



MEMO is produced by the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities \(SCoJeC\)](#) in partnership with [BEMIS – empowering Scotland's ethnic and cultural minority communities](#). It provides an overview of information of interest to minority ethnic communities in Scotland, including parliamentary activity at Holyrood and Westminster, new publications, consultations, forthcoming conferences, and news reports.

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Note that some weblinks, particularly of newspaper articles, are only valid for a short period of time, usually around a month, and that the Scottish and UK Parliament and Government websites have been redesigned, so that links published in previous issues of MEMO may no longer work. To find archive material on these websites, copy details from MEMO into the relevant search facility.

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Immigration and Asylum

UK Parliament Debate

Asylum Seekers and Permission to Work

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-18/debates/CB0F67B7-7272-42BC-ACE1-5F81E634EFC2/AsylumSeekersAndPermissionToWork>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Immigration: Applications

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [113611] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of Indefinite Leave to Remain applications were processed within the six month service standard in each month since January 2020.

Reply from Kevin Foster: Performance against service standards for Indefinite Leave to Remain applications are included in the Migration Transparency data which is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113611>

Immigration: Applications

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [114352] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) backlog and (b) average length of time taken to process applications for indefinite leave to remain.

Reply from Chris Philp: There are no backlogs on our ILR routes, we are deciding cases within published service standard, unless there is a specific reason we cannot, in which case we will contact the customer. Our service standard for the processing of ILR cases remains six months.

Performance against service standards for Indefinite Leave to Remain applications are included in the Migration Transparency data which is published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114352>

Immigration: Health Services

Margaret Ferrier (Independent) [114914] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will waive the Immigration Health Surcharge for British Nationals (Overseas) who apply for UK visas from January 2021.

Reply from Kevin Foster: The bespoke new Hong Kong British National (Overseas) Visa route recognises our historic and moral commitment to British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) citizens in Hong Kong, giving them the option to live in the UK if they decide that is an appropriate choice for them.

It is reasonable to expect BN(O) citizens coming to the UK to show they can support themselves when they arrive. It is only right that they contribute towards our brilliant NHS through the Immigration Health Surcharge. The Immigration Health Surcharge offers excellent value to BN(O) citizens given the comprehensive access to the range of NHS services it provides.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114914>

Visas: Ministers of Religion

Lisa Cameron (SNP) [114240] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with faith leaders on the effect of changes to tier 2 and tier 5 visas on ministers of religion and religious workers.

Reply from Kevin Foster: This Government recognises the unique value members of religious institutions overseas bring to our communities in the UK. This is reflected in the two dedicated immigration arrangements which exist for Ministers of Religion and Religious Workers.

Faith leaders have a dedicated point of contact within the Department, with whom they regularly engage, and I have met with representatives of different faiths on a number of occasions to discuss these topics.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114240>

Migrant Workers: Visas

Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Labour) [114329] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to offer free visas extensions to NHS health care workers whose visa permits expire after 1 October 2020.

Reply from Kevin Foster: The Government recognises the vital contribution overseas NHS, health and social care workers have and continue to make in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier in the year we offered free visa extensions for health professionals whose visas were due to expire between 31 March 2020 and 1 October 2020. Today we have announced we will extend this offer from 1 October 2020 until 31 March 2021. More details of this announcement can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-health-workers-to-benefit-from-visa-extensions>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114329>

Visas: Married People

Daniel Zeichner (Labour) [114912] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the restrictions on marriage services may have on those individuals who required a spousal visa during the covid-19 outbreak.

Reply from Kevin Foster: The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; this includes those who are currently in the UK as a fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner.

A person with six months' leave as a fiancé, fiancée or proposed civil partner whose wedding or civil ceremony has been delayed due to coronavirus may request additional time to stay, also known as exceptional assurance, and extend their leave until their wedding or civil partnership takes place.

Otherwise, applicants can apply to extend their stay for a further six months to allow their ceremony to take place. The current family Immigration Rules allow a fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner to apply for an extension of leave if there is good reason for their wedding or civil partnership not taking place during the initial six-month period of leave to enter. Cancellation of a wedding due to COVID-19 will be considered a good reason under this policy. Further information is set out for customers on GOV.UK and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents#if-youre-applying-to-enter-the-uk-or-remain-on-the-basis-of-family-or-private-life>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114912>

Asylum and Immigration: Coronavirus

Catherine West (Labour) [91992] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of making (a) asylum and (b) other migration application processes available online during the covid-19 outbreak.

Reply from Chris Philp: UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has worked at pace to ensure the application processes for our routes are Covid safe. Where we can, we have digitised the application process, but in some areas this is not possible.

Asylum in the UK should continue to be sought at the first available opportunity; on arrival, at a port of entry. Those who have failed to claim on arrival, or whose circumstances have changed since arrival, can lodge a claim at an in-country location – this is usually by appointment at the Asylum Intake Unit (AIU) in Croydon. The AIU has continued operate throughout the Covid 19 pandemic, however in line with Government Covid 19 guidance and restrictions, additional regional locations have been temporarily introduced to ensure asylum seekers are able to safely register their claims. In addition, the asylum screening and registration process has been temporarily abridged to minimise in person contact and limit travel required and remains under ongoing review.

Asylum claims registered at these temporary regional locations are processed in

accordance with policy, fulfilling the UK's statutory obligations in relation to registering asylum claims in a Covid safe environment. The asylum registration process requires the enrolment of biometrics (photographs and fingerprints) to complete vital immigration and security checks against Home Office systems. This process requires attendance in person and so cannot be turned into an online process.

In relation to in-country further leave applications, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and government and public health restrictions put in place, the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service (UKVCAS), which allows customers within the UK to enrol their biometrics, was suspended from the end of March to 1st June 2020.

As the UKVCAS service reopened, in parallel UKVI began reusing existing fingerprint biometrics for some customers which meant that instead of attending a service point in person to re-enrol, UKVI could reuse the fingerprints already recorded against a previous application. Once a customer has submitted their biometrics to UKVI, either through a physical appointment or verifying their identity in order that their existing biometrics can be reused, we are able to make a decision. Finally, due to the digital nature of the EU Settlement Scheme, it has remained open throughout the pandemic for customers able to apply on line using the EU Exit: ID Document Check app”.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-13/91992>

Information about the EU Settlement Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

Immigration: Income

Abena Opong-Asare (Labour) [113260] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the minimum income requirement on families with a non-European person whose earnings have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Reply from Kevin Foster: The Minimum Income Requirement is set at a level which prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration.

We recognise COVID-19 will have an economic impact on earnings including on those families where, because of a non-EEA family member, the minimum income requirement applies. We have therefore made relevant adjustments in order to support those affected.

Such adjustments are among a range of measures put in place by the Home Office to support those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. These are set out for customers on GOV.UK and are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>

These are unprecedented times. We continue to monitor the situation closely and may make further adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/113260>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Immigrants: Finance

Stephen Timms (Labour) [114049] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November to Question 105275, what routes are included in the other category referred to in the data for in-country extensions included in that Answer.

Stephen Timms (Labour) [114050] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 November to Question 105275, what assessment

she has made of the reasons for the increase in the number of people in the other category extending their leave from Q4 2019 to Q1 2020.

Reply from Chris Philp: Information regarding the routes included in the 'Other' category are included in notes for table Exe_01 'Grants of an extension of stay in the UK, by category of extension' available from *Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2020* at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020/list-of-tables#extensions>

The 'Category of leave group': 'Other' includes discretionary leave, long residence, parents of children at school, stateless leave, other reasons and cases where the category of grant has not been recorded. 'Other' also includes extensions granted to individuals who are unable to travel home because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus (COVID-19) as detailed in the notes to summary table Exe_01. A more detailed breakdown is available in the 'Category of leave sub group' variable in the published detailed dataset.

As indicated in the commentary accompanying extensions data in *Immigration Statistics, year ending June 2020*, the increase in the number of extensions granted in Q1 2020 compared to Q4 2019 reflects extensions granted under the separate [policy for those currently unable to return home due to COVID-19](#) (63,048 grants up to the end of March 2020).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114050>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-19/105275>

Immigrants: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle (Labour) [110144] To ask the Secretary of State for the Health and Social Care, whether all foreign nationals living in the UK will be able to access free covid-19 related healthcare treatment during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Reply from Edward Argar: Regulations came into force on 29 January 2020 to add Novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) (now known as COVID-19) to Schedule 1 of the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015. This means there can be no charge made to any overseas visitor, including anyone living in the United Kingdom without permission, for the diagnosis, or, if positive, treatment, of COVID-19.

This information has been widely communicated to National Health Service staff and the public, including a public-facing message which has been translated into 40 languages.

Furthermore, migrants who are ordinarily resident in the UK are entitled to all NHS secondary care without charge and certain groups, such as asylum seekers, refugees and victims of modern slavery are exempt from charge under the Charging Regulations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110144>

Immigrants: Coronavirus

Stephen Timms (Labour) [114047] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to her oral statement of 9 November 2020, Official Report, column 637 on supporting disadvantaged families, whether children in families whose immigration status has the No Recourse to Public Funds condition will be eligible for help if they are (a) born in the UK and (b) born outside the UK.

