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Immigration and Asylum

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Nationality and Borders Bill

Maggie Chapman (Green): To ask the First Minister what impact the United Kingdom Government's Nationality and Borders Bill will have on devolved functions. (S6F-00675)

Reply from the First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government has profound concerns about the bill. We are currently considering its potential impact on areas that are devolved. If we conclude that there is an impact on the legislative competence of this Parliament, we will lodge a legislative consent memorandum, setting out the relevant provisions. There is no doubt, however, that the bill will have significant impacts on devolved services, local authorities and communities.

The Scottish ministers have written to the UK Government in relation to the bill five

times, outlining our significant concerns, along with the Welsh Government, which shares those concerns.

I note that the House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights said yesterday that the reforms to the asylum system that are proposed in the bill “would fail to meet the UK’s human rights obligations and risk exacerbating the already unacceptable backlog”.

We will continue to urge the UK Government to introduce a humane, effective and efficient system that delivers for people living in Scotland, including those who are fleeing war and persecution.

Maggie Chapman: The Prime Minister’s intention to use the military to prevent asylum seekers reaching the UK is deeply immoral, as is the possibility of trading access to Covid vaccines for the right to open detention centres in other countries.

The First Minister will be aware of the appalling circumstances faced by many asylum seekers in Scotland, including in Aberdeen, in my region. They are accommodated in hotels, but not given basic support or things like toiletries, culturally sensitive food, language classes and so on. Although we do not have the powers to counter those racist policies, we can make sure that asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland are treated better.

I am sure that the First Minister will join me in condemning the plans by the Prime Minister and his cruel and inhumane Home Office. Will she also outline what lessons have been learned from the tragic death at the Park Inn in Glasgow, and say what more we can do to prevent the growth in the use of institutional accommodation across Scotland and improve the support available through local authorities so that asylum seekers are treated with dignity?

Reply from the First Minister: There is a lot of detail in that question and I undertake to ask the relevant minister to write to Maggie Chapman with more detailed answers than time will allow me to give today, including on the question of lessons learned from the dreadful circumstances around the Park Inn in Glasgow. The UK Government’s plans to divert vessels in the channel are dangerous. It is important that we are all clear that they will significantly increase risk to life. Médecins Sans Frontières has stated: “Pursuing a policy of forced returns and engaging in pushback tactics is dangerous, inhumane and is in breach of international law. It puts lives at risk at sea.”

People seeking asylum in the UK should be accommodated in communities where they can begin to rebuild their lives and have access to essential services and the support and advocacy that they need, and so that they can make a contribution to those communities. The UK Government is failing to provide that.

The Home Office has not yet shared its review of the tragedy at the Park Inn but, as I said, I will ask the Scottish Government minister responsible to write to the member with further details on that.

The comments that we saw at the weekend about the use of the military—a bit like the comments on the BBC—were an attempt to divert attention from the self-inflicted troubles of the Prime Minister. We should not be using the BBC, and we should absolutely not be using refugees and asylum seekers, in that way. I say “we”, but it is the UK Government that is using refugees and asylum seekers in that way. It is utterly despicable and is another sign of the moral decay at the heart of the UK Government.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13526&i=122778#ScotParlOR>

Afghan Refugees Resettlement

Katy Clark (Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its discussions with the United Kingdom Government regarding people in Afghanistan

seeking resettlement in the UK who could be relocated in Scotland if they already have existing family connections, including in relation to correspondence from MSPs on this matter. (S6O-00644)

Reply from the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): ... We engage regularly with the UK Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, individual local authorities and other partners to ensure that people are provided with the safety and security that they need in order to rebuild their lives in Scotland.

The UK Government is responsible for refugee resettlement and relocation, and the Home Office is responsible for the provision of accommodation. However, we continue to request that consideration is given to preferences, including where there are family and other connections, wherever possible.

Scotland is committed to playing its part in welcoming people fleeing Afghanistan. I am delighted that all Scotland's 32 local authorities have confirmed their participation in the scheme.

Katy Clark: My experience—and I suspect that it is the same for other members—is that the Home Office is not responding to correspondence from MSPs and MPs who are acting on behalf of individuals who are trying to get out of Afghanistan. An investigation by Open Democracy in December found that more than 99 per cent of calls to the UK Government helpline were unanswered and only 5 per cent of callers received the necessary assistance. Will the cabinet secretary use his role to take that up with the Home Office and ask for more resources to be put into that work?

Reply from Angus Robertson: The situation with the Home Office is hugely disappointing. People who find themselves in such circumstances deserve respect—their situation should be dealt with expeditiously and they deserve consideration and empathy.

I encourage Katy Clark and any other members who have had such experiences in relation to constituency cases—it is not rare, unfortunately—to forward on any constituent correspondence to me and I will be happy to take it up with the Home Office. However, I have to say that I am not brimming with confidence that the Home Office will miraculously change its course in dealing with such matters.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13526&i=122793#ScotParlOR>

Information about the Open Democracy report referred to above can be read at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/99-of-calls-to-uks-afghanistan-evacuation-helpline-were-never-answered/>

Afghan Refugees Resettlement

Mercedes Villalba (Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its discussions with the United Kingdom Government regarding the resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees who may be resettled in Scotland. (S6O-00647)

Reply from the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government met with Victoria Atkins, the UK Minister for Afghan Resettlement on 10 January to discuss the launch of the UK's Afghan citizens resettlement scheme. At that meeting, the cabinet secretary raised the issue of property offers by local authorities that are waiting to be matched with Afghan families and the need to make that happen as soon as possible. She reiterated that funding provided by the UK Government to support Afghan families in Scotland needs to accurately reflect the need in Scotland.

It was agreed that more regular four-nation engagement will take place to discuss Afghan resettlement across the UK, and I know that the cabinet secretary is looking forward to that.

