 2016

Brexit

Asked by Lord Davies of Stamford

To ask Her Majesty's Government what they anticipate to be the total cost of consultants employed in connection with the UK's negotiations to leave the EU in (1) 2016–17, and (2) 2017–18. [[HL3867](#)]

Lord Bridges of Headley: The Department for Exiting the European Union has used the services of a number of consulting firms to help with departmental set-up and planning. The Departmental budget will be published in due course.

Asked by Lord Davies of Stamford

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many civil servants or other public employees they anticipate will need to be recruited in (1) 2016–17, and (2) 2017–18, in connection with the UK's negotiations to leave the EU, and what they expect the total cost of employing them to be in each of those years. [[HL3869](#)]

Lord Bridges of Headley: All departments are equipping themselves with the resources they need to get the best deal for the UK. The Department for Exiting the European Union now has just over 300 staff, and is growing fast. We are not in a position to give a final total as recruitment is ongoing. Overall size and scope of the new department, including staffing and budget, are regularly reviewed and we will ensure we are appropriately staffed to deal with the task at hand.

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, following the giving of notice to leave the EU under Article 50, they will cease to participate in the Council of Ministers and the European Council. [[HL3938](#)]

Lord Bridges of Headley: Until the UK formally leaves, the UK remains a full member of the European Union and all the rights and obligations of EU membership remain in force. During this period the Government will continue to negotiate, implement and apply EU legislation and participate in Council meetings.

Care Homes: Fees and Charges

Asked by Lord Warner

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy regarding proprietors of nursing and residential care homes subsidising the care of publicly funded residents from payments by private payers; and what guidance they have issued on this to local authorities or care home proprietors. [[HL4041](#)]

Lord Prior of Brampton: Care and support is arranged on an open market where prices and fee rates are

negotiated locally by commissioners for state-funded clients, whilst individuals and their families do so for those who self-fund. The Government has no say in these individual negotiations.

There are many reasons why individuals who self-fund may pay more than local authorities, including premium accommodation and services, and discounts that may be available to authorities for bulk purchasing and lower transaction costs.

The Care Act placed duties on councils to promote their overall local market of providers to ensure it remains sustainable as to deliver high-quality services for all local people. Prices and fee rates paid by commissioners to provider organisations must reflect these new duties.

The Department published the Care and Support statutory guidance setting out how councils should meet these new duties when commissioning, including the consideration of the actual costs of care and support when negotiating fee levels. This guidance is an online-only resource, subject to updates.

Channel Four Television

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ashton of Hyde on 15 December ([HL3953](#)) concerning the criteria used to appoint new members of the Channel 4 Corporation Board, why those criteria make no reference to gender; and to what extent this practice extends to other public appointments. [[HL4168](#)]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: Non-executive members of the Channel 4 Corporation board are appointed by Ofcom with the approval of the Secretary of State. Ofcom advertised for four vacancies for candidates with specific sector skills and experience. The Secretary of State approved the four candidates on the basis that they met the skills and experience set out the advertised job descriptions.

The government is committed to ensuring diversity within public appointments. The Cabinet Office aspiration is for 50% of new appointments made by each Government Department to go to female candidates, and 10% to candidates from a BAME background. This target is also contained within the DCMS Departmental Plan, and, in the first two quarters of 2016/17, 50% of new DCMS appointments went to women and 18% to BAME candidates.

Child Tax Credit

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of reducing public health funding for contraception on the proposal to limit child tax credits to the first two children in a household. [[HL4115](#)]

Lord Prior of Brampton: No assessment has been made. Local areas decide how to spend public health funding. Contraception is widely available from general practices, and sexual and reproductive health services and is free to all.

Classroom Assistants: Recruitment

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have conducted or commissioned research into the reasons for the increase in the number of teaching assistants hired by schools in the period 2000–10; and if so, where this can be obtained. [HL4003]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: In 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families published the research report *Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools and the Impact of the National Agreement*.

The report considers reasons for the increase in teaching assistant numbers as part of wider research into their deployment. The report was produced by the Institute for Education. A copy of the report is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Deployment and impact of support staff in schools
[Deployment_and_impact_of_support_staff_in_schools.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-09/HL4003>

Climate Change

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to meet the requirements set out in the 2030 EU climate and energy framework when the UK leaves the EU. [HL3923]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The terms of the EU's 2030 Clean Energy Package have only just been proposed by the Commission so it is too early to say what requirements will be agreed by Member States and the European Parliament. The extent to which the UK will be bound by the requirements of the EU 2030 framework will depend on the terms of the UK's exit from the European Union. The UK's action to tackle climate change is framed by the Climate Change Act, which is domestic legislation and therefore unaffected by the result of the referendum.

Commonwealth: Curriculum

Asked by Lord Luce

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to include the history of the Commonwealth in the national curriculum; and if so, what steps are they taking to ensure this. [HL4134]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Schools are free to judge whether pupils should be taught about the Commonwealth. The national curriculum for citizenship education, introduced in September 2014, requires pupils to be taught about local, regional and international governance and the United Kingdom's relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the wider world.