Reply from Will Quince: The eligibility rules relating to immigration status have not changed. Local authorities can and do use their judgement in assessing what support they may lawfully give those who are ineligible for public funds or housing

support, on an individual basis taking into account their specific needs and circumstances. This includes providing basic safety net support if it is established that there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution; for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems, or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114047>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-09/debates/640B734D-982A-46E7-8B6C-8576D161FCC1/SupportingDisadvantagedFamilies>

Migrant Workers

Neil Coyle (Labour) [113560] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to ensure the independence and effectiveness of the proposed Migrants' Commissioner role.

Reply from Kevin Foster: The Home Office is committed to listening to the voices of migrant communities. Transparency and independence will remain at the heart of the Home Office's approach to implementing the Windrush Lessons Learned Review recommendations.

As outlined in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan on 30 September 2020, the Home Office will be consulting with the Windrush Cross-Government Working Group to implement the Migrants' Commissioner role. The Windrush Cross Government Working Group brings together key stakeholders and community leaders with representatives from a number of government departments, to support the delivery of solutions for the Windrush generation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113560>

The Windrush Lessons Learned Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874022/6.5577_HO_Windrush_Lessons_Learned_Review_WEB_v2.pdf

The Improvement Plan referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/922973/CCS001_CCS0820050750-001_Resp_to_Windrush_Lessons_CP_293_Accessible.pdf

The following two questions both received the same answer

Immigrants: Sleeping Rough

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [115576] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has in place to support non-UK nationals who are experiencing rough sleeping to ensure that they do not face deportation when new rules come into force in December 2020.

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [115577] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure non-UK nationals who are experiencing rough sleeping will not face deportation.

Reply from Chris Philp: The new Immigration Rules make provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping. The new rule will apply on a discretionary basis to non-EEA citizens from 1 December 2020 and to newly arriving EEA citizens from 1 January 2021. The provision will be used sparingly and only where individuals have repeatedly refused support offers such as accommodation and are engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

A person is expected to leave the UK if their leave is cancelled or refused. If they do not choose to leave voluntarily we may enforce their removal. They will not be subject to deportation action which is reserved for foreign national offenders with serious and persistent criminality as well as for reasons of national security.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-16/115576>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-16/115577>

Windrush Generation: Compensation

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [113613] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Windrush Compensation Scheme applicants have died since January 2019; and of those how many had received final decisions on their applications.

Reply from Priti Patel: Non-casework staff that supported the Covid Helpline included team members with specific call centre expertise and experienced call handlers. The former supported the team for a short period to set up the Helpline, including call centre systems, management data production and development of tools for call handlers. These team members were not reassigned to the Covid Helpline. Experienced Call handlers were reassigned to the team and supported the training and mentoring of new team members and receipt of customer calls. The redeployment had minimal impact on performance as team members had been upskilled to undertake a variety of duties across the team so that work could be prioritised. Intake on claims and calls was lower than forecast which enabled the support to be agreed. The support was reviewed in line with intake and team members were returned to the team in a staged process to ensure that both areas had the resource that they required.

We are aware of nine unfortunate cases to date where the claimant has passed away since January 2019, of which one claim received a final decision.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113613>

Information about the Windrush Compensation Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-windrush-compensation-scheme>

Refugees: Resettlement

Paul Blomfield (Labour) [111491] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to restart refugee resettlement programmes.

Reply from Chris Philp: Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related restrictions and pressures, both overseas and in the UK, resettlement activity is currently paused. We continue to evaluate how to respond given these restrictions and pressures, but we expect to resume refugee resettlement activity when safe to do so

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-04/111491>

Refugees: Social Security Benefits

Abena Opong-Asare (Labour) [113676] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how her Department decided on the amount of £39.60 per week as standard asylum support payments.

Reply from Chris Philp: The Home Office reviews the level of the support allowances each year to ensure that they meet the essential living needs of asylum seekers and their dependants who would otherwise be destitute.

A report published in March 2018 sets out the methodology for assessing the appropriate level of the allowances used in the annual review and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-on-review-of-cash-allowance-paid-to-asylum-seekers>

The standard allowance was raised to £39.60 per week from £37.75 per week with effect from 15 June, an increase of around 5%. This increase was significantly higher than the general rate of inflation, which Office for National Statistics data shows was only 0.5% in the 12 months period to May.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113676>

Asylum: Glasgow

Chris Stephens (SNP) [115724] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the review of asylum support and accommodation provided in Glasgow has been completed; and when she plans to publish the findings of that review.

Reply from Chris Philp: We are committed to improving accommodation and support services experienced by asylum seekers, as evidenced by the evaluation of the provisions in Glasgow during the pandemic and our commitment to act on the findings.

The evaluation is nearing completion, and the sharing of the relevant actions will be considered once the evaluation has been concluded.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-16/115724>

Asylum: Applications

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [113610] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November 2020 to Question 109520, what the monthly application processing capacity is at each additional location introduced to register asylum claims.

Reply from Chris Philp: There are no processing capacity limits on the additional temporary locations introduced to register asylum claims.

The Home Office aims to ensure all locations are sufficiently resourced to provide timely appointments to register asylum claims. Capacity is based upon demand and workforce availability at these temporary locations which enables them to cope with fluctuations in levels of asylum intake.

Asylum claims registered at these temporary regional locations are processed in accordance with policy, fulfilling the UK's statutory obligations in relation to registering asylum claims in a Covid safe environment.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113610>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109520>

The following four questions all received the same answer

Asylum: Interviews

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [109253] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which external supplier is providing staff to deliver her Department's proof of concept pilot for the outsourcing of asylum interviews.

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [109254] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria will be applied to evaluate the success of the proof of concept pilot for the outsourcing of asylum interviews.

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [109255] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's proof of concept pilot on the outsourcing of asylum interviews, what comparative assessment her Department plans to make of the (a) timeliness and (b) quality of asylum interviews conducted by outsourced staff and by staff of her Department.

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [109256] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's proof of concept pilot on the outsourcing of asylum interviews, whether asylum claimants interviewed under that proof of concept pilot will be informed that they are being interviewed by a third party rather than an employee of her Department.

Reply from Chris Philp: The Home Office is exploring many options to reduce the number of outstanding asylum claims. Alongside seeking temporary resource from within the Home Office and other government departments, we are also exploring with third-party suppliers, through a proof of concept, to test the viability of whether

they can deliver the support required as a temporary, short term measure. Asylum interviews have not been outsourced.

At this stage we are only exploring the potential feasibility of using third party resource to support asylum interviewing, however the name of the third-party supplier who is assisting with the proof of concept is commercially sensitive at this stage.

Any future service, beyond a proof of concept, would be subject to an appropriate commercial process subject to any recommendations being agreed to do so. Any future service would increase interview throughput, help rebalance the system, but also speed up decision making, reduce the number of outstanding cases and support costs.

The Home Office will evaluate the success of the proof of concept pilot by conducting an evaluation once we have completed the proof of concept exercise. The evaluation will include a lessons learnt exercise, inform findings and conclusions on any future service requirement.

To ensure external suppliers are suitably equipped to carry out the role, third-party interviewing officers will complete a bespoke training package, delivered by the qualified asylum operations training team, that has been designed specifically to meet their needs. Anyone who conducts asylum interviews receives thorough training to ensure they are fully equipped for the role. The Home Office is not planning to disclose to a claimant if they have been interviewed by a third party rather than a Home Office employee as we expect the experience to equal the existing high standards already in place.

To guarantee governance and accountability, mechanisms are in place for the oversight of third-party interviews, the department has a quality assurance process which assesses the quality of decisions, interviews and the application of Home Office policy.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109253>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109254>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109255>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109256>

Asylum: Interviews

Stuart C McDonald (SNP) [101029] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 October 2020 to Question 96931 on Asylum: Interviews, whether the pilot of third parties carrying out asylum interviews will include interviews of those who are or claim to be under 18 years; and whether additional safeguards will be put in place for such interviews carried out by third parties.

Reply from Chris Philp: Asylum Operations are exploring many options to reduce the number of outstanding asylum claims. Alongside seeking temporary resource from within the Home Office and other government departments, we are also exploring with third-party suppliers to test the viability of whether they can deliver the support required as a temporary, short term measure. Asylum interviews have not been outsourced, and at this stage we are only exploring the potential feasibility. Third party interviewing officers will complete a bespoke training package, delivered by the qualified asylum operations training team, that has been designed specifically to meet their needs. The course will include training specifically about modern slavery and safeguarding awareness. Third party interviewing officers will not be carrying out the interviews of those who are or claim to be under 18 years. Anyone who conducts asylum interviews receives thorough training to ensure they

are fully equipped for the role. Third party interviewing officers will not be carrying out the interviews of those who are or claim to be under 18 years.

To guarantee governance and accountability, mechanisms are in place for the oversight of third-party interviews, the department has a quality assurance process which assesses the quality of decisions, interviews and the application of Home Office policy.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-08/101029>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-29/96931>

Asylum: Interviews

Jessica Morden (Labour) [113032] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time was for an asylum interview after the date of an asylum claim in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

Reply from Chris Philp: The Home Office is unable to state what the average waiting time is for an asylum interview after the date of an asylum claim in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020 as the Home Office does not publish this information.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration, for main applicants only. This data can be found at Asy_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2020/list-of-tables>

The Home Office are committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay, individuals who need protection are granted asylum as soon as possible and can start to integrate and rebuild their lives, including those granted at appeal.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/113032>

Asylum: Universal Credit

Abena Opong-Asare (Labour) [113251] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reinstating the link with mainstream benefits by setting the asylum support rate at 70 percent of universal credit.