Mercedes Villalaba: The United Nations High Commission for Refugees can only register Afghan citizens as refugees or asylum seekers once they are outside Afghanistan and in another country. However, there are still those in Afghanistan who remain at severe risk from the Taliban, especially if they are caught trying to travel to Iran or Pakistan to seek asylum through the UNHCR. Will the Scottish Government push the UK Government to clarify which safe routes will be available through the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme, particularly for those who would be at risk if they travelled to another country to seek asylum?

Reply from Angus Robertson: That is an entirely reasonable suggestion, although we also need to bear in mind that some of the routes for people leaving Afghanistan are cloaked in secrecy so that the Taliban are not able to pursue those seeking refuge in other countries. I will consider the member's request. We are in regular touch with the Home Office. We would all welcome having greater clarity on that, although we also accept that there is necessary secrecy around some of the routes through which refugees are safely able to get out of Afghanistan in the current circumstances.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13526&i=122794#ScotParlOR>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Sandesh Gulhane (Conservative) [S6M-02860] Scottish Jewish Archives Centre Heritage Walking Trail – That the Parliament commends all those involved in the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre at the Garnethill Synagogue in Glasgow for the creation of a new heritage walking trail; understands that, by using collections from the Archive Centre, the trail showcases buildings connected with Jewish refugees who came to Glasgow from Europe before, during and after the Second World War, and tells the story of many individuals who came to the city at that time; believes that this initiative will prove to be an invaluable resource and will encourage local people and visitors alike to find out more about the fascinating history of Garnethill, and is grateful to the Archive Centre for making information on the trail available through its website for download at sjhc.org.uk

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/votes-and-motions-search/S6M-02860>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Windrush Compensation Scheme

Catherine West (Labour): What steps [the Minister] has taken to expedite the processing of Windrush compensation scheme claims. (905034)

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): We take our commitments to the victims of the Windrush scandal seriously, and our focus is on resolving claims as quickly as possible. To enable us to do that, we have recruited 40 new caseworkers, with 35 more in the pipeline for the coming months. We have also refreshed and streamlined internal processes to reduce processing times and improve user experience for those applying to the scheme.

Catherine West: A recent report criticised the Home Office, which was forced to apologise to charities and community groups that were meant to be supporting victims with their applications. The budget remains as full as ever and underspent. It took two years for one of my constituents to receive a reply, which is an absolute disgrace considering the age profile of Windrush victims. What will the Minister do to put that right? Will he outsource

the process to a proper independent group that will get on with the job?

Reply from Kevin Foster: As we have said before, outsourcing would merely introduce further delays into the process when our focus should be on getting compensation out to the victims of the Windrush scandal. The hon. Member will be aware that the changes we made in December 2020 saw us pay considerably more compensation, offering an average of £3.1 million a month, with more than £38.7 million in compensation now offered. To be clear, there is no “budget” here; we will pay the compensation that is due to people, and there is no ceiling on what will be paid.

Naz Shah (Labour): I remind the Home Secretary of the legal maxim, “Justice delayed is justice denied.” This Government promised to try to right some of the wrongs with the Windrush compensation scheme in a time-limited manner. In November, the Home Affairs Committee found that only 20% of claimants had applied, and that only 5% had received any compensation. Twenty-three people have died before receiving their compensation. Is it not high time that the responsibility to provide justice to the ageing Windrush generation was passed on to an independent body capable of delivering it?

Reply from Kevin Foster: Again, we would make the point that moving this operation out of the Home Office would merely further delay the provision of the compensation that we all want to see paid. As I have touched on, we are recruiting more caseworkers and speeding up the process. Given the age cohort we are talking about, we are aware that some people have sadly passed away. However, that is why we are more motivated to speed up the process and make a real difference. As I have said, we have more staff coming in, and we will streamline the process to make it not only quicker, but simpler for those claiming compensation to engage with the team.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-17/debates/02CB0620-333C-4A95-ABA2-AAF891D4E6A6/WindrushCompensationScheme>

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

The Home Affairs Committee report referred to above can be read at <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/7936/documents/82209/default/>

It is not clear which is the other “recent report” referred to above, but it may be <https://files.justice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/12142211/JUSTICE-Report-Reforming-the-Windrush-Compensation-Scheme-Press-Copy.pdf>

Small Boat Channel Crossings

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): What progress [the Minister] has made on reducing the number of illegal small boat crossings in the channel. (905030)

Andrew Selous (Conservative): What progress [the Minister] has made on reducing the number of illegal small boat crossings in the channel. (905035)

Philip Davies (Conservative): What steps [the Minister] is taking to reduce the number of migrants crossing the channel illegally. (905036)

Jamie Wallis (Conservative): What progress [the Minister] has made on reducing the number of illegal small boat crossings in the channel. (905049)

Reply from the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): ... These crossings are unfair, unacceptable and lethally dangerous. They are totally unnecessary, as France and other EU member states are safe countries with long-established asylum systems.

Stephen Crabb: ... I know that the Home Secretary has been requesting the assistance of the Royal Navy to reduce the number of illegal channel crossings, and I look forward to seeing growing co-operation between her Department and the Ministry of Defence. Does she agree that it is surely right to deploy all the available resources and tools to shut down

the routes used by the cruel people smugglers and to protect lives at sea?

Reply from Priti Patel: My right hon. Friend's question is an important one because, as all hon. Members will be well aware, I asked for MOD naval assets and support back in 2020, because no Department can resolve the complex issue of channel crossings on its own. It is also right, having called for MOD involvement, that we now bring the whole machinery of government, the ultimate utility, together to ensure that we work collectively to protect our borders. My right hon. Friend is right about the wider issues on immigration, and that is why we have the new plan for immigration.

Andrew Selous: ... Does the Home Secretary recognise the anger felt about this issue, not least by the many people who fully respect this country's proud tradition of asylum and the tremendous contribution made so many people who have come to this country legally?

Reply from Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why this Government are unapologetic for the fact that we now have the Nationality and Borders Bill and the new plan for immigration. We are operationalising these changes primarily because we need a system that is firm but also fair to those who need genuine help when fleeing persecution and claiming asylum. That is effectively what this Government are doing.