There are also a number of opportunities in the history programmes of study for pupils to be taught about the Commonwealth. For example pupils are taught about British history from 1745 to 1901. This includes the development of The Empire, and they are taught a topic on the end of The Empire and Britain's place in the world since 1945.

Counterfeit Manufacturing: Electronic Equipment

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action are they taking to stop counterfeit electrical goods being sold online. [HL3996]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government takes the issue of IP infringement seriously, including counterfeit electrical goods, and is working with industry and law enforcement agencies on a number of initiatives to tackle this issue.

The Police IP Crime Unit, launched in September 2013, has had a significant impact having arrested over 70 people and suspended over 11,000 internet domains. In 2014/15 Border Force detained over 1.6 Million IP infringing items, if genuine the retail value would have been in excess of £56 million. Ongoing enforcement initiatives include Operation Jasper, which is addressing the use of social media to sell counterfeit items and work by National Trading Standards and the IPO Intelligence Hub to deal with the risks posed by 'fulfilment houses' that supply many counterfeit items purchased online.

Officials have also met online retailers to discuss the availability of counterfeits on their platforms and to help co-ordinate law enforcement action against sellers.

Cyprus: Peace Negotiations

Asked by Baroness Hussein-Ece

To ask Her Majesty's Government who will be the UK's representative on the proposed five-party conference to discuss the Cyprus Settlement, to be held on 12 January 2017. [HL3937]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK welcomes the decision of the Leaders of the two Cypriot communities to proceed to a conference on Cyprus with the Guarantor Powers starting on 12 January 2017. The UK stands ready to participate at an appropriate level and we look forward to receiving further details from the UN and two sides in due course.

Developing Countries: Nutrition

Asked by Baroness Manzoor

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote progress towards (1) the World Health Assembly 2025 global nutrition targets, and (2) Sustainable Development Goal 2 to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. [HL4178]

Lord Bates: DFID has committed to improve the nutrition of 50 million people by 2020 to enable more countries to get on track to meet World Health Assembly and Sustainable Development Goal targets. We are working closely with partners to make sure countries receive effective support to accelerate reductions in malnutrition. Our support to the Global Nutrition Report helps monitor whether countries are on track to reach global targets.

Asked by Baroness Manzoor

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have fully disbursed the commitments made at the 2013 Nutrition for Growth Summit; and if not, how much has been disbursed, and when they will disburse the remaining commitments. [HL4179]

Lord Bates: DFID provides annual updates on progress towards Nutrition for Growth (N4G) commitments through the Global Nutrition Report. DFID disbursed 40% of its N4G spending commitment in 2013 and 2014. The remaining funds committed will be disbursed gradually up to 2020 as nutrition programmes are implemented.

Duchy of Cornwall: Taxation

Asked by Lord Berkeley

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Attorney General or other counsel have reviewed the taxation of the income from the Duchy of Cornwall within the last 30 years. [HL3853]

Lord Keen of Elie: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs is the department with principal responsibility for reviewing individual tax affairs. They do not comment on the affairs of identifiable taxpayers.

Education

Asked by Baroness Shephard of Northwold

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that education policy relates to learners of all ages and backgrounds. [HL3973]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Government has made a series of changes to help ensure education policy better supports all ages. In the 2016 Budget, the Government announced that it would conduct a review into the gaps in support for lifetime learning, including for flexible and part-time study. The review is on-going and the Government will announce its next steps shortly.

Employment Tribunals Service

Asked by Lord Beecham

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Neville-Rolfe on 24 October (HL2341), how many penalty notices have been issued since April 2016 in respect of employers' failure to pay compensation ordered by employment tribunals; and how much has been recovered. [HL4165]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Since April 2016, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has issued 60 penalty notices to employers for failure to comply with orders of employment tribunals to pay compensation to applicants.

As a result of the Employment Tribunal Penalty regime the department has secured £83,245.52 in previously unpaid awards for applicants.

Should the penalty notices not be paid, the department will take further enforcement action as necessary to pursue payment.

Equality

Asked by Lord Taylor of Warwick

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of changes in regional inequality across the UK. [HL3932]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government is committed to delivering an economy that works for everyone. We have established the £12 billion Local Growth Fund (2015-16 to 2020-21) for local areas; agreed 8 Devolution Deals; and established 36 Enterprise Zones, unlocking a further £2.6 billion of private sector investment.

We have made significant progress in addressing regional inequality across the UK. The latest Growth Value Added (GVA) data in England shows that between 2014 and 2015, 6 English regions (North East, North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, East of England, South East and South West) had stronger GVA growth per head of population than London.^[1]

^[1] Source: ONS Regional Gross Value Added (Income Approach), adjusted for inflation, Table 2: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/regionalgrossvalueaddedincomeapproach>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

ONS Regional Gross Value Added [Attachment to HL3932.xls]

The material can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-07/HL3932>

Female Genital Mutilation

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to include female genital mutilation as a

mandatory element in the personal, social, health and economic programme of study in schools. [HL3939]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: There is no mandatory programme of study for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Schools have the autonomy to tailor their PSHE to reflect the needs of their pupils, including teaching about female genital mutilation (FGM), drawing on the resources, tools and evidence provided by experts such as the PSHE Association.