Reply from Chris Philp: The Home Office review the level of the support allowances each year to ensure that they meet the essential living needs of asylum seekers and their dependants. There are no plans to link the level of the allowances with Universal Credit rates.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/113251>

Asylum: Legal Aid Scheme

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [115578] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 November 2020 to Question 109252 on Asylum: Legal Aid Scheme, what guidance she has issued to Migrant Help on advising asylum seekers housed at the (a) Napier Barracks in Folkestone and (b) Pengally Training Camp in Pembrokeshire on where they can access legally aided immigration advice.

Reply from Chris Philp: The Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service, operated by Migrant Help is a single integrated and national service for asylum seekers.

The AIRE service will provide advice and guidance to service users on the asylum process, their rights and signposting different services.

It will also provide asylum seekers with a single point of contact, independent from

the accommodation providers and the Home Office, to report issues.

AIRE are contracted to provide information on the availability of legal advice and representation and signposting of Service User's to the Legal Aid Agency, where appropriate upon induction into temporary accommodation.

We are working with Migrant Help to pilot additional measures for legal aid signposting in temporary accommodation, including Napier and Penally.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-16/115578>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109252>

Asylum: Mobile Phones

Sarah Champion (Labour) [114198] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) process is and (b) agreed timescales are for the return of confiscated mobile phones to asylum seekers by Border Force; and what steps her Department takes to communicate that process to affected asylum seekers.

Reply from Chris Philp: Immigration Enforcement search all migrants upon arrival at the Tug Haven at Dover. In the event that a mobile phone is discovered it will be seized as part of an investigation into the organised crime group involved in the facilitation.

The migrant will be informed verbally that the phone will be kept for evidential purpose for three to six months. They are provided with a receipt and contact details. Attempts will be made, to communicate this in their first language, although this can be challenging due to external factors.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114198>

Asylum: Military Bases

Stuart C McDonald (SNP) [114918] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what Government Departments and agencies she has consulted on potential sites for asylum accommodation; what sites she has under consideration; and whether she plans to use additional Ministry of Defence sites for asylum accommodation in the 2020-21 financial year.

Reply from Chris Philp: The current global pandemic has presented us with significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation. This has included the need to source sufficient accommodation to meet demand. Following a review of available government property, the Ministry of Defence agreed to temporarily hand over two of their sites in Kent and Pembrokeshire which are now being used to house asylum seekers.

Whilst this is contingency accommodation used on a temporary basis, our primary focus remains to ensure that we maintain sufficient capacity to meet our statutory obligations during these unprecedented times and will continue to examine further opportunities which may be utilised if necessary.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114918>

Asylum: Hotels and Military Bases

Chris Stephens (SNP) [115723] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were in (a) full board hotels and (b) full board barracks in the UK on 30 October 2020; and how many hotels are being used for that purpose as of 16 November 2020.

Reply from Chris Philp: The current global pandemic has presented us with significant challenges when it comes to the provision of asylum accommodation, including sourcing sufficient suitable accommodation to meet demand.

The use of hotels and wider government facilities are a short-term measure and we

are working to move people to longer-term dispersal accommodation as soon as it becomes available.

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area, which includes those in hotel and wider government facilities. These statistics can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics which disaggregates the type of accommodation being used to accommodate asylum seekers.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-16/115723>

Asylum: Housing

Patrick Grady (SNP) [99002] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timescale is for moving asylum seekers in (a) Glasgow and (b) elsewhere in the UK from the hotel accommodation to which they were transferred back to appropriate accommodation.

Reply from Chris Philp: It is Home Office policy to move people into suitable Dispersed Accommodation (DA) once their claim for support has been assessed. The current global pandemic has presented significant challenges in relation to the provision of asylum accommodation. To mitigate these challenges, we have had to source sufficient accommodation to meet demand, including hotels.

Hotels are utilised as contingency accommodation on a temporary basis, whilst pressures in the system are addressed and hotel use will be discontinued as soon as the Home Office is able to do so. There are currently 5,168 asylum seekers accommodated in Glasgow, of which a peak of 405 were in hotels at one point, but this has now been reduced to 237 and we are aiming to get to zero as soon as practicable.

Availability of DA is crucial to plans and timelines for reductions in hotel use. A comprehensive plan for the cessation of asylum support for ineligible cases has been established with input from Local Authorities, Other Government Departments and Stakeholders to assist in this regard.

180 Local Authorities out of 414 across the United Kingdom currently allow asylum seekers to be dispersed in their area. In Scotland, only Glasgow City Council has agreed to allow the dispersal of asylum seekers within their Local Authority area. We would encourage Local Authorities across the United Kingdom, including Scotland to participate so that we can reduce the number of people accommodated in hotels and create an equitable system of asylum dispersal.

We will continue to work with Local Authorities across the UK to increase the number of DA properties available to our accommodation service providers. In Glasgow we attend fortnight partnership boards with Glasgow City Council and Scottish Government to discuss DA procurement and hotel reduction.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-05/99002>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Sleeping Rough: Deportation

Stuart C McDonald (SNP) [114916] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the new discretionary powers in the Immigration Rules to refuse or cancel a person's permission to stay in the UK on the basis of that person's rough sleeping; whether consent was sought from the devolved Administrations for the introduction or exercise of such a power where housing and homelessness is devolved; what consultation her Department conducted with police forces in (a) Scotland (b) Wales and (c) Northern

Ireland on the introduction of that power; what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of existing levels of co-ordination between police forces in England and the other UK nations in implementing that power; and what team in her Department leads on the implementation of that power.

Stuart C McDonald (SNP) [114917] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with (a) housing and (b) homelessness charities on the new discretionary powers in the Immigration Rules to refuse or cancel a person's permission to stay in the UK on the basis of that person's rough sleeping, and how she plans to work with those charities in relation to use of that power.

Reply from Chris Philp: Immigration is a reserved matter. The new Immigration Rules make provision for the refusal or cancellation of permission to stay in the UK on the basis of rough sleeping. The new rule will apply on a discretionary basis to non-EEA nationals from 1 December 2020 and to newly arriving EEA nationals from 1 January 2021. The provision will be used sparingly and only where individuals refuse to engage with the range of support mechanisms available and are repeatedly engaged in persistent anti-social behaviour.

Tackling rough sleeping is not a primary responsibility for the police unless there is crime or anti-social behaviour perpetrated by a person who is sleeping rough. The police rely upon integrated support to be in place across relevant partner agencies and services to help rough sleepers move off the streets.

The Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government are working together to encourage local authorities and approved charities to resolve the immigration status of eligible rough sleepers and unlock access to any benefits and entitlements that rough sleepers may be eligible for.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114916>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114917>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Oral Answers

Child Trafficking

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Liberal Democrat): To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the efficacy of the process for child victims of trafficking to seek leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

Reply from the Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford): My Lords, UK children continue to account for a large proportion of national referral mechanism referrals. Children from overseas who are victims of trafficking may benefit from a grant of leave to remain under a number of different routes, depending on their individual circumstances. Unaccompanied children are only ever returned to their country of origin if safe and adequate reception arrangements are in place.

Lord Roberts of Llandudno: The Minister will be aware of the ECPAT UK report in the *Guardian* which spoke of those seeking solace in this country between 2016 and 2019. Of the 4,695 victims of people trafficking who applied for status in the UK, 2,000—half of them—are likely to have been children, yet only 28 were granted leave to remain in the UK? Why only 28? Also, what has happened to the other 2,000 who applied? Does the policy remain the same, or will we have a change of policy and a bigger heart?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: I assure the noble Lord that we have a very big heart indeed; 81% of decisions on asylum claims from unaccompanied children resulted in a grant of some form of leave, 75% of which were grants of asylum or humanitarian protection. The article to which he refers is slightly misleading, in that many of the children who come to this country get leave under

asylum grants.

Lord Wigley (Plaid Cymru): My Lords, can the Minister publish and place in the Library a copy of the analysis that she has just given? She indicated that the situation is very different from the figure of 28 to which the noble Lord, Lord Roberts, referred. Given the Prime Minister's announcement last week that he wished to see a kinder, gentler, more inclusive approach by his Government, would this not be the right place to start? With Christmas coming, can the Government not give some good news to these children?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: I hope that I have explained that the broader context shows this country to be incredibly generous. The FoI might be looked at again to provide that broader context analysis. I am sure that it will be placed in the Library for noble Lords to see.

Baroness Buscombe (Conservative): Can my noble friend confirm whether the Home Office removes unaccompanied children, including victims of trafficking?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: As I said to the noble Lord, Lord Roberts of Llandudno, it is important to highlight that 75% of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who seek protection are granted it. It is our long-standing position that we will return unaccompanied children to their country of origin only where it has been established, including by the courts, that the child has no lawful basis to remain in the UK and where safe and adequate arrangements are in place in their country of origin.

Baroness Goudie (Labour): My Lords, child victims of human trafficking should always be considered for the grant of leave to remain in the United Kingdom, as was agreed some time ago, indefinitely. Their best interests should be looked at as the primary factor in determining their length of stay or whether they stay indefinitely. They are victims of a crime. They do not choose to be trafficked.