Philip Davies: If everyone is agreed that the channel crossings are so dangerous, we must clearly do whatever is necessary to stop them. Surely the quickest way to stop them is simply to turn the boats back and escort them back into French waters. I do not think it would take long for the word to get around that these crossings were futile. Has not the time come to do just that, on humanitarian grounds as well as to protect our borders from illegal immigration?

Reply from Priti Patel: My hon. Friend will know that that is the policy of this Government. Border Force was commissioned to do this with the MOD, and through the hybrid ways of working that I have commissioned across Government, they will be doing exactly that. Routes have been tested and technology is being used, and the way in which boats can be pushed back has also been well tested, with the basis to do that. That is our policy.

Jamie Wallis: My right hon. Friend is aware that the British people want to see decisive action being taken to reduce the number of small boat crossings in our channel. Does she therefore share my disappointment that the Opposition refused to support our measures to end vexatious and unmerited claims, and chose instead to side with those entering the UK illegally?

Reply from Priti Patel: We could rerun the debate on the Nationality and Borders Bill, which I would happily do. This Government are determined not just to reform what is a broken asylum system—we are lifting up every aspect of the dysfunctionality of the system—but to tackle the root causes of illegal migration. In March 2021 the new plan for immigration was published, and we had the Nationality and Borders Bill in this House last autumn. The Opposition seem to be on the wrong side of the argument. They do not really want to support an end to illegal migration or stop the people smugglers.

Diane Abbott (Labour): Is there any truth in the reports that the Government want to have asylum seekers processed offshore in countries such as Gambia? Has any such country actually agreed to this? Does the Secretary of State accept that having people processed hundreds or thousands of miles away might meet the letter of our obligations to asylum seekers but certainly does not meet the spirit?

Reply from Priti Patel: I absolutely disagree with the right hon. Lady's question. Had she read the new plan for immigration—the policy statement published for the benefit of all Members in March 2021—she would know that this Government are considering all options for outsourcing processing and for removing people with no legal basis to be in our country. I completely recognise that she disagrees with the

policies of this Government ... It matters not which countries. We will continue to discuss this with a range of countries, because I, as Home Secretary, and this Government are determined to fix the decades-long problem of a very broken asylum system. Frankly, under successive Labour Governments there were mass failures to remove people with no legal basis to be in the country.

Holly Lynch (Labour): ... We hear that responsibility for ending dangerous crossings of the channel is to be taken away from the Home Office and handed to the MOD, but we have been here before. In 2019 the Government brought in the Navy to patrol the channel, and those patrols ended after just six weeks, having cost £780,000 and without a single boat having been intercepted. Can the Home Secretary explain how today's proposal will be any different from 2019 and prevent lives from being lost at sea?

Reply from Priti Patel: Of course I can. I restate what I have said in the House many times about the hybrid approach we need: no one Department can solve this issue in the channel on its own. Let us be crystal clear about this. I originally commissioned the military aid to the civil authorities request that went to the Ministry of Defence very early on, back in 2020. Of course my decision to bring in the MOD is vindication of our need to strengthen our defences in the channel.

This is about a number of things ... However, the reality is that we want to stop illegal crossings. People are dying in the channel and in the Mediterranean. All aspects of pushbacks and turn-backs—of the approach we take in the channel—are operational. This has been tested, there is a basis on which to do it, and individuals are trained. The MOD, maritime policing and Border Force originally came together, and they will continue to work together. This is, first, a global migration issue but, secondly, the British public will support the Government in doing everything possible to protect our borders. That is why a blended approach is absolutely vital.

Stuart C McDonald: ... The Home Secretary should have pointed out that, unlike the endless Downing Street parties, arriving in the UK to claim asylum is not unlawful, as the Court of Appeal reminded her just last month. It is only her atrocious anti-refugee Bill that will see Afghans, Syrians and Uyghurs arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned for up to four years. Why does she see relentless flouting of lockdown rules as forgivable for the Prime Minister but seeking safety here from Assad, the Taliban or genocide as worth four years in prison?

Reply from Priti Patel: I always enjoy the hon. Gentleman's contributions. As we saw on Report and Third Reading of the Nationality and Borders Bill, the Scottish National party choose to deploy political gimmicks—I am being kind to the SNP—to frustrate the will of the public when it comes to reforming asylum and illegal migration. It is fair to say that the Conservative party in government, through the Nationality and Borders Bill and the new plan for immigration, will do everything possible to tackle the unscrupulous exploitation of people who cross illegally and will provide sanctuary to those who need our help and support—those fleeing persecution who need refuge. Frankly, when local authorities in Scotland are not even helping to accommodate these people, I take no lectures from the Scottish National party.

Stuart C McDonald: ... the proposals leaked out over the weekend have absolutely nothing to do with saving lives and everything to do with saving the Prime Minister's career and her political career. The Home Secretary sending in the Royal Navy against small boats full of refugees and asylum seekers is pathetic, inhumane and an abuse of the Royal Navy, and her grubby shopping around for places to offshore asylum seekers to is an outrageous and dangerous big white elephant. Instead of ripping up the refugee convention and locking up refugees, why does the Home Office not start working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and others to live up to our humanitarian obligations?

Reply from Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman needs to understand global migration challenges and the international exploitation of human lives and human beings that takes place, because clearly he has no recommendations or answers. His local authorities across Scotland refuse to house people who have come to our country. Frankly, I will take no lectures from him. He can carry on with his political gimmicks, but the Scottish National party's lack of policy says a great deal.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-17/debates/9AF48D5C-8072-4E3D-878A-1FC94A349FA9/SmallBoatChannelCrossings>

Migrant Crossings: Role of the Military

Tobias Ellwood (Conservative): To ask the Minister for the Armed Forces to make a statement on the migrant channel issues and the role of the military.