The Government has worked with the PSHE Association to develop a section of their website focusing on FGM and including a range of guidance and resources for teachers and schools to use.

The non-statutory programme of study for PSHE includes giving young people the opportunity to learn about taking care of their body, understanding that actions such as FGM constitute abuse and are a crime under British law and universal human rights, and develop the skills and strategies required to get support if they have fears for themselves or their peers.

In addition, the statutory 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance, updated in September 2016, includes information for schools on the issue of FGM and reminds schools of their duty in relation to reporting cases of FGM. A copy of the guidance is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Keeping children safe in education
[Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-07/HL3939>

Food: Exports

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much additional business has been generated for the UK food and drinks industry since the latest export drive was launched. [HL3922]

Lord Price: Promoting food and drink exports is a high priority for Government. Under the International Action Plan which ran from 2013, the Government supported over 4,000 companies to secure more than £1bn of new exports. This helped exports for the sector to reach £18.2bn in 2015. A refreshed International Action Plan for Food and Drink was launched in October 2016 and will provide fresh impetus for the coming years.

Genito-urinary Medicine

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of local authority cross-charging arrangements for sexual health services. [HL4065]

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their estimate of the number of local authorities that have not developed cross-charging arrangements for the provision of sexual health services, as recommended in the report Sexual Health Services: Key Principles for Cross Charging, published in August 2013. [HL4066]

Lord Prior of Brampton: There is no requirement on local authorities to have cross-charging arrangements in place; this is a matter for local determination.

No estimate has been made of the number of local authorities that do not have cross-charging arrangements. Public Health England recently conducted a survey into the commissioning arrangements for sexual and reproductive health and HIV, including assessment of cross-charging arrangements.

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many patients resident in the devolved administrations accessed sexual health services in England in the last three years for which figures are available; and what was the estimated cost to NHS England of the provision of those services in each of those years. [HL4116]

Lord Prior of Brampton: Data have been provided on the number of contacts with Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in England, from residents of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for the last two years (2014-15 and 2015-16). Data are not available prior to this, as location of patient residence was not submitted by all providers.

NHS England does not hold data on the costs associated with these contacts. Attendances at genito-urinary medicine (GUM) services is collected separately through the GUMCAD data set. Data are not published in the format requested.

Contacts with Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in England, from residents of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.¹

2014-2015 and 2015-2016

Country of residence	Year	
	2014-15	2015-16
Northern Ireland	3	43
Scotland	152	254
Wales	2,362	2,049
Total	2,517	2,346

¹ The quality of this data is dependent on the location of residence submitted by providers.

Source: Sexual and Reproductive Health Activity Dataset, NHS Digital.

Gibraltar: Brexit

Asked by Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have held with the government of Gibraltar

regarding the UK's plans to leave the EU; and whether they plan to have due regard to the views of the people of Gibraltar as expressed in the referendum. [HL4072]

Lord Bridges of Headley: The UK Government has made clear that it intends to fully involve Gibraltar as we prepare for exit from the EU, to ensure Gibraltar's interests are properly taken into account. The first meeting of the UK-Gibraltar Ministerial Forum on EU Exit took place on 7 December 2016, with Department for Exiting the EU and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers taking part alongside the Chief Minister of Gibraltar. This followed a meeting the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Exiting the EU (Mr Robin Walker) chaired with the Gibraltar Chief Minister and business and union representatives on 1 November 2016. In addition, officials continue to be in frequent contact with their Gibraltar counterparts. The Government is committed to continued close working with the Government of Gibraltar.

Health and Social Care Information Centre

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Hospital Episode Statistics and Secondary Uses Service datasets are maintained for purposes of direct care; and whether the creation and processing of information by the Health and Social Care Information Centre for those purposes is subject to dissent under the Data Protection Act 1998. [HL3943]

Lord Prior of Brampton: NHS Digital (formerly known as the Health and Social Care Information Centre) has confirmed that Hospital Episode Statistics and Secondary Uses Service data are maintained for secondary uses; these are purposes other than for direct patient care. These purposes include supporting the planning and commissioning of healthcare services, supporting payment mechanisms and the development of healthcare policy.

Under Section 10 of the Data Protection Act, individuals can request that a data controller does not process their personal data, because to do so would cause the individual 'substantial damage' or 'substantial distress', and would be 'unwarranted'.

NHS Digital will consider all such requests on their merits and respond appropriately to the individuals who have made them.

Hepatitis

Asked by Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 6 December (HL3698), whether they are committed to eliminating hepatitis C as a public health threat in the UK by 2030; and if so, what strategy they have adopted to achieve this. [HL4114]

Lord Prior of Brampton: The Government is committed to eliminating hepatitis C as a major public health threat.

The United Kingdom has a comprehensive surveillance system in place combining laboratory diagnoses data, risk/behaviour data, outcome data, statistical modelling and service evaluation to monitor the cascade of care, detect outbreaks, and generate burden estimates. Prevention efforts in minimising harm in people who inject drugs is focused on access to opiate substitution therapies and needle syringe exchange programmes, and disinfection tablets in prisons. NHS England leads on treatment and continues to support National Health Service-led Operational Delivery Networks to provide National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approved treatments for hepatitis C.