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: I am not sure what the question was. All I can say is that I absolutely agree with the premise that, first and foremost, they are victims of a crime. In supporting them, that is exactly how they should be treated—as victims first.

Lord Dholakia (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, human trafficking is more lucrative than indulging in drugs. There is substantial evidence that women are brought into this country, particularly from countries such as Romania, and used for sexual trafficking by those who exploit them. Now that we have anti-slavery legislation, what is being done to stop the vile trafficking in human beings?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: The noble Lord is absolutely right that crime is at the heart of this and that women play a big part in the lucrateness of that crime. We have our modern slavery Bill, and the Home Secretary will be having further discussions with my noble friend Lord McColl on how we deal with victims of trafficking. This country has been a very safe refuge for people genuinely fleeing traffickers.

Baroness Sanderson of Welton (Conservative): My Lords, where does the backlog on NRM cases currently stand? How long does my noble friend estimate it will take to clear?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: The single competent authority recently launched a recruitment campaign to bring in 371 new operational staff members. This will significantly reduce the decision-making period so that victims can be given certainty, which is absolutely right.

Lord Rosser (Labour): The Minister said that the figures quoted by the noble Lord, Lord Roberts, were misleading. Could she give some more specific information? How many identified child victims of trafficking were denied leave to remain by the Home Office between 2016 and 2019? Are they in the tens or the hundreds? How many identified children of human trafficking have been deported by the Home Office over the last four years?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: As I said to the noble Lord, Lord

Roberts, the grant rate is 75%. No child is deported; a child will be returned to their country of origin only if there are safe and adequate reception arrangements in place. It is important to realise that there is a far more generous leave provision under an asylum claim than under discretionary leave to remain. Discretionary leave to remain is always the last consideration and leave of asylum is quite often the first—and a far more generous—one.

Lord McColl of Dulwich (Conservative): My Lords, the importance of certainty and stability for victims of modern slavery cannot be underestimated. Not having a secure immigration status not only causes great anxiety and harms the well-being of victims but means that they are unlikely to engage with police investigations, with vital intelligence and evidence thereby being lost. When will the Government offer all confirmed victims of modern slavery a guaranteed period of leave after they leave the support of the victim care contract?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: I agree that certainty is crucial for anyone who has undergone such a trauma. A discretionary leave to remain provision is already in place. On the question of when a conclusive grant decision is made, this Government are committed to supporting people who have undergone that trauma, but the two do not necessarily go together. Sometimes they do, but we should not conflate immigration with the support needed for victims of modern slavery. They do not necessarily go hand in glove. However, I understand my noble friend's premise—that people need support when they are most vulnerable.

Lord Dubs (Labour): My Lords, the Minister referred on more than one occasion to the generosity of the British Government in that 75% of unaccompanied child refugees are given a status to remain here, usually asylum status. Does she not agree that the majority of them have been trafficked, and that it would be far better to give them safe and legal routes to the UK rather than having them become victims of traffickers, with all the risks of the dangerous journey across the channel?

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: The noble Lord goes to the heart of the problem: traffickers are at the heart of all these awful crimes, some of which result in the deaths of people crossing the channel and suchlike. Safe and legal routes are at the heart of our philosophy, as my right honourable friend the Home Secretary has laid out.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-11-16/debates/4C80A4D6-AB77-4BD7-8C6D-966D796E639A/ChildTrafficking>

The article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/oct/17/thousands-of-victims-of-child-trafficking-denied-right-to-stay-in-the-uk>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers

Visas: Musicians

The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench) [HL9826] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the music sector to discuss the requirement, particularly for self-employed musicians, of a flexible and affordable mechanism allowing short-term visa-free work travel.

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK's Points-Based Immigration System has been designed with businesses and employers given huge consideration, including the music sector.

The Visitor route includes provision for professional artists entertainers and musicians to undertake paid engagements for up to a month. We expect to treat EEA and Swiss nationals as non-visa nationals, meaning they can undertake these

engagements without needing to apply for a visa in advance of travel.

As non-visa nationals, EEA citizens will be in scope for the concession for temporary creative workers looking to remain in the UK for up to three months, without the need to apply for a visa in advance, provided they first secure a certificate of sponsorship. This is a popular and generous concession available only to non-visa nationals working in the creative industries.

We will continue to engage with the creative industries as we review the routes for creatives going forward.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/hl9826>

Immigration: European Economic Area

The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench) [HL9824] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Permitted Paid Engagement visa will be extended to citizens in the European Economic Area after the end of the transition period.

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: EEA and Swiss citizens will be able to come to the UK under the Permitted Paid Engagement visitor route in order to undertake certain paid engagements for up to a month.

We expect to treat EEA and Swiss citizens as non-visa nationals, meaning they will be able to enter the UK without the need for a visa in advance of travel if they are intending to visit. This includes the Permitted Paid Engagement visitor route.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/hl9824>

Doctors: Migrant Workers

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Liberal Democrat) [HL9867] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether overseas doctors with applications pending to register to practise medicine in the UK at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic have had their applications processed; and whether those whose applications were approved have been allowed to come to the UK.

Reply from Lord Bethell: The General Medical Council took steps to ensure that doctors' registration was not delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Anyone who submitted an application to register at the start of the pandemic, or who subsequently became eligible and applied, has had their application processed as normal.

The Department does not hold information on whether those whose applications were approved have been allowed to come to the United Kingdom.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/hl9867>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Olivia Blake (Labour) [1167] In-person immigration bail reporting – That this House notes that immigration bail reporting was suspended for the duration of the first covid-19 lockdown in the interest of public health and that individuals were permitted to, and did successfully, report safely from home via phone or text for the duration of the lockdown; further notes that despite the global pandemic, in-person reporting has resumed for the second national lockdown; and calls on the Government to immediately suspend all physical immigration bail reporting until the end of the second national lockdown, and to continue this beyond the national lockdown for any regions with additional covid-19 public health restrictions.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/57746>

Press Releases

Thousands more health workers to benefit from visa extensions

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-health-workers-to-benefit-from-visa-extensions>

Home Affairs Committee: New inquiry: The Windrush Compensation Scheme

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/132733/new-inquiry-the-windrush-compensation-scheme/>

Funding to prevent destitution during Covid-19

<https://www.gov.scot/news/funding-to-prevent-destitution-during-covid-19/>

New Publication

Court of Justice of the European Union: In the context of the civil war in Syria, there is a strong presumption that refusal to perform military service there is connected to a reason which may give rise to entitlement to recognition as a refugee

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2020-11/cp200142en.pdf>

News

Scottish Refugee Council Covid-19 resources: support, guidance and important updates

<https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/our-covid-19-resources/>

Black official quits 'racist' Windrush compensation scheme over its failure to help victims

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/windrush-compensation-scheme-alexandra-ankrah-quit-b1725038.html>

Windrush head of policy quits over 'racist' compensation scheme

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/11/18/windrush-head-policy-quits-racist-compensation-scheme/>

Black official quit 'racist' Windrush compensation scheme

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/nov/18/black-official-quit-allegedly-racist-windrush-compensation-scheme>

Government accused of 'propaganda campaign' over English Channel crossings

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/channel-crossings-migrants-lawyers-propaganda-b1725249.html>

Trafficking gang arrested after attempting to smuggle 69 illegal migrants into UK on fishing boat

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/11/18/trafficking-gang-arrested-attempting-smuggle-69-illegal-migrants/>

Serious self-harm incidents surge 2,000% in detention centre holding Channel asylum seekers

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/self-harm-detention-brook-house-asylum-seekers-b1668406.html>

Asylum seekers forced to travel miles to sign on with Home Office during lockdown
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asylum-seekers-home-office-travel-lockdown-uk-b1723721.html>

It's time to give asylum seekers the right to work
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/its-time-to-give-asylum-seekers-the-right-to-work-ffw8kb76n>

Home Office spending millions putting up migrants in hotels after surge of Channel crossings
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/11/18/home-office-spending-millions-putting-migrants-hotels-surge/>

Councils overwhelmed by asylum seekers as Home Office moves hundreds into hotels
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/11/20/councils-overwhelmed-asylum-seekers-home-office-moves-hundreds/>

Gaslighting of refugees by Mears Group Continues
<https://www.paih.org/gaslighting-of-asylum-seekers-by-mears/>

Asylum seeker 'tried to take own life' in ex-military base where hundreds are being held
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asylum-seeker-suicide-napier-barracks-home-office-b1751123.html>

Essex lorry deaths trial: Driver 'was watching Netflix' as migrants loaded into trailer
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/essex-lorry-deaths-trial-old-bailey-netflix-b1755770.html>

TOP

Community Relations

New Publication

British Sikh Report 2020: An insight into the British Sikh Community
<https://britishsikhreport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/British-Sikh-Report-2020.pdf>

TOP

Equality

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Traveller Communities: Planning Policy

Andrew Selous (Conservative): What steps [is the Minister] taking to improve planning policy for Traveller communities. [908797]

Reply from the Minister for Housing (Christopher Pincher): The Government's response to the consultation on powers for dealing with unauthorised development and encampments proposed measures related to Traveller site provision and strengthening planning enforcement powers. I can confirm to my hon. Friend that further changes to planning policy will be considered as part of our reforms to the

wider planning system set out in our White Paper, "Planning for the Future".