Reply from the Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heappey): Unacceptable numbers of people continue to make these dangerous channel crossings, and last November's tragic deaths serve as the strongest reminder of the need to stop them. The Government have been exploring every avenue to prevent further crossings, and have now appointed the Ministry of Defence to take operational primacy for cross-channel counter-migration operations. That will mean a much larger and more visible role for the Royal Navy in operational planning, asset co-ordination and operational delivery.

As the Home Secretary explained during Home Office questions yesterday, the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence have worked closely on countering the small boats challenge through the military aid to civilian authorities process. Throughout the last 12 months Defence has provided a range of support, including the provision of surveillance aircraft, additional accommodation and planning expertise, and has assisted in the delivery of trials for novel tactics to help Border Force and the Home Office to better interdict and deter migrant vessels.

Details of how Defence will deliver and maintain the primacy of cross-channel counter-migration operations are currently being worked through. The Government's objective is that no one should arrive illegally in the United Kingdom on their own terms, and all vessels transporting illegal migrants across the channel must therefore be intercepted before, or as, they land. Defence is committed to delivering that step change. Details of how it will be achieved will be made known in due course, but the House can be reassured that the MOD is working hand in hand with the Home Secretary and her Department to achieve this goal while ensuring the safety of all individuals involved and protecting other Defence priority output.

Tobias Ellwood: ... We are rightly proud of our armed forces, who watch our backs and defend our interests across the world, and who are equipped and trained to step forward and assist other Government Departments in times of emergency. However, the bigger picture is clear to see. Our world is becoming more dangerous and more complex, and demands on our military—not least the Royal Navy—are increasing. ... The Defence Committee's recent review of the Royal Navy concluded that it is now too small to meet its current commitments in the Atlantic, in the Mediterranean, in the Gulf, off east Africa, in the Caribbean and in the Arctic, and, of course, with the tilt to the Indo-Pacific. Yet here we are introducing another task: co-ordinating the migrant crossing response, which is normally the responsibility of the Home Office.

As the Minister said, the migrant channel issue is complex and is not likely to go away soon. It is not an acute emergency, so why is the Navy being drawn in, even in this limited capacity? I say "limited"; the Minister spoke of "operational primacy", and he is now responsible for it. There is a real danger of mission creep, with further navel assets being sucked into this challenge. Please will the Minister explain who will pay for this mission, what success looks like, and how long the task will last?

This tactic may, on the face of it, look popular, with 28,000 migrants now crossing every year—“send in the Navy to sort it out”—but it is not the strategy that will solve the problem of the movement of migrants. We need first to break up the gangs who encourage migrants in the first place, and secondly to help restore governance and security in the very countries from which these people are fleeing—places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Somalia. Ironically, those are parts of the world where we have used our own hard power to intervene but then departed before there was enduring stability, and now families are fleeing towards Europe.

Unless the fires are put out at source, we will never reduce the numbers. We need a broader strategy than simply tasking the Navy to the channel, which will not be the answer.

Reply from James Heapey: ... I take issue with his point that the Navy has to make a binary choice between work at home and work overseas. Ships are deployed all over the world right now, and other ships are making ready to set to sea in response to whatever crises may unfold in the Euro-Atlantic over the coming weeks.

In addition, there is capacity to do as we do year round, which is to deploy naval resources into the channel for purposes such as fishery protection and, indeed, securing our border. That is an important point. The purpose of our nation’s armed forces is to secure the UK’s national security interests both at home and abroad, and I would argue that deploying our armed forces to ensure that our borders are robust is a perfectly appropriate use of them. Indeed, as I know my right hon. Friend is very aware, there are parts of Europe right now in which state-sponsored illegal migration is being used as a sub-threshold weapon of competition. I am not suggesting for a second that the migration across the channel is that right now but, in the absence of robust defence of our borders, it could be in the future, and the MOD therefore has a perfectly reasonable role to play in ensuring that our borders are robustly protected.

My right hon. Friend specifically asked about pay. Clearly this will be a multi-agency effort under Royal Navy command. Where agencies are already doing things in the channel, they will continue to be funded by the Departments that own them.

Success is that we do not allow anybody to land in the UK on their own terms. For how long? Until the deterrent effect is achieved and the cross-channel route for small boats collapses.

There is a limit to my right hon. Friend’s question, which is the role of the Royal Navy and the military within the channel—that is what I am here to answer today—but I completely agree that this is just one part of a wider system. Indeed, he is right to note that the MOD has plenty of equity in providing stability in countries such as Iraq and in the Sahel, where the majority of migrants are coming from, and we are engaged in that.

Nobody is pretending that the presence of a rear admiral and a few extra Royal Navy ships solves this issue. It is regrettable that only part of the Government’s solution should appear in the papers, and I will do my best to answer any questions my right hon. Friend asks.

John Healey (Labour): ... The Minister has confirmed today that the armed forces will be involved in what he calls operational delivery. He says the details are still being worked through, so let me try again. What will the armed forces now do? Will naval vessels be deployed in the channel? Will the Navy be used to push back migrant boats? Will the Navy use sonic weapons, as No. 10 wants? Will it step up the use of drones for surveillance? Will it transport migrants from British beaches? What military accommodation will be used to house and process migrants? We are told by the media that Rear Admiral Utley has been put in charge. To whom will he report, the Home Secretary or the Defence Secretary? This announcement is official confirmation that the Home Secretary is failing. Our armed forces are always the Government’s last resort. The military aid to the civil authorities code

means such assistance is granted only when “the civil authority lacks the necessary capability to fulfil the task”.

Who will pay the military’s bills for this work? What will be the arrangements for co-operation between the UK and French military? ...

The Navy was used before, in 2019. Two patrol vessels were redeployed from defence tasks to the channel. They intercepted no boats, at a cost of £780,000 to the taxpayer. Will the Minister guarantee that this military deployment in the channel will not compromise our armed forces in any of their fundamental defence tasks? When will the Home Secretary step up to do her job to secure a proper security agreement with the French, break the smuggling gangs, and prevent more tragic deaths of migrants in the channel?