Public Health England supports the Government's efforts by publishing hepatitis C metrics which are available in the report *Hepatitis C in the UK 2016 report: Working towards its elimination as a major public health threat*. A copy of the report is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

HEPATITIS C IN THE UK
[Hepatitis_C_in_the_UK_2016_report.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-14/HL4114>

Humanitarian Aid: Older People

Asked by Baroness Northover

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the needs of vulnerable elderly people in humanitarian emergencies such as those currently trapped in Aleppo and other besieged Syrian cities, and the 1.65 million older people in Yemen. [HL4190]

Lord Bates: When carrying out humanitarian assessments and responding to humanitarian needs, DFID and our partners take into account the specific needs of those who may be more vulnerable, including the elderly.

In Syria mitigating diseases that are common amongst the elderly is a priority. DFID is providing flu vaccines and support for the treatment of diabetes and high blood pressure. This is part of the £717million DFID is providing to support vulnerable people inside Syria. In Aleppo and other besieged areas, DFID funded partners are providing food, clean water, shelter and healthcare to meet the needs of vulnerable Syrians, including the elderly, where access is possible.

In Yemen, DFID is providing £100million this financial year in humanitarian aid to support vulnerable Yemenis, including the elderly. This will be delivered through partners such as the UN and NGOs, and includes food, medical supplies, water, healthcare and nutritional supplies.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Prior of Brampton on 17 October (HL2340) and 5 December (HL3452), whether any members of the expert panel convened by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) shared private and confidential correspondence with members of the HFEA Executive that had not been submitted to the Authority as part of any formal calls for evidence; and if so, what were the particular circumstances that necessitated giving weight to any material not intended for publication. [HL4014]

Asked by Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Prior of Brampton on 17 October (HL2340) and 5 December (HL3452), whether members of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) expert panel approached John Zhang or were approached by him, and when any such contact was first made; and to what extent, if any, the recent recommendations of the HFEA expert panel were influenced by the John Zhang's unpublished data referred to in the journal *Nature* on 10 November. [HL4015]

Lord Prior of Brampton: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has advised that the Expert Panel has met on four occasions over the past four years. On each occasion a formal call for evidence was issued. With regard to the most recent report, the Panel received confidential correspondence on particular issues. Panel members were able to share private correspondence with the Secretariat that supports the Panel, where relevant. Where any evidence has influenced the reports it has been cited.

The HFEA has also advised that it approached John Zhang, following the publication of the abstract from the October 2016 American Society for Reproductive Medicine meeting, entitled "First live birth using human oocytes reconstituted by spindle nuclear transfer for mitochondrial DNA mutation causing Leigh syndrome". A copy of the abstract is attached. The Panel also interviewed Prof. Zhang to further understand the methods used. The Panel's report references the Zhang work.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

ZHANG ABSTRACT [Zhang abstract ASRM Oct 2016 (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-12/HL4014>

Islamic State: British Nationals Abroad

Asked by Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, in the event that British nationals involved with Islamic State

in Iraq or Syria are captured by British forces in those countries, they will be handed over to local authorities. [HL4187]

Earl Howe: British forces in Iraq are operating in a training and advisory capacity only. As such they are not expected to come into contact with British nationals involved with Daesh. In the unlikely event that this was to occur they would revert to the Ministry of Defence who would provide advice on a case by case basis.

Maritime Patrol Aircraft

Asked by Lord Campbell of Pittenweem

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the proposed purchase by Norway of Boeing P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, whether they intend to increase co-operation with Norway in maritime patrol operations. [HL4158]

Earl Howe: The UK works extremely closely with our Norwegian allies in maritime patrol operations. On a visit to Norway on 9-10 November 2016, the Secretary of State for Defence and the Norwegian Defence Minister agreed to deepen our bilateral co-operation on Maritime Patrol Aircraft. Plans for Norway to purchase the P-8 Poseidon aircraft offers the opportunity for refined interoperability in areas including; training, maintenance and logistics, as well as exercises and operations.

Middle East and North Africa: Christianity

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to assist in the protection of Christian minorities in the Middle East and North Africa. [HL4140]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK Government supports the right to freedom of religion or belief for Christian communities in the Middle East and North Africa. We do this by regularly urging governments at senior levels to uphold the rights of all minorities; building international consensus on freedom of religion or belief, including by holding a major conference in October on the synergy between this human right and countering violent extremism; and supporting practical projects, for example, a project inspiring key leaders in Iraqi society to become defenders of freedom of religion or belief.

We are also working closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify vulnerable refugees that they deem to be in need of resettlement. The UNHCR is intensifying outreach to groups that might otherwise be reluctant to register for fear of discrimination and unaware of the options available to them. This includes Christian and all other religious minorities.

NHS: Innovation

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government why new innovations developed by Medtech are not adopted by the NHS. [HL3890]

Asked by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government why innovations that might save the NHS considerable amounts of money, have passed safety checks, and have proven to be beneficial to patients, have not been taken up by the NHS. [HL3893]

Lord Prior of Brampton: We attempt to deliver the best possible care for patients within the resources available, including by adapting to the latest innovations.