Andrew Selous: In parts of the country, we have the double disaster of settled residents moving away in fear and Traveller children having the worst outcomes of any group of children. Can the Minister reassure me that the review that his Department is undertaking will put an end to the unacceptable situation in which both those groups find themselves

Reply from Christopher Pincher: My hon. Friend has campaigned long and hard on these issues, as have several others in the House. He will know that the Government's overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for Travellers and their children, but we must not be blind to the rights of the settled community as well. The distress that some local communities face due to antisocial behaviour is unacceptable. Local authorities have a wide range of powers at their disposal, including the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, but I can confirm to him that I will happily consider his and other proposals as we work through the contributions to the White Paper consultation, to ensure that our planning reform also encapsulates the concerns he raises.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-16/debates/553263C8-7A64-4AAE-8F53-A25904EBDB8C/TravellerCommunitiesPlanningPolicy>

The White Paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907647/MHCLG-Planning-Consultation.pdf

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Electoral Register: Ethnic Groups

Cat Smith (Labour) [114938] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to improve voting registration rates among black people in the UK.

Reply from Chloe Smith: Electoral Registration Officers have statutory responsibility for maintaining complete and accurate electoral registers for their areas. The Government seeks to make registration as easy as possible and to work with many others to reduce any barriers to registration. We encourage everyone who is eligible to register to vote, and registering to vote has never been easier or more convenient.

The Government opposes automatic registration as it contradicts the principle that individuals are responsible for registering and that this should be done at a time and place of their choosing. Automatic registration would raise privacy and security concerns. It would also risk introducing errors and inaccuracies to the registers, creating unwarranted opportunities for fraud.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114938>

Health Services: Ethnic Groups

Virendra Sharma (Labour) [91865] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the ability of the (a) NHS and (b) CQC to ensure that BAME populations in deprived areas with (a) heart failure and (b) other long term conditions are represented in (A) audits, (B) guidelines, (C) clinical trials, and (D) medical research.

Reply from Jo Churchill: The specific assessment mentioned in the question has not been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement launched the independent NHS Race and Health Observatory with NHS Confederation this year, which will work to identify and tackle the specific health challenges facing black, Asian and minority ethnic populations in deprived areas. NHS England and NHS Improvement

has a programme of work on cardiac conditions, and in common with NHS Long Term Plan objectives, this has a focus on reducing health inequalities, including using data from clinic audits to review and improve NHS services.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-06/91865>

New Businesses: Ethnic Groups

Chi Onwurah (Labour) [114880] To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the British Business Bank report on entrepreneurship and diversity in the UK; and if he will publish the recommendations of that report.

Reply from Paul Scully: We are grateful to the British Business Bank for launching the 'Alone together: Entrepreneurship and diversity in the UK' report. The report is published in full and we are working with the British Business Bank to understand how to better address the challenges faced by BAME and women-led businesses. Government always welcomes input to ensure our support benefits these communities.

A diverse and inclusive finance ecosystem is good for entrepreneurs, companies, investors, and the society as a whole. Therefore, all of the Government's business support schemes are open to eligible businesses from all regions and backgrounds, including BAME and female entrepreneurs. The Government will continue to monitor the implementation and take up of the schemes, working with investors, lenders, representative groups across the industry and the British Business Bank. We are working with the private sector to deliver the eight initiatives of the Rose Review. Great progress has been made over the past year with NatWest and Be the Business jointly launching the Rose Review Female Entrepreneurs Mentoring Programme soon on 27 October.

More widely, the Government has set an ambition of 20,000 start-up loans being issued to Black and Minority Ethnic applicants by the end of this parliament. Of all the start-up loans issued up to September 2020, 16,159 loans (21% of lending) was issued to entrepreneurs from a BAME background and around 30,000 loans, worth over £239m, were issued to female entrepreneurs.

The Department's Ministerial team is also actively engaging with entrepreneurs from the BAME business community to better understand their concerns, including access to finance, and has undertaken 10 engagements since March 2020.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114880>

Armed Forces: Muslims

Fleur Anderson (Labour) [113661] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many British-born Muslims who joined the armed forces from (a) 2016 to (b) 2019 completed the minimum length of service before exiting the armed services.

Reply from James Heapey: In the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019, an estimated 85 personnel joined the untrained Regular Armed Forces and self-identified as British-born Muslims; personnel are not mandated to provide their religious identity. As at 1 April 2020, an estimated 35 of these personnel had not joined the full-time trained strength, either because they had left their Service prior to 31 March 2020 or because they were still in training. There is no standard minimum length of service across the Armed Forces.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113661>

Armed Forces: Muslims

Fleur Anderson (Labour) [113662] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many formal complaints were received from British-born Muslim armed forces personnel in service from (a) 2016 to (b) 2019.

Reply from Johnny Mercer: In the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019 the number of admissible Service Complaints made by British-born Muslim Armed Forces personnel was 10 (rounded). This figure is based on single Service estimates.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113662>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answer

NHS: Ethnic Groups

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green) [HL9353] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of staff working for the NHS through wholly-owned subsidiaries not being included in workforce race equality standard figures; and what plans they have to ensure those staff are included in future figures.

Reply from Lord Bethell: The Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) applies to all organisations providing National Health Service healthcare services under the full-length version of the NHS standard contract. The status and reporting by NHS trust subsidiary companies, outsourcing and subcontracting service providers is being reviewed by the WRES strategic advisory group. We anticipate the outcome of this review in the coming months and will apply recommendations to future data collections.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-20/hl9353>

Press Release

Spotlight on obstacles facing BAME women in the workplace

<https://www.parliament.scot/newsandmediacentre/116531.aspx>

New Publication

How We Get Along: The Diversity Study of England and Wales 2020

Executive Summary

<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/assets/file-downloads/How-We-Get-Along-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Report

<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/assets/file-downloads/How-We-Get-Along-Full-Report.pdf>

Appendix

<https://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/assets/file-downloads/Appendix-Complete.pdf>

Respect, equality, participation: exploring human rights education in Great Britain

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/respect_equality_participation_exploring_human_rights_education_in_great_britain.pdf

Young Women Lead Report 2019/2020

https://www.ywcascotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/YWL-Report-19_20.pdf

Alone together: Entrepreneurship and diversity in the UK

<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Alone-together-Entrepreneurship-and-diversity-in-the-UK-FINAL.pdf>

Welsh Government: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-11/black-asian-minority-ethnic-communities-contributions-cynefin-new-curriculum-working-group-interim-report_2.pdf

News

Non-white judges 'do not feel welcome on the bench'

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/non-white-judges-do-not-feel-welcome-on-the-bench-s5zp6rj2n>

Murder risk in England and Wales much higher for black people

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/17/risk-in-england-and-wales-much-higher-for-black-people>

TOP

Racism, Religious Hatred, and Discrimination

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalmbous (Labour) [114992] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle hate crime during the autumn 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Reply from Kit Malthouse: Since the outbreak of Covid-19 we know that some police forces have reported some increases in reported hate crimes, including where people of Asian origin have been targeted. These offences are completely unacceptable.

The Home Office are working closely with the National Police Chief's Council to ensure that all police forces are providing reassurance to affected communities and encouraging hate crime reporting during the pandemic. The Government are also working with civil society partners to understand what issues there are for communities.

Government continues to work with communities around the country and the police to ensure people of all backgrounds have access to the latest information and are supported through this period.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114992>

Football: Racial Discrimination

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [115017] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the level of (a) structural and (b) institutional racism within professional football.

Reply from Nigel Huddleston: Racism or any form of discrimination has no place in football or society.

The Government welcomed the launch of the Football Association's 'Football Leadership Diversity Code' to ensure English football better represents our modern and diverse society.

There is still more to do, however, and the Government continues to liaise closely with the football authorities to tackle this issue.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/115017>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Apsana Begum (Labour) [1164] Global Islamophobia – That this House draws attention to Islamophobia in the UK and worldwide; supports Islamophobia Awareness Month; draws attention to the fact that Rohingya Muslims have been driven out of Myanmar and now seek refuge in Bangladesh; that two mosques were simultaneously attacked in New Zealand in 2019; that Uyghur Muslims are being persecuted in Xinjiang, China; that German Muslims were killed in a far right attack in February 2020; that two women were stabbed in a racially-aggravated attack in Paris in October 2020, in a country that in 2010 banned the wearing of niqab in public spaces; recognises that Islamophobia is prevalent in the UK, with year on year figures for racially or religiously aggravated hate crimes rising by 34 per cent in June 2020; that the UK Government's Prevent programme is viewed by many to foster discrimination against Muslims; recognises that these incidents together illustrate the global nature of Islamophobia, and are only the most high profile examples of it; believes that the Government must stand up to Islamophobia in the UK and abroad; that it must support those countries and groups that are victims of racism; that it must seek to diversify curriculums in our schools to reflect the lived experience of all pupils, in order to combat racism at as early a stage as is possible; and calls on the Government to investigate the cause of rising hate crime, in order to instigate new policy to tackle it.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/57744>

Press Releases

Lack of hate crime recording means victims and their needs too often remain invisible, OSCE's human rights office says

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/470415>

No Place for Racism at United Nations, Secretary-General Stresses, Describing It as 'Scourge of the World' at Launch of 'Awareness and Action' Campaign

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sqsm20428.doc.htm>

New Publications

OSCE: 2019 Hate Crime Data

<https://hatecrime.osce.org/what-do-we-know>

Online bullying in England and Wales: year ending March 2020

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/onlinebullyinginenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020/pdf>