Reply from James Heapey: ... It is asking the Navy to take primacy, from a command-and-control perspective, to bring to bear all the Government’s maritime assets that set sail, across all agencies, in order to try to cohere a more robust response at sea. It is an evolution of what we have been doing rather than a replacement of something that had previously existed.

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there may be a requirement for more naval assets—warships—to be in the channel, but they sit too high off the water to be a credible platform from which to cross-deck people from a dinghy, so the presence of naval assets is probably from a command-and-control perspective rather than from an interdiction or interception perspective. There are better platforms within the Government’s inventory, and things that we can lease from the open market, that will be much more effective for mid-channel cross-decking under RN command and control.

Neither the Royal Navy nor the Royal Marines will be engaged in pushback, but that tactic has been developed by Border Force, and if it is applicable it will be used. The Royal Navy will not use sonic weapons. The Royal Navy or the wider military may be involved in transportation of people when they reach the shore as they enter the processing system. There may be a use for military accommodation. As I said, this is a UQ responding to a partial revelation of the plan, and I make no apology for the wider plan being still in development. ...

To continue reading this very lengthy question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-18/debates/9C47DEA3-8E6E-4952-9A44-E1495186E108/MigrantCrossingsRoleOfTheMilitary>

Topical Questions, Home Department: Afghan Resettlement

Paul Blomfield (Labour): Last week, at a briefing for Members with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement, Home Office officials indicated that while the Department is not introducing a specific family reunion route, there is some flexibility on visa requirements for Afghan family members of British citizens. Will the Minister confirm, as we were told, that there could be flexibility on visa fees, income requirements and demands for lost or destroyed documents, because that would offer real assistance to constituents who took Ministers’ advice to flee to third countries and are now trapped there? (905057)

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): To be clear, the wider immigration system obviously operates separately from the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme, but we are carefully considering what the requirements are, and not least how we can ensure people can actually access the system to make applications because, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, for obvious reasons we cannot run our usual application centre that we would have in Kabul given the Taliban’s control of the territory.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-17/debates/FF62934B-0956-46F8-9FF2-A39929EBCC20/TopicalQuestions#contribution-0DE57B9C-7077-4CE4-A81C-7E5CBE4896C9>

Pending Asylum Applications

Afzal Khan (Labour): What recent estimate [the Minister] has made of the number of asylum applications pending initial decision. (905043)

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): We accept that the asylum system is broken, often taking too long to reach decisions. We are working to fix it via the Nationality and Borders Bill. Alongside that, we have plans to speed up the decision-making process and reduce unnecessary delays. I hope the hon. Gentleman will reconsider his opposition to the Bill and play his part in helping to fix our broken system.

Afzal Khan: The Conservatives say that the asylum system is broken, but having been in power for more than a decade, the truth is that they are the ones who broke it. Asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable individuals. The Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit revealed the emotional and physical trauma they experience—the anxiety, insomnia, self-harm, depression, deterioration of relationships with friends and support staff and reduced engagement with vital services. How has the Home Office's ability to make initial decisions been allowed to collapse so completely under this Government? What steps will the Minister take to intervene to ensure the situation is addressed with urgency?

Reply from Kevin Foster: I am sorry to hear that it sounds like the hon. Gentleman will not be reconsidering his opposition to our reform plans, most notably in the Nationality and Borders Bill, while his party offers no meaningful alternative. The Home Secretary, the whole team in Government and I will continue to focus on our work to reform and update the system, to ensure it offers resettlement based on need, not the ability to pay a people trafficker. That is what our focus will continue to be and we are working towards that.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-17/debates/AF8C231F-63BF-48EF-8F5B-A54B078FF824/PendingAsylumApplications>

Removal of Failed Asylum Seekers

Laurence Robertson (Conservative): What progress [the Minister] is making on removing failed asylum seekers from the UK; and if she will make a statement. (905032)

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): Our new plan for immigration will overhaul our asylum system and speed up the removal of failed asylum seekers. The Bill will introduce new measures to prevent repeated last-minute, meritless claims that are designed to frustrate proper removal. We are determined to return people who have no right to be here and arrive in the UK illegally.

Laurence Robertson: ... This country has a proud record of accepting refugees and treating asylum seekers fairly, and long may that continue. Does he agree that, in order to retain confidence in our system and to avoid it being a draw to people taking very dangerous and unnecessary journeys, asylum seekers must have their cases considered very quickly, and, if they have not established a right or a need to be here, they should be removed quickly?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: My hon. Friend gets to the nub of the issue by saying that we must have a fair but firm system. Returns have undoubtedly been hard hit as a result of the pandemic, and we want to see a quick recovery from that. The issue of attrition is also important. We are addressing that through the Nationality and Borders Bill, and I appreciate his support for that. On returns agreements, we need, of course, to secure more. Those with India and Albania prove exactly what can be done.

Feryal Clark (Labour): Hundreds of people in my constituency of Enfield North are residents in this country on the European Community Association agreement visa, also known as the Ankara agreement, which allows them to set up businesses in this country.

When they try to extend their stay in this country, the majority of them are not able to renew their visas. There have been hundreds of emails in relation to this from across the country. The delays in some cases are 14 months, and they mean that those people are unable to renew business leases and housing and residential contracts. What assurances can the Minister give to my constituents whose lives are at a standstill that these timings will be reduced and that they will receive a timely response to their applications?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her question. She will know that Ministers in the Home Office are always keen to try to assist in these matters wherever possible. If she could provide me with the specifics, I would be very happy to take those cases away and have a look at them.

Peter Bone (Conservative): Does the Minister agree that one of the problems with genuine victims of human trafficking is that they are lumped together with asylum seekers? The quicker we can return bogus asylum seekers, the quicker we can get help to the genuine victims of human traffickers.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who raises an important point. It is fair to say that the Nationality and Borders Bill and the new plan for immigration focus very much on returning those who have no right to be here, while ensuring that those who require our protection and are genuinely in need of support do get that support as quickly as possible.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-17/debates/45F9F02E-08A9-4B57-A9AA-4CCBF23CABD4/RemovalOfFailedAsylumSeekers>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers: Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Refugees

Dan Jarvis (Labour) [106708] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department is providing to eligible applicants to the Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy who are not in receipt of the travel documents required to relocate to the UK.