Occupational Pensions

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take to prevent employers who participated in multi-employer schemes as partnerships, rather than through limited liability companies, from losing their homes and being made bankrupt as a result of section 75 debts relating to workers who were not in their employ. [HL4012]

Lord Freud: Following a Call for Evidence last year we are exploring alternative methods to help employers in multi-employer schemes manage section 75 employer debts.

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are proposing to change rules relating to debts under section 75 of the Pensions Act 1995 to protect unincorporated employers from being made bankrupt as a result of debts calculated on a section 75 basis in non-associated multi-employer pension schemes which relate to other employers who have already left the scheme; and if so, how. [HL4052]

Lord Freud: Following a Call for Evidence last year we are exploring alternative methods to help employers in multi-employer schemes manage section 75 employer debts.

Older Workers

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures they have taken to facilitate employment for people (1) over 50, and (2) over 60. [HL4053]

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they have taken to comply with the recommendations of the report A new vision for older workers, published in

March 2015; and when they will publish their response to the report. [HL4054]

Asked by Baroness Altmann

To ask Her Majesty's Government what new policies or initiatives they plan to introduce during 2017 to encourage employers to retain, retrain and recruit workers aged (1) over 50, and (2) over 60. [HL4055]

Lord Freud: The Government is committed to ensuring that employers are aware of the wealth of skills and experience that older workers bring to the workplace. There is also a clear business need; by the 2030s over 50s will comprise over half of the UK adult working age population and employers increasingly need to employ and retain the skills and experience of older workers longer to remain competitive and avoid skills and labour shortages in the future.

The Government has recently appointed the Business in the Community (BiTC) Age at Work Leadership Team led by Andy Briggs, Chief Executive of Aviva UK and Chairman of Global Life, as Business Champion for Older Workers to promote the benefits older people bring to employers. The BiTC team will actively promote the benefits of older workers to employers across England – influencing them both strategically and in terms of practical advice.

Jobcentre Plus advisers have the flexibility to offer all claimants, including older people, a comprehensive menu of help which includes skills provision and job search support. All claimants who are long-term unemployed can access the tailored back to work support, on offer from the Work Programme.

Jobcentre Plus also introduced an Older Claimant Champion in each of its seven Jobcentre Plus Groups in April 2015. These Champions work with Work Coaches and employer-facing staff to raise the profile of older workers, highlight the benefits of employing older jobseekers and share best practice.

DWP is working with a range of organisations and employers to produce effective solutions and set up working groups of employers to look at improving the retention, retraining and recruitment of people age 50+. The Government will publish a new cross-government, employer-led national strategy which will set out the future direction of the Fuller Working Lives agenda early next year. The new strategy will be firmly grounded in "A New Vision for Older Workers: Retain, Retrain, Recruit".

Overseas Trade: Israel

Asked by Lord McInnes of Kilwinning

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the value of trade between Scotland and Israel in 2015; and what steps they are taking to further strengthen ties between Scotland and Israel. [HL4089]

Lord Price: The value of trade in goods between Scotland and Israel was £75 million in 2015 (Source: HM Revenue and Customs Regional Trade Statistics

database). This does not include services, which will make this figure considerably higher.

Israel is an important trading partner for the UK and we are committed to further strengthening our important trade relationship.

Parliamentary Questions

Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey

To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the statement in the Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to Proceedings of the House of Lords that "A parliamentary question is not a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000", whether answers to parliamentary questions should contain more or less information than a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. [HL4069]

Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen: Section 1 of the Ministerial Code states that Ministers have a duty to be as open as possible with Parliament and the public, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest. This should be decided in accordance with the relevant statutes and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress is being made to introduce personal, health and social education in all (1) state schools, (2) academies, and (3) free schools. [HL4063]

Asked by Baroness Gould of Potternewton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to introduce compulsory sex and relationship education in schools; and if not, why not. [HL4064]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: We want schools to provide all young people with a curriculum that equips them for success in adult life.

High quality PSHE teaching has an important role to play in this, helping young people understand the world around them, building resilience and helping them to make positive choices and stay safe. We have made it clear in the introduction to the national curriculum that all schools should make provision for PSHE, drawing on examples of good practice. Academies and free schools are encouraged to teach PSHE as part of a broad and balanced curriculum.

Sex education is already compulsory in secondary maintained schools, and the Government is clear that all schools should make provision for high quality, age-appropriate sex and relationship education (SRE) which is a vital part of preparing young people for life in modern Britain.

The Secretary of State agrees that we need to look again at the case for further action on PSHE and SRE provision, with particular consideration to improving quality and accessibility. We are actively considering what steps we could take, including whether to update the existing SRE guidance and will give a view soon.

Petrochemicals: Industrial Health and Safety

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many serious health and safety incidents at oil refineries and petrochemical plants have been reported in the UK over the last five years. [HL4127]

Lord Freud: The table below shows health and safety incidents reported in the manufacture of refined petroleum products sector over the 5 years 2011/12-2015/16, for Great Britain. Each year is from 1 April to 31 March.