News

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf ready to make U-turn on Hate Crime Bill

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/crime/justice-secretary-humza-yousaf-ready-make-u-turn-hate-crime-bill-3043631>

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf on how personal experience is driving him to get hate crime bill into law

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/insight-justice-secretary-humza-yousaf-how-personal-experience-driving-him-get-hate-crime-bill-law-3043630>

Hate crime bill will not stifle speech, insists trans activist

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/absurd-to-say-hate-crime-bill-will-kill-free-speech-claims-trans-rights-activist-wqgbzbl37>

Irvine Welsh: Scotland's hate crime bill is open to abuse

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-scotland-54971646>

Man denies sending tweet linking Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf to terrorism

<https://www.faith-matters.org/man-denies-sending-tweet-linking-justice-secretary-humza-yousaf-to-terrorism/>

Jeremy Corbyn's lawyers challenge Labour over MP suspension

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-55001462>

Jeremy Corbyn: Labour readmits ex-leader after anti-Semitism row

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-54976558>

Jeremy Corbyn returns to the Labour fold following another anti-Semitism row

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18878643.jeremy-corbyn-returns-labour-fold-following-another-anti-semitism-row/>

Jeremy Corbyn: Former Labour Party leader to have whip suspended for three months

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/jeremy-corbyn-former-labour-party-leader-have-whip-suspended-three-months-3041843>

Former leader Jeremy Corbyn to be 'readmitted to Labour Party' after suspension

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/former-leader-jeremy-corbyn-be-readmitted-labour-party-after-suspension-3039013>

Jeremy Corbyn states regret over anti-semitism as Labour considers his suspension

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/jeremy-corbyn-states-regret-over-23023609>

Jeremy Corbyn says he did not intend to 'belittle concerns' about antisemitism in Labour

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/jeremy-corbyn-suspension-labour-antisemitism-b1724193.html>

Tory MP Michael Fabricant to face no further action from party for 'Anglo-Muslim relations' tweet

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/michael-fabricant-anglo-muslim-relations-b1740019.html>

Counterterror police chief warns of 'new and worrying trend' of teenage neo-Nazis

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/terrorism-uk-neo-nazis-teenagers-arrests-b1724480.html>

Facebook condemned for hosting neo-Nazi network with UK links

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/nov/22/facebook-condemned-for-hosting-neo-nazi-network-with-uk-links>

Covid: How racism could hinder take-up of a vaccine by Black people

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/covid-how-racism-could-hinder-take-vaccine-black-people-dr-gwenetta-curry-3039505>

Manchester Uni vice-chancellor apologises over 'racial profiling' incident

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-manchester-55005343>

Calls for Manchester University vice-chancellor to quit after racism row

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/nov/17/calls-for-manchester-university-vice-chancellor-to-quit-after-racism-row>

Manchester University student 'traumatised' by 'racial profiling' incident

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54954602>

Working from home could lead to more prejudice, report warns

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54937713>

Black applicants least likely to be offered PhD places

<https://www.bbc.com/news/education-54934953>

'I hold no grudges': Ian Wright forgives football fan who racially abused him

<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/news/ian-wright-podcast-racism-football-fan-b1745405.html>

Devon Malcolm leads call for independent ECB inquiry amid claims black and Asian umpires held back by cronyism and racism

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/cricket/2020/11/17/devon-malcolm-leads-call-independent-ecb-inquiry-amid-claimsblack/>

Wilfred Zaha urges educators to teach children about racial issues and help curb online hate

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2020/11/16/wilfred-zaha-urges-educators-teach-children-racial-issues-help/>

Two cricket umpires accuse the ECB of institutional racism, bullying and cronyism

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/cricket/2020/11/17/two-cricket-umpires-accuse-ecb-institutional-racism-bullying/>

ECB calls review in face of umpires' accusation of institutional racism

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/nov/17/england-wales-cricket-board-announce-review-in-face-of-umpires-accusation-of-institutional-racism>

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Other Scottish Parliament and Government

Press Release

'Positive view' needed to tackle Scotland's challenges of the next decade

<https://www.parliament.scot/newsandmediacentre/116524.aspx>

New Publication

Scotland 2030: a positive view of our future

https://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Scotland2030Report_APositiveViewOfTheFuture.pdf

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Other UK Parliament and Government

UK Parliament, House of Lords Oral Answers

Integrated Communities Strategy

Baroness Cox (Crossbench): To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards their commitment in the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*, published on 14 March 2018, to “explore the legal and practical challenges of limited reform relating to the law on marriage and religious weddings”.

Reply from the Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Stewart of Dirleton): [*Inaudible*—difficulties in addressing this issue that mean we are doing so with the greatest care. The Law Commission separately is looking at aspects of the problem and has consulted with a wide range of groups with an interest. The Government continue the exploration both of limited reform and of non-legislative options. Any proposals affecting how religious groups are permitted to conduct marriages must be thoroughly assessed for fairness.

Baroness Cox: My Lords, I remain deeply concerned, because there is no evidence of any significant progress since the publication of the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* over two years ago. Given the strong recommendations of the Casey review, the sharia law review, the new Civitas report and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the Private Members' Bills I have submitted since 2011, with cross-party support and the support of Muslim women's groups, will the Minister give an assurance at last that government legislation will be introduced as a matter of urgency? So many Muslim women in this country are suffering in ways which are totally unacceptable and, as I always say, would make our suffragettes turn in their graves.

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, my noble friend's concern about this matter is indeed a matter of record. The Government are aware that the Law Commission is tasked with investigating the matter and reporting. Its report is anticipated by the middle of next year. The Government's manifesto commitment was to explore the matters; that exploration will be based upon the thorough and meticulous research which is being carried out.

Viscount Bridgeman (Conservative): The Government previously assured the House that there is no need for a change in the law because all citizens can access their rights according to law. Yet the chasm between the de jure situation and the de facto reality is an abyss into which countless women are falling and suffering as a result. Is the Minister able to assure the House that repeated commitments to “continue the exploration” of reform are not used to kick these issues into the long grass?

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, the Government have no intention of kicking the matter into the long grass. The Law Commission's report is anticipated in the second part of next year. In the mean- time, the Government are contemplating also the introduction of interim measures and continue to explore the matter themselves, alongside the work being carried out by the Law Commission.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: My Lords, the Government have a clear responsibility to protect the legal rights of vulnerable girls entering into that religious marriage. Simply

saying all citizens can access their legal rights is like saying that all citizens have a right to dine in the Dorchester. Will the Minister agree that, while religious ceremonies should be respected, both marriage partners should be made aware of the law of the land on gender equality and women's rights?

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, I agree with the noble Lord's point. As my predecessor, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Keen of Elie, has remarked in your Lordships' House in the past, the matter is a social and educational question as much as it is a legal one. It is in order to establish the extent of the problem that the Government are continuing to await the findings of the Law Commission and to look in detail at the meticulous research being carried out.

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede (Labour): My Lords, does the Minister understand that it is relatively common for couples to come to family courts in England and Wales saying that they are married under sharia law, only to be told that the court does not recognise this status of marriage? The Government plan to support awareness programmes arising out of Dame Louise Casey's review of marriage published in 2015. Can the Minister tell us what steps have been taken to provide such educational material in the citizens advice bureaux and in the family courts across the country?

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, sharia law is not part of the legal system of England and Wales, and that has been made clear in the past. In relation to the provision of material via the citizens advice bureaux, to which the noble Lord refers, I will write to him about the availability of that material and how it is being promulgated through these bodies.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): Last month, I attended a nikah ceremony at the impressive Cambridge eco mosque, and I was impressed by the young imam there, who made it perfectly clear that he would refuse to perform a nikah for non-British couples and those who had not already taken part in a legal marriage in this country. Are the Government satisfied that this good practice is happening in all religious ceremonies across the country?

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, the point raised by the noble Baroness is important. To repeat the terms of a previous answer, that matter is part of the social and educational function, which the Government are exploring.

Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated): My Lords, for the record, may I set straight that it is not sharia marriages but sharia-compliant marriages, or religious ceremonies? My generation of women understood implicitly that a valid marriage is a registered one. This appears not to be the case for a significant proportion of my daughter's generation, because the law has allowed this ambiguous anomaly to continue. The Government are fully cognisant that up to 100,000 religious ceremonies do not proceed to civil register. Will the Minister undertake to address this at the Government's earliest convenience, through a small amendment to the Marriage Act, which has been called for for some time by leading organisations? That would not only safeguard women but empower women with their full rights.

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, I am obliged to the noble Baroness for her correction. With regard to a change in the law, it is precisely to avoid the creation of inconsistency and anomaly that the Government are waiting for the conclusion of the Law Commission's investigations and their own work before considering whether legislation is appropriate.

Baroness Sanderson of Welton (Conservative): My Lords, there seem to be complex reasons behind the number of marriages that are not legally binding. Does my noble and learned friend agree that any way forward must take account of these issues?

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: Some couples have a legally binding religious marriage, while others do not, whether by choice or because they did not know that they could. We need a much better understanding of the factors behind this because, without such real insight into these matters, no solution can change

what is happening or be sensitive to the issues facing individuals and the differing voices within communities. That is the Government's approach.