Reply from James Heapey: Relocating eligible Afghans without passports or other documents is challenging, but we are working with third countries to negotiate routes that can be used for their relocation to the United Kingdom. We have already had some success in operating these routes, but the third countries who have worked with us have asked to do so discreetly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-18/106708>

Information about the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

Afghanistan: Refugees

Stuart C McDonald (SNP) [100570] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to identify new asylum applications from Afghan nationals that meet the criteria for the Afghan Citizenship Resettlement Scheme or the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

The Government is providing safe and legal routes for people from Afghanistan through i) the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme, for employees of the Government, and others who have worked with or alongside the Government, in exceptional circumstances; and ii) the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will help up to 20,000 women, children and others who are vulnerable or at risk.

Resettlement routes operate separately to the UK's in-country asylum system. Further information about the eligibility criteria can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100570>

Information about the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

Afghanistan: Refugees

Sarah Green (Liberal Democrat) [102809] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to contact vulnerable Afghans to inform them that they are eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Reply from Victoria Atkins: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) commenced on 6th January. The ACRS will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

The first to be resettled under the new ACRS will be some of those already evacuated and in the UK. They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British Nationals.

From Spring, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will refer refugees to the scheme, based on assessments of protection need.

In Year One we will also resettle individuals who supported the UK and international community effort in Afghanistan, including those British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni who are most at risk. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will be in touch with those eligible to support them through the next steps.

There will not be an application process for the ACRS. More detail on the three referral pathways can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-12/102809>

Information about the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

Refugees: Afghanistan

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [100463] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the initial 5,000 places on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will be allocated to people already in the UK.

Reply from Victoria Atkins: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) commenced on 6th January. The ACRS will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

Due to the success of our emergency evacuation and the larger than anticipated number of people brought over to the UK, we plan to exceed our initial aim of 5,000 people in the first year of the ACRS.

There are around 6,500 people in the UK who have been brought to safety during and after the evacuation who are eligible for the ACRS. They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British Nationals. This also includes some of those most at risk, such as members of the LGBT community.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100463>

Information about the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

The following seven questions all received the same answer

Refugees: Afghanistan

Caroline Lucas (Green) [100479] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement on 6 January 2022 on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement

Scheme (ACRS), Official Report, col. 185, if she will take steps to set up an ACRS implementation group (a) with the aim of ensuring the ACRS is run with an understanding by staff of Afghanistan's particular (i) cultural, (ii) security (iii) gender concerns, and (b) to include the expertise of (iv) women from the region with knowledge of the (A) cultural, (B) socio-religious and (C) geopolitical context of Afghanistan and (v) people working on the ground with those in need of UK assistance; and if she will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas (Green) [100480] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement on 6 January 2022 on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), Official Report col. 185, how many (a) Afghan nationals who are already in the UK and (b) British nationals evacuated from Afghanistan (i) have been and (ii) will be resettled under ACRS.

Caroline Lucas (Green) [100481] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, how many people currently outside of the UK the Government plans to resettle in the first year of that scheme.

Caroline Lucas (Green) [100482] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, from what date does the first year of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme start.

Caroline Lucas (Green) [100483] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, how Afghan nationals at risk, who are not Chevening alumni or British Council or GardaWorld contractors, can ensure their details are recorded and considered for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme as part of the third referral pathway from within Afghanistan; and if she will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas (Green) [100484] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, whether discussions are taking place with (a) Qatar, (b) Pakistan, (c) other third-party countries to facilitate safe passage from Afghanistan to the UK for (i) Chevening Scholars and (ii) British Council and GardaWorld contractors; and if she will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas (Green) [100485] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Statement by the Minister for Afghan Resettlement on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, 6 January 2022, Official Report, column 185, what measures will she put in place to ensure that undocumented Afghan national family members of British nationals in third countries, can make family member visa applications without delay; and if she will make a statement.

Reply from Victoria Atkins: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) commenced on 6th January. The ACRS will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

The first to be resettled under the new ACRS will be those already evacuated and in the UK. They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British Nationals.

Due to the success of our emergency evacuation and the larger than anticipated number of people brought over to the UK, we will exceed our initial aim of 5,000 people resettled in the first year of the ACRS. There are around 6,500 people in the UK who have been brought to safety during and after the evacuation who are eligible for the ACRS.

British nationals who have a right of abode in the UK will not be resettled under the ACRS. However, we are supporting those British Nationals who have been assisted by Her Majesty's Government to the UK.

In addition to those already in the UK, we are working with the UNHCR to receive referrals of vulnerable refugees in need of protection in year 1 of the ACRS, and

we will continue to receive referrals to the scheme in coming years. In the first year we will also offer ACRS places to the most at-risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors, and Chevening alumni. Beyond the first year of the ACRS, we will work with international partners and NGOs to welcome referrals of wider groups of Afghans most at risk. There will not be an application process.

The ACRS provides those at risk with a route to safety through three distinct referral routes and has been designed with partners, including the UNHCR, with whom we are designing the referral route for refugees outside of Afghanistan.

The Government will continue to work with international partners to seek to facilitate the travel of those eligible for resettlement in the UK.

Family members of British citizens and settled persons who were not called forward during the evacuation of Afghanistan, or who have not been offered resettlement under the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, will need to apply to come to the UK under the existing economic or family migration and reunion rules. They will be expected to meet the eligibility requirements of their chosen route, which may include paying relevant fees and charges, and providing their biometrics.

The family Immigration Rules also allow a person to enter a spouse or partner visa if a couple have been in a relationship akin to marriage and have resided together for a two-year period prior to the application date. The two-year period does not have to be the immediate two years prior to the application date.