<i>Incident</i>	<i>2011/12</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>2015/16p</i>
Fatal injuries to workers	5	-	-	-	-
Non-fatal injuries to workers	42	32	24	20	22
Dangerous Occurrences	47*	33	27	17	19

Source: RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations);

p=provisional

Notes:

For fatal injuries, the data provided is based on the site of where the death occurred.

For non-fatal injuries and dangerous occurrences, the data is reported according to Standard Industrial Classification (SIC), namely 'SIC 19.2 – manufacture of refined petroleum products'. For non-fatal injuries reporting is made by the employer of the injured person.

Non-fatal injuries to workers are defined under RIDDOR, and cover specified injuries such as amputation or most bone fractures; prior to October 2013 these were known as Major Injuries. The non-fatal injury figures also include injuries resulting in more than seven days off work (the reporting threshold was over-3-days until April 2012).

Also from October 2013, some legislative changes were made to the "Types of Dangerous Occurrences" reportable under RIDDOR.

Dangerous Occurrences include incidents such as an explosion, fire or the release of flammable or other dangerous substances.

* Due to a reporting system change in September 2011, figures for Dangerous Occurrences in 2011/12 only cover seven months.

Police: Mental Health Services

Asked by Baroness Smith of Basildon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 23 November (HL Deb, col 1931), what other ongoing work is being carried out to ensure that operational police decisions on the use of force in a mental health setting are necessary and proportionate. [HL3911]

Asked by Baroness Smith of Basildon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 23 November (HL Deb, col 1931), whether the new protocol on police attendance will be published; and if so, when. [HL3912]

Asked by Baroness Smith of Basildon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 23 November (HL Deb, col 1931), who will be responsible for the national collection from 2017 to 2018 of police data on the use of force in mental health settings. [HL3913]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Other ongoing work to ensure that operational police decisions on the use of force in a mental health setting are necessary and proportionate includes the recent publication by the College of Policing of Authorised Professional Practice on Mental Health and Learning Disabilities. This guidance, along with associated training packages, provides police forces with the tools to ensure that police officers are more aware of mental health issues and how best to respond to people with mental health problems with whom they come into contact. Adherence to the Authorised Professional Practice is at the discretion of individual Chief Constables. All providers of mental health services are required to produce and monitor the effectiveness of a restrictive intervention reduction programme, which is an organisation wide plan to reduce the need for restrictive practice, which in turn reduces the likelihood of police being called to support health staff. In addition, we are aware that local leaders in policing and mental health agencies are working together to scrutinise any use of tasers in mental health settings and consider any lessons learned. The College of Policing will publish the new protocol on police attendance at mental health settings around the turn of the year (2016-17). The protocol has been developed as a Memorandum of Understanding for local health and policing agencies, at the request of the National Police Chiefs Council.

Political Parties: European Union

Asked by Lord Stoddart of Swindon

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they contribute to the EU to support political parties, movements or campaigns across the member states; and how much financial support British political parties,

movements or campaigns receive from the EU. [HL4144]

Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen: The UK contributes to the EU budget as a whole, and not to individual programmes within it.

Financial support from the European Parliament is available to political parties at European level, in the form of operating grants. These grants cannot be used to fund national parties or candidates. Full details of the amounts awarded to European-level political parties are published by the European Parliament [1].

We are focussed on securing the best possible deal for the United Kingdom as we leave the European Union. Once we have left it will be for the United Kingdom to decide how taxpayers' money is spent.

[1] Data on grants paid since 2004 is attached.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Data on grants paid since 2004 [Grant_amounts_parties_09-2016.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-14/HL4144>

Prisoners: Mental Illness

Asked by Baroness Smith of Basildon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 3 November (HL Deb, col 770), what training is undertaken by prison officers, and what support is available to ensure that they can effectively identify and deal with mental health problems amongst the prison population. [HL3386]

Asked by Baroness Smith of Basildon

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Keen of Elie on 3 November (HL Deb, col 770), which prisons provide mental health training for prison officers to enable them effectively to identify and deal with mental health problems amongst the prison population. [HL3387]

Lord Keen of Elie: All Prison Officers receive 'Introduction to Mental Health' training within their initial Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT). Within this training learners are taught to identify signs and symptoms for the various forms of mental ill-health, how to manage the offender and when it is necessary to seek help from healthcare professionals.

In addition, there is an 'Enhanced Mental Health' course which is run locally for Case Managers and Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) Assessors. This provides these specialist staff with a more in depth understanding of mental ill-health so that they can better support those identified as at risk.

There are also a number of establishments who have worked with NHS trusts to commission bespoke mental health training for staff.

Prisons

*Asked by **Baroness Corston***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to hold men and women prisoners on shared sites. [[HL3854](#)]

Lord Keen of Elie: The Prison Safety and Reform White Paper (Cmnd 9350), published 3 November 2016, announced the intention to create five small community prisons for women. It said that we will seek to use land adjacent to existing prison sites to get economies of scale, while maintaining the feel of separate institutions that will be important for prisoners' experiences.

In line with one of the key recommendations in your review: 'Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System', one of our primary objectives is improving closeness to home for women offenders. The creation of these prisons will mean that more women are held closer to their homes and given the support services they need to help them address what are often multiple and complex needs.

We are currently looking for appropriate sites and will set out further detail on the design and operation of these prisons as part of a wider strategy for female offenders which we will publish next year.