Baroness Warsi (Conservative): My Lords, the honourable Member for the Medway area recently introduced the Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill in the other place. It would mean that people who wished to be wedded at a humanist ceremony would not have to attend a registry office afterwards to make the marriage legally binding. Will the Government support this Bill? Secondly, nearly a decade after the issue of unregistered Muslim marriages was first discussed by a Conservative-led Government, how do the Government reconcile their stated support for the rights and protection of women with their failure to act on this issue for over 10 years?

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, the Government invited the Law Commission to make recommendations about how marriage by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent. The Government will decide on provision on the basis of those recommendations. The Law Commission published a consultation paper on 3 September as part of its review, and welcomes responses from all.

Lord Beith (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, does the Minister appreciate that the right to a legally recognised marriage in their own place of worship was secured after a long struggle by non-conformists in England and Wales, and that nothing should be done to diminish that right or, indeed, to prevent us extending it to other groups? But what constitutes a legally valid religious wedding, and what rights, protections and obligations in law it confers, also needs to be clear. Nobody should be tricked, misled or pressured into a form of marriage that is not valid in law.

Reply from Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, I wholeheartedly endorse the noble Lord's observation that nobody should be tricked or compelled into a marriage that is not recognised by law. To continue the theme of my earlier answers, the Government are very concerned that, as well as being an opportunity for legal reform, these matters are socially and educationally important, and the Government continue to investigate the social and educational reasons why people enter into marriages that are not valid.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-11-17/debates/584CAB3C-C60C-4610-85BD-A08E754ABE8C/IntegratedCommunitiesStrategy>

The Green Paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/law-commission-begins-work-on-weddings-reform/>

and

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/#weddings-consultation-paper>

The Casey Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

The Sharia Law review referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678478/6.4152_HO_CPFGR_Report_into_Sharia_Law_in_the_UK_WEB.pdf

The Civitas report referred to above can be read at

<http://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/A-Fallen-through-the-cracks.pdf>

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolution referred to above can be read at

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=25353>

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Health Information: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

NHS

NHS Inform (Scotland)

Latest guidance about COVID-19 from NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government, including social distancing and stay at home advice.

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

Protect-Scot contact tracing app

<https://protect.scot/how-it-works>

Healthcare for overseas visitors

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/healthcare-for-overseas-visitors>

Healthcare for refugees and asylum seekers

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/healthcare-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

NHS Near Me (Scotland)

Near Me is a video consulting service that enables people to have health and social care appointments from home or wherever is convenient. All you need is a device for making video calls like a smartphone and an internet connection. Near Me is a secure form of video consulting approved for use by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland.

<https://www.nearme.scot/>

NHS (England and Wales)

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Questions: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous (Labour): A recent study of 18 million people in *The Lancet* shows that black, Asian and minority ethnic people are twice as likely as white people to catch coronavirus and more likely to go into intensive care. Lead researchers have suggested that structural inequalities, not genetics, are the key differential, so how will the Prime Minister redress structural inequalities as the vaccine is rolled out? [909055]

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point, and we are thinking about this issue in government right now. As he knows, in response to the early data that we saw about the impact on black and minority ethnic groups, we brought forward enhanced testing procedures for particularly vulnerable groups—those who are exposed to a heavy viral load, perhaps in the course of their work. There are other factors at play in the prevalence of the disease among black and minority ethnic groups. I am sure that the point he makes will be among the considerations that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation takes into account in the course of deciding how to roll out the vaccine and where it should go first. He makes an important point.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-18/debates/9674CA7A-A00C-4C9F-973F-61C7C9B01152/Engagements#contribution-396F0289-AAE9-4FC6-972C-7E1C5A5BF7AF>

The study referred to above can be read at

Places of Worship: Covid-19

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative): What assessment the Government have made of the transmission rate of covid-19 in places of worship where social distancing restrictions were in place. [908778]

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Kelly Tolhurst): We are grateful to our faith communities for their efforts in ensuring that their places of worship are as covid-secure as possible. However, the view of the scientific community, including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, is that there is a greater risk of the virus spreading indoors and where people gather. Regrettably, this means that places of worship are currently closed for communal prayer but remain open for individual prayer.

Andrew Rosindell: ... Given the serious implications of criminalising worship and the hardship it has caused churches and religious communities, will the Government commit to publishing their evidence base and to consulting fully and widely with faith groups before any future decisions on applying restrictions to worship are made?

Reply from Kelly Tolhurst: I do not underestimate the concern that this has caused for our religious communities, but the evidence from the scientific community, including SAGE, shows that the virus spreads quicker indoors and where people gather and interact. We are incredibly grateful to those who have taken part in the places of worship taskforce for their support and advice. We continue to call on their expertise and that of all major faith groups ahead of the regulations ending on 2 December, and we will continue to have those conversations over the next two weeks.

Janet Daby (Labour): The Government created a places of worship taskforce in May, but the taskforce has been ignored and has repeatedly not been consulted on these very consequential decisions during the pandemic. Does the Minister agree that our people of faith do not deserve to be an afterthought for the Government but must instead be respected, and will she commit to the Government meeting weekly with the taskforce to avoid this problem being repeated?

Reply from Kelly Tolhurst: I have to disagree strongly with the hon. Lady's assertion that the taskforce has not been consulted. It has been led by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We have listened to the views of the community leaders and individuals around the table, and evidence has been shared. I can agree to her call for a weekly meeting, because the taskforce already meets weekly.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-16/debates/903F68A8-D2A8-413F-8919-35E5AD808368/PlacesOfWorshipCovid-19>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Ethnic Groups: Coronavirus

Rachel Reeves (Labour) [106979] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to (a) inform and (b) engage Black and ethnic minority communities to ensure that those communities can access and engage covid-19 self-isolation support where applicable.

Reply from Helen Whately: When an individual is required by National Health Service Test and Trace to self-isolate, financial support is available, subject to certain eligibility criteria, through the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme. This scheme is administered through local authorities, enabling tailoring of

messaging and communication to best support and engage local communities. The NHS Test and Trace service also helps signpost people who need support while self-isolating to local authority helplines and to the NHS Volunteers service.

At both the testing and contact tracing stages, there are also services in place to provide real time translation in a range of languages.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-21/106979>

Churches: Coronavirus

Chris Green (Conservative) [113564] To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Commissioners have made of the effect of churches on community health and wellbeing through their provision of food banks, youth services, mental health services, addiction support services and other community services during the covid-19 outbreak and associated lockdowns.

Reply from Andrew Selous: The parish church is a key source of community support and I commend the work of clergy and volunteers across the country during this very challenging time.

Recent research published by Theos and the Church Urban Fund

<https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf>

and separately by the National Churches Trust

<https://www.houseofgood.nationalchurchestrust.org/>

has shown the substantial social and economic contribution parishes, and cathedrals make to their local communities.

Across the dioceses of the Church of England churches are operating 35,000 based projects which serve the needs of their communities, I am pleased to say that many of these have continued to operate during the pandemic within the guidelines set out by Government on Covid-19, providing crisis support such as foodbanks, bereavement counselling, night shelters, debt relief advice, as well as project work to combat modern slavery and support victim of domestic abuse.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113564>

Scottish Government Press Releases

Updated COVID-19 protection levels supported

<https://www.gov.scot/news/updated-covid-19-protection-levels-supported/>

COVID-19 vaccines update

<https://www.gov.scot/news/covid-19-vaccines-update/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on travel and transport

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-travel-and-transport/>

Scottish Government Publications

Coronavirus (COVID-19): daily data for Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-data-for-scotland/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): trends in daily data

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-trends-in-daily-data/>

Public attitudes to Coronavirus: November update

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-attitudes-coronavirus-november-update/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update: First Minister's statement – Friday 20 November 2020

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-update-first-ministers-statement-friday-20-november-2020/>

COVID Vaccine delivery: Health Secretary's statement Thursday November 2020

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-vaccine-delivery-statement-health-secretary/>

UK Government Press Release

New film shows importance of ventilation to reduce spread of COVID-19

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-film-shows-importance-of-ventilation-to-reduce-spread-of-covid-19>

News

Travel ban exemptions published amid 'legal questions'

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18884825.travel-ban-exemptions-published-amid-legal-questions/>

MSPs vote for travel ban for Scots despite 'grave doubts' and legality concerns

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/msps-vote-travel-ban-scots-despite-grave-doubts-and-legality-concerns-3041786>

Does the travel ban breach the human rights of Scots?