Information for those wishing to apply to enter or remain in the UK as a spouse or partner is available on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/uk-family-visa/partner-spouse>

A full policy statement on this matter published on 13 September 2021 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version>

Further information on the opening of the ARCS can be found in the Oral Statement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-on-the-afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100479>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100480>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100481>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100482>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100483>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100484>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/100485>

Refugees: Afghanistan

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) [105711] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghans evacuated under Operation Pitting are waiting to be granted indefinite leave to remain.

Reply from Kevin Foster: Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan, with people continuing to be evacuated from third countries.

In view of the urgency of the situation the majority of those who entered the UK

during the evacuation phase were initially granted limited leave to enter with access to public funds and employment. This status is not a bar to them being permanently housed or to starting their life in the UK, including taking employment.

The Home Office has now started the process to support them in applying for and being granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Our aim is to conclude this process before individuals' leave to remain expires. All those evacuated will be provided with ILR.

Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. They also provide links to guidance and information on how prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation.

The data on those waiting to be granted ILR is not currently available but once published we will direct to the publication.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-17/105711>

Refugees: Afghanistan

Dan Jarvis (Labour) [102638] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 16 November 2021 to Question 72441 on Afghanistan: Refugees, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that no one is disadvantaged while their case is reviewed.

Reply from Victoria Atkins: The Home Office has established a dedicated caseworking team, which is working jointly with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Defence. This team will contact all those who arrived to discuss their leave arrangements and ensure they get the right form of leave.

Communications have been issued advising individuals of next steps to progress permanent residence in the UK. The Home Office is contacting those here in the UK under the Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy, and also those moving onto the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, to assist them in obtaining indefinite leave to remain. Amongst the information provided, those communications confirm individuals' rights to employment and to access services (e.g. medical treatment, school places). They also provide links to guidance and information on how prospective employers and landlords can contact the Home Office to confirm individuals' right to take employment and rented accommodation, through the Employer Checking Service.

No one will be required to leave the United Kingdom, or be disadvantaged in any way, while we work through their cases.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-12/102638>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-09/72441>

Information about the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

Information about the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

Refugees: Afghanistan

Darren Jones (Labour) [102748] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support is available to families in the UK with relatives in Afghanistan; and what steps Afghan nationals in Afghanistan, and under threat from the Taliban, can take to come to the UK.

Reply from Victoria Atkins: Families in the UK with relatives in Afghanistan can

access information to assess their relative's eligibility for the following resettlement schemes on gov.uk:

- [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#)
- [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy](#)
- [Refugee Family Reunion](#)

From Spring, the UNHCR will refer refugees to the ACRS, based on assessments of protection of need. The Government will also offer ACRS places to the most at risk British Council and Gardaworld contractors and Chevening alumni. We are committed to working in step with the international community and continue to do all we can to enable those who are eligible to relocate to the UK.

The Minister for the Armed Forces recently visited the region, to identify what more we can do for applicants both in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries. We are working with a wide range of allies and partners and are exploring every avenue to help them reach safety.

The UK Government will work with international partners to put pressure on the Taliban to allow those with a right to leave Afghanistan to do so safely.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-12/102748>

Refugees: Afghanistan

Fleur Anderson (Labour) [99402] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether direct relatives of (a) current Chevening scholars and (b) Chevening alumni will be fully eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Reply from Victoria Atkins: The Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will prioritise those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for UK values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech and rule of law; and vulnerable people such as women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups (including ethnic / religious minorities and LGBT+).

As set out in the oral statement made on 6th January, Chevening alumni who are at risk will be eligible to be considered for resettlement under the ACRS in year 1. Spouses, partners and dependent children under the age of 18 of identified eligible individuals will be eligible for the scheme.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-07/99402>

Information about the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

Afghanistan: Refugees

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104357] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many homes his Department has provided to people arriving under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Reply from Leo Docherty: The Ministry of Defence works closely with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the Home Office to identify where we can best support those under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

Around 550 Service Family Accommodation properties have been made available, however this is not intended as a long-term or settled housing solution and the standard is a 12-month lease. There may be options for extensions on a case-by-case basis in discussion with the relevant Local Authority based on Service need.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104357>

Information about the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

The following seven questions all received the same answer

Refugees: Afghanistan

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104358] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he has taken to ensure that the Warm Welcome initiative continues for refugees who remain in bridging hotels.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104359] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason Afghan refugees who have given birth have been returned to a bridging hotel rather than rehomed.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104360] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to identify accommodation for Afghan refugees.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104361] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of moving people from bridging hotels into short term residential accommodation.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104362] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with stakeholders on converting void and disused properties into accommodation for Afghan refugees currently in bridging hotels.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104363] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has a timetable for rehousing people currently in bridging hotels.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [104364] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with NHS property services on repurposing vacant NHS property to home Afghan refugees, including if it needs to be retrofitted.

Reply from Victoria Atkins: [Operation Warm Welcome](#) is a significant cross-government effort, working with local authorities, NGOs and the commercial sector, and will continue over the coming months to ensure those evacuated from Afghanistan can settle permanently, contribute to their communities and rebuild their lives here in the UK. The UK Government will continue to work with our international partners and use every lever at our disposal to fulfil our moral obligations, and we will provide a warm welcome to those who have fled persecution.

We are engaging with Local Authorities and housing organisations to explore options to meet the need for housing. We are working closely with Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities and other stakeholders to identify a range of alternative accommodation options to minimise the use of hotels and enable people to get into accommodation which enables them to settle into their new lives in the UK as quickly as possible.

DLUHC have created a new Housing Portal to make it easier for councils to assess the suitability of properties prior to contacting landlords. Offers of property are triaged by DLUHC and sent directly to councils. We are also looking at ways to make more suitable homes available in the private rental sector by engaging with landlords, letting agencies and industry bodies to promote the housing portal and encourage participation in the resettlement programme. We are also working with the Estate Agent Rightmove to identify potential properties available in the private rental sector.