Propaganda

*Asked by **Lord Kennedy of Southwark***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of fake news on the formulation and implementation of government policy. [[HL4125](#)]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: We are currently considering the implications of the dissemination of fake news on social media sites.

Public Sector: Harassment

*Asked by **Lord Porter of Spalding***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen on 6 December ([HL3463](#)), whether they will establish a cross party commission with representatives from national and local government to create an action plan to reduce the incidence of threatening behaviour against those holding public office. [[HL4029](#)]

Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen: We note the issue raised and will continue to consider whether any appropriate steps need to be taken in light of any developments.

Refugees

*Asked by **The Lord Bishop of Durham***

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many refugees have been resettled through the Syrian

vulnerable person resettlement scheme and community sponsorship scheme in each region of the UK. [[HL3880](#)]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Progress on resettlement in each local authority is indicated in quarterly immigration statistics. The last set of statistics, published on 1 December 2016 showed that 4,162 Syrians were relocated to the UK under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme between October 2015 and September 2016 and sets out how many were located in each local authority. The figures include those Syrians resettled with a community sponsor during this period.

The refugees that we are bringing to the United Kingdom are very vulnerable people. Our prime concern is their safety and protection as they arrive in this country. We want to protect their privacy and ensure their recovery and integration, as they rebuild their lives in safe and secure surroundings, among supportive communities in the UK. We will, therefore, not be providing a running commentary on numbers that have been resettled with a community sponsor.

Renewable Energy: Northern Ireland

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government what communications they have had with the Northern Ireland Executive concerning the preparation and introduction of the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive scheme; and what were (1) the nature, and (2) the timing, of those communications, both before and since the introduction of the scheme in 2013. [[HL3914](#)]

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they were consulted by the Northern Ireland Executive about renewable energy schemes; and if so, what was the nature of those consultations. [[HL3915](#)]

*Asked by **Lord Empey***

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they provided information to the Northern Ireland Executive and other devolved administrations on the introduction of renewable energy schemes; and if so, whether models were suggested and advice given on the appropriateness of such schemes and on their compliance with EU law. [[HL3916](#)]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has regular discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on a range of matters, including the introduction and administration of renewable energy schemes.

Where renewable energy schemes, including the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive, are devolved to Northern Ireland they are the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Executive.

Rejuvenate Your Business

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with, and what representations they have (1) sent to, and (2) received from, Liverpool City Council concerning (a) Rejuvenate your Business Limited, (b) the Project Enterprise Village initiative, and (c) the Insolvency Service investigation and subsequent disqualification undertaking banning Shazan Qureshi from acting as a company director. [HL4000]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Government's Insolvency Service investigated Mr Qureshi's conduct as a director of Rejuvenate Your Business Ltd on half of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. There was no contact between the investigation team and Liverpool City Council in relation to that company or the Project Enterprise Village initiative. Details of the investigation, disqualifications obtained and matters of misconduct can be found in the Insolvency Service's press release on GOV.UK.

Schools: Commonwealth

Asked by Lord Luce

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to facilitate links between British and Commonwealth schools through the use of digital technology. [HL4135]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Department does not directly facilitate school links. Through its Schools Online website, the British Council facilitates a number of school linking programmes, including in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, 'the Commonwealth Class' which is a programme of activities, teaching resources, and events to connect schools and young people across the globe.

Schools: Staff

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have conducted or commissioned research into the determinants of schools' overall staffing decisions, and the balance they strike between hiring administrative and teaching staff. [HL4004]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Department continually reviews information about schools' staff deployment; for example through the School Workforce Census.

A wide range of complex factors determine deployment decisions, including school type and curriculum priorities.

In June 2013, the Department published the Review of efficiency in the schools system, which identified effective workforce deployment as one of the key characteristics of efficient schools and set out examples of

school practice. The review has been attached to this answer.

The Department has also published information for schools to enable them to compare their expenditure with other similar schools. This includes tools on the School Financial Health and Efficiency collection available on gov.uk to support schools in carrying out financial reviews and self-assessments.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

The_Review_of_efficiency_in_the_schools_system [HL4004 attachment 1.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-09/HL4004>

Schools: Standards

Asked by Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reasons for the current ranking of UK schools in the Programme for International Student Assessment survey; and whether they intend to propose measures to improve the performance of UK schools in the survey. [HL4031]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Government is committed to raising standards of achievement in English, mathematics and science. The pupils who sat the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment in England were born around the year 2000 and have therefore experienced only some of the changes we have introduced since 2010, and none of the changes to primary education. We have introduced rigorous new English, maths and science curricula and new qualifications to match expectations set in the highest performing jurisdictions internationally.

For mathematics, we are providing £41m over the next four years to introduce mathematics 'mastery' in primary schools, based on successful teaching approaches from south-east Asia. We are funding the networks of Science Learning Partnerships and Maths Hubs to improve the quality of science and maths teaching in primary and secondary schools. We also offer significant financial incentives to attract top science and mathematics graduates into teaching and are investing up to £67m over four years to train up to an additional 2,500 maths and physics teachers and upskill 15,000 existing teachers in these subjects by the end of this parliament.