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/coronavirus/analysis-does-travel-ban-breach-human-rights-scots-3041004>

Covid in Scotland: First vaccine delivery due next month

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-55005494>

Police write to faith leaders warning of the dangers of hosting religious gatherings during lockdown

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/11/16/police-write-faith-leaders-warning-dangers-hosting-religious/>

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Bills in Progress

** new or updated this week

Children (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/children-scotland-bill>

Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/domestic-abuse-protection-scotland-bill>

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

**** Scottish General Election (Coronavirus) Bill**

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill>

Press Release

<https://www.parliament.scot/newsandmediacentre/116511.aspx>

SPICe briefing

<https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdneq.azureedge.net/published/2020/11/17/Scottish-General-Election--Coronavirus--Bill/SB%2020-74.pdf>

Call for evidence

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/sppa/scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill/>

Bill as introduced

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill/introduced/bill-as-introduced-scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill/introduced/explanatory-notes-scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill.pdf>

Policy Memorandum

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill/introduced/policy-memorandum-scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill.pdf>

Financial Memorandum

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill/introduced/financial-memorandum-scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill.pdf>

Delegated Powers Memorandum

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill/introduced/delegated-powers-memorandum-scottish-general-election-coronavirus-bill.pdf>

Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-scotland-bill>

UK Parliament

Asylum Seekers (Accommodation Eviction Procedures) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2699>

Asylum Seekers (Permission to Work) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2638>

Asylum Support (Prescribed Period) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2535>

European Citizens' Rights Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2704>

Illegal Immigration (Offences) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2660>

Immigration Control (Gross Human Rights Abuses) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2574>

Immigration (Health and Social Care Staff)

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2770>

Marriage (Approved Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2538>

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (Legal Advice and Appeals) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2611>

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Consultations

** new or updated this week

Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK (closing date 30 November 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence>

**** The Windrush Compensation Scheme** (closing date 16 December 2020)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/317/the-windrush-compensation-scheme/>

Hate crime laws [in England and Wales] (closing date 24 December 2020)

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

Future Arrangements for Early Medical Abortion at Home (closing date 5 January 2021)

<https://consult.gov.scot/population-health/early-medical-abortion-at-home/>

Tackling modern slavery [in Northern Ireland] (closing date 7 January 2021)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-tackling-modern-slavery>

Your Police 2020-2021 (closing date 31 March 2021)

Police Scotland recognise the importance of understanding the views and priorities of Scotland's diverse communities. This is especially important during the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This survey is an opportunity for you to give your views and opinions during these challenging times, and beyond.

<https://consult.scotland.police.uk/surveys/your-police-2020-2021/>

Equality and human rights impact of Covid-19 (closing date not stated)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/114975.aspx>

Experiences of Islamophobia (closing date not stated)
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/amina-islamophobia>

Raising skills and standards of supporters of refugees and asylum seekers
(closing date not stated)
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3R8SDYN>

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Job Opportunities

[Click here](#) to find out about job opportunities.

[Click here](#) to find out about Graduate, Modern, and Foundation Apprenticeship opportunities.

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Funding Opportunities

** new or updated this week

Grants online: Coronavirus

A number of Community Foundations and other organisations have launched funding programmes to assist local organisations in responding to the challenges of the Coronavirus Pandemic. To read a list of organisations and the types of funding they have made available, see <https://www.grantsonline.org.uk/coronavirus.html>

**** closes this week!**

Scotland's Winter Festivals: Acts of Kindness Fund

Closing date: 23 November 2020

BEMIS funding to encourage community groups to come together to celebrate St Andrew's Day by performing an act of kindness in their community – something that celebrates and promotes inclusion, diversity, and togetherness. For information see <https://bemis.org.uk/swf/acts-of-kindness/>

Resilient & Inclusive Communities Fund

Running until March 2021

BEMIS grants of up to £3,000, in partnership with Foundation Scotland, for eligible local community groups and organisations supporting disadvantaged and excluded communities (suffering with domestic abuse; mental health; access to food, shelter and amenities; poverty, access to services/care). For information see <https://bemis.org.uk/ricfund/>

Covid-19 Transition Fund

Closing date not stated

Ethnic Minority National Resilience Network funding for organisations to respond to the changing needs of their members in a sustainable way. Funding priorities will be to ensure that community organisations can:

- set up sustainable networks that support access to food and sustenance needs initially up until August 2020
- support their communities to be connected to services, information and communication

- provide services to tackle isolation, such as online events and befriending

For information and to apply see

<https://bemis.org.uk/emnrrn/transition-fund/>

Places of Worship Fund

Running until mid January 2021

Interfaith Scotland grants of up to £500 for places of worship that are struggling to meet the safety requirements of re-opening their buildings and safely holding services within Government Guidelines. With discretion the funds can also be used to assist in keeping open places that have managed their initial outlay with regard to safely reopening their place of worship but are now struggling to keep up the measures required to stay open.

This fund will help places of worship to:

- **Re-open** safely, including deep clean premises, provide appropriate signage and ensure that all volunteers and staff have appropriate training and PPE.
- **Keep open** places of worship that are struggling with the on-going health and safety costs during the pandemic
- **Remain connected** with those still too vulnerable to come to a place of worship – this may be through regular mail outs, telephone calls or the provision of mobile devices to allow those without digital access to keep in touch
- **Advancing Equality and Tackling Loneliness** Supporting faith communities to open the doors of their places of worship in a safe and inclusive manner will enable thousands of lonely and isolated people across Scotland to re-connect with their wider community.

The funding will be available for faith communities and community groups that utilise places of worship only, and will be offered to faith communities that are members and associate members of Interfaith Scotland in the first instance. For full details and an application form contact Frances Hume frances@interfaithscotland.org

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Events, Conferences, and Training

** new or updated this week

**** this week!**

Windrush engagement events

25 November 2020 (online, 4.30–6.00)

15 December 2020 (online, 4.30–6.00)

UK Government events to raise awareness of the Windrush Compensation Scheme and the work of the Windrush Taskforce, and provide information on who may be eligible for the Windrush Compensation Scheme, what kinds of losses and impacts it covers and how to apply. For information see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/windrush-engagement-events>

Scots Charity Law Engagement: Transparency & Accountability

2 December 2020 (online, 1.00–2.30)

9 December 2020 (online, 1.00–2.30)

Scottish Government event in partnership with ACOSVO and SCVO to hear views on enhancing transparency and accountability in Scottish charities, and the possibility of increased regulatory powers for the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. For information about the 2 December event see <https://tinyurl.com/yx9pdavx> and the 9 December event see <https://tinyurl.com/yxadkkyo>

Interpreting Culture – Improving Cross-Cultural Communication

9 December 2020 (online, 1.00–4.00)

Interfaith Scotland course to explore how culture forms a lens through which we interpret each other's behaviour, and learn how to improve our inter-cultural communication. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/y2yr6qaw> or contact Jamie Spurway jamie@interfaithscotland.org

Rights and Entitlements of EEA Nationals

13 January 2021 (online, 10.00–12.00)

3 March 2021 (online, 10.00–12.00)

Positive Action in Housing course to provide information about fundamental issues of housing, homelessness and welfare entitlements of EEA nationals and look at how service users might prepare themselves to avoid the threats of Brexit. For information contact training@positiveactionh.org or see <https://www.paih.org/our-services/training/>

Interpreting Culture

19 and 20 January 2021 (two day course) (online, 10.30–12.30)

Positive Action in Housing course to examine where culture comes from and look at examples of its extraordinary diversity, and focus on interactions with people from other cultures to improve understanding, confidence and trust. For information contact training@positiveactionh.org or see <https://www.paih.org/our-services/training/>

20 January 2021 (online, 10.00–12.00)

10 March 2021 (online, 10.00–12.00)

Positive Action in Housing course to explore how the asylum system works from the perspective of a claimant and the process involved in making a claim for asylum. The course will also explore the barriers faced by both refugees and asylum seekers building a new life in Scotland and their respective entitlement to services. For information contact training@positiveactionh.org or see <https://www.paih.org/our-services/training/>

No Recourse to Public Funds

3 February 2021 (online, 10.00–12.00)

17 March 2021 (online, 10.00–12.00)

Positive Action in Housing course to help frontline workers identify a tenant's current status, clarify what this means in terms of access to public funds and plan effective support where difficulties arise. For information contact training@positiveactionh.org or see <https://www.paih.org/our-services/training/>

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Useful Links

Scottish Parliament <http://www.parliament.scot/>

Scottish Government <https://www.gov.scot/>

UK Parliament <http://www.parliament.uk/>

GovUK (links to UK Government Departments) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations>

European Parliament <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

One Scotland <http://onescotland.org/>

Scottish Refugee Council <http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk>

Refugee Survival Trust <https://www.rst.org.uk/>

Freedom from Torture <https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/>

Interfaith Scotland <https://interfaithscotland.org/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en>

Equality Advisory Support Service <http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/>

Scottish Human Rights Commission <http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/>

ACAS <http://www.acas.org.uk/>

SCVO <https://scvo.org.uk/>

Volunteer Scotland <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/>

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) <https://www.oscr.org.uk/>

Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel <https://www.goodfundraising.scot/>

Disclosure Scotland <https://www.mygov.scot/working-jobs/finding-a-job/disclosure/>

Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services

<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/disclosure-services/>

BBC News <https://www.bbc.com/news>

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SCoJeC
Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities

Representing, connecting, and supporting Jewish people in Scotland



The **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC)** is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland. It advances public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community, and also works in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality. (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438) <https://www.scojec.org/>



BEMIS is the Scottish national Ethnic Minorities led umbrella body, supporting, empowering, and building the capacity of minority third sector community organisations. As a strategic partner with Government, it is proactive in influencing the development of race equality policy in Scotland, and helps develop and progress multicultural Scotland, active citizenship, democracy, and Human Rights Education at the Scottish, UK, and European levels. (Scottish Charity, no. SC027692) <http://www.bemis.org.uk/>



The **Scottish Government** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and social justice for all those who live in Scotland. **One Scotland** is the Scottish Government campaign designed to tackle racism. It aims to raise awareness of racist attitudes, highlight its negative impact and recognise the valuable contributions that other cultures have made to our society – and make Scotland no place for racism. <http://www.gov.scot/>

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