In English we have introduced a phonics check at the beginning of compulsory schooling which aims to ensure all pupils acquire the basics in literacy before the end of primary school.

Sovereign Wealth Funds: Malaysia

Asked by Lord Myners

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are investigating matters relating to Malaysia's state

investment fund, 1MDB, and the role played by Goldman Sachs International Limited and its officers past and present. [HL3811]

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Money laundering investigations are conducted by law enforcement agencies with access to the powers in the Proceeds of Crime Act, such as the National Crime Agency, the Serious Fraud Office, and the police. All of these law enforcement agencies are operationally independent of the Government.

Statistics

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many UK regulators follow the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics in their collection and publication of statistics. [HL4103]

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many UK regulators publish statistical releases that have National Statistics status. [HL4104]

Asked by Baroness Wolf of Dulwich

To ask Her Majesty's Government which UK regulators are, as part of their statutory remit, required to follow the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Official Statistics. [HL4105]

Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

UKSA response to HL4103, HL4104, HL4105 [Reply to Baroness Wolf (HL4103-HL4105) AD3 (1) (1) (1).pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-13/HL4103>

Surgery

Asked by The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many NHS hospital operations have been cancelled since August 2016 because of a shortage of (1) beds, or (2) staff. [HL4142]

Lord Prior of Brampton: The information is not available in the format requested.

Swimming: Primary Education

Asked by Lord Storey

To ask Her Majesty's Government what percentage of primary schools do not have access to a swimming pool and are therefore not able to provide swimming lessons to their pupils. [HL3998]

Viscount Younger of Leckie: We want all children to leave primary school able to swim. Swimming is not only an excellent form of physical activity but also a life-saving skill. This is why swimming and water safety is compulsory in the national curriculum for PE at key stages 1 and 2.

We do not hold information on the percentage of primary schools without access to swimming pools. While many schools enjoy excellent links to local facilities we do know that some primaries struggle to access local pools.

To help look into this and other issues that hinder the teaching of high quality swimming lessons, the Government has established a working group to advise on how to ensure no child leaves primary school unable to swim. The group is supported by the Amateur Swimming Association and includes sector experts, and will be presenting their recommendations in the new year.

Syria: Politics and Government

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are seeking to secure agreement between the governments of the United States and Russia on the future for Syria. [HL3918]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The United Kingdom, United States and Russia are all members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) which is working to secure agreement on the future of Syria, as well as addressing the current situation in Syria. We are also Permanent Members of the UN Security Council where the situation in Syria is regularly discussed. The US and Russia also hold bilateral talks on a number of specific Syria issues. The UK will continue to work towards an enduring political settlement based on transition away from the Asad regime to a government representative of all Syrians and which will protect all Syrians' rights.

Tobacco

Asked by Lord Palmer

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will publish a full evidence base, including any supporting research, for each measure contained in their forthcoming tobacco control strategy. [I] [HL3966]

Asked by Lord Palmer

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether, and how, they will ensure that the views of the independent retail sector will be taken into account when putting together their forthcoming tobacco control strategy. [I] [HL3967]

Lord Prior of Brampton: We have a long track record in this country of implementing tobacco control measures which are supported by a strong evidence base, and the new tobacco control plan will build on this approach. As

part of our development of the tobacco control plan, stakeholders were invited to give views during the initial stages. This included representatives of the independent retail sector. We will continue to consult with our stakeholders before introducing any new tobacco control measures.

Trading Standards

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment have they made of the adequacy of the powers of trading standards officers. [I] [[HL4107](#)]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The Consumer Rights Act (CRA) came into force 1st October 2015. The act has given Trading Standards Officers (TSOs) greater flexibility to respond to breaches of consumer law, such as seeking redress for consumers who have suffered harm.

TSOs have a range of additional powers dependent upon the legislation they are enforcing. These include the power to require traders to produce documents relating to their business and powers to seize and detain goods and documents in certain circumstances.

Following responses to a Call for Evidence run in spring 2016 on Terms and Conditions and Civil Enforcement, the Department is considering the strength of Local Authority Trading Standards Services' powers in enforcing consumer protection law such as that on unfair

contract terms. The department will publish their response to this Call for Evidence in due course.

Written Questions: Government Responses

Asked by Lord Harris of Haringey

To ask the Leader of the House what arrangements are in place to ensure that, in answering Questions for Written Answer, government departments are, as required by the Ministerial Code, "accurate and truthful" and as "open as possible" in the answers they provide to members of the House of Lords; whether she has put in place a system to provide quality assurance of the answers provided by government departments to members of the House of Lords; and if so, what. [[HL4068](#)]

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: As Leader of the House I take very seriously the responsibility incumbent on all Ministers to provide full, timely and comprehensible answers to Questions for Written Answer. This is something I stress regularly to frontbench colleagues and which I will certainly reiterate in the light of the Noble Lord's question. My office also engage regularly with private offices and Parliamentary teams when issues arise, both proactively and in response to concerns raised by individual members. It is for Ministers, though, to be directly accountable for the content of their answers, which is why I fully support the rule that Ministers must personally sign all answers to members of the House of Lords.

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