There is a huge effort underway to get families into permanent homes as soon as we can so they can settle and rebuild their lives, and to ensure those still temporarily accommodated in hotels have access to healthcare, education, any essential items they need as well as employment opportunities or Universal Credit. The length of time that a family will remain in bridging hotels is dependent on a number of factors including the availability of appropriate housing. We expect that whilst the hotel estate will reduce, there will be an ongoing need to provide temporary housing in hotels for a small number of families for several months. Where possible we prioritise matching properties to certain categories including those that are pregnant and have given birth.

As of the 6 January 2022, the latest available data shows there are over 12,000 people in around 80 bridging hotels. While work is ongoing to resettle families permanently as quickly as possible, they are receiving the necessary support required to integrate into society.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104358>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104359>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104360>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104361>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104362>

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<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104363>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104364>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers: Other Immigration and Asylum

Visas

Alison Thewliss (SNP) [905050] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the financial thresholds for family visas.

Reply from Kevin Foster: The minimum income requirement was implemented in July 2012, following advice from the Migration Advisory Committee.

It is intended to ensure financial independence and encourage integration, although several concessions were introduced in response to the impacts of Covid-19.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-17/905050>

Visas: British National (Overseas)

Jim Shannon (DUP) [101721] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of changing the BN(O) visa scheme to enable any persons from Hong Kong who have at least one parent who is a British national (overseas) to apply for the British National (Overseas) visa.

Reply from Kevin Foster: The BN(O) route is an unprecedented and generous offer reflecting the UK's historic and moral commitment to the people of Hong Kong who chose to retain their ties to the UK by taking up BN(O) status. We are sympathetic to the circumstances of this cohort and are looking at whether more can be done to support them.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-11/101721>

Information about the BN(O) visa scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa>

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Stephen Kinnock (Labour) [105572] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when will she publish details of her proposal to use the Royal Navy to deter asylum seekers from crossing the English Channel illegally.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Government is determined to prevent further loss of life in the Channel and break the business model of dangerous criminal people smugglers.

The UK armed forces already work closely with Border Force in these operations, given their expertise and experience in maritime operations.

This is a complex global issue requiring a response across the whole of government, and it is right that we pursue all options to prevent illegal crossings and protect life at sea.

The Government's New Plan for Immigration will help deter illegal migration and break the business model of the criminal gangs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-17/105572>

Asylum: Females

Owen Thompson (SNP) [99014] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill on women seeking asylum in the UK after fleeing sexual violence and trafficking.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Nationality and Borders Bill is the most significant overhaul of our asylum system in over two decades. It will bring in a new, comprehensive, fair but firm long-term plan, which seeks to address the challenge of illegal migration head on, and to take down the serious organised criminals exploiting people and profiting from human misery. Only by tackling illegal migration can we effectively help those in greatest need.

An Equality Impact Assessment was published on 16 September, and this includes consideration of possible impacts on women who have been subjected to sex-based violence and/or trafficked for a sexual purpose.

The Equality Impact Assessment can be found on the GOV.UK website at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nationality-and-borders-bill-equality-impact-assessment>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-06/99014>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Oral Answers

Migrant Crossings: Role of the Military

The statement made in the House of Commons by the Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heappey) was read in the House of Lords. ([See above to read the statement.](#))

Lord Coaker (Labour): My Lords, following the failure of the Government to deal with record numbers of migrants crossing the channel and, rightly, the abandonment of policies such as wave machines and sonic booms, the Navy has been called in. What is the plan? Where are the ships that the Navy will use coming from? Can the Minister also clarify whether the awful policy of pushback is still government policy?

The Minister in the other place said only on Monday that pushback remains an option, as has the Home Secretary, but the MoD apparently says that it is not. Who is in control? What is the policy? Although a naval ship might not be used, what about a Border Force vessel? This is a real crisis involving real people, with only a confused policy coming from the Government. It is time that they got a grip.

Reply from the Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie): I am very proud to stand at this Dispatch Box once again on behalf of the MoD to say that, once again, the MoD is going to contribute to dealing with a crisis that has perplexed not just the Government and the Opposition but the public: the danger being encountered by migrants who seek to come to this country and have been enduring appalling experiences while trying to cross the channel. That is why the MoD's primary role will be to ensure that all vessels transporting illegal migrants across the channel are intercepted before or as they land, preventing the uncontrolled arrival of migrants on UK shores. The Armed Forces will not be

engaged in turnaround tactics.

Baroness Smith of Newnham (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, the Minister was asked if she could say where the ships were coming from. Could she answer that question and say whether the MoD will be funding this new activity or whether the Home Office will pick up the tab, and whether there are not also diplomatic routes to try to ensure that, instead of stopping boats landing, the boats never leave the departing shores?

Reply from Baroness Goldie: The noble Baroness makes an important series of points. She is right, for example, that the Home Office and the FCDO will continue the primary discussion with France on the diplomatic front. I reassure her that Defence has a very strong relationship with France, and we regularly speak to our counterparts on matters of mutual interest. Funding will be required for this, and the Ministry of Defence is currently computing costs with a view to informing discussions with the Treasury. On the assets, we are dealing with a domestic situation in largely indigenous waters, and therefore the capabilities that Defence makes available for this task will be assets already permanently assigned and committed to operations in home waters, including offshore patrol vessels, P2000s and RHIBs.

Lord Craig of Radley (Crossbench): My Lords, it is very unlikely that the migration effort by people wanting to come to this country will cease. I must therefore ask the Minister how long the Ministry of Defence expects to be committed to this task. Is it indefinite or for a set period?

Reply from Baroness Goldie: I say to the noble and gallant Lord that the overall responsibility for dealing with immigration is cross-government. In so far as the MoD's operational role is concerned, it will retain primacy of operational control until public confidence is restored and the number of individuals attempting to enter the UK through this route is brought under manageable levels. ...

Lord Dubs (Labour): My Lords, the Answer suggests to me that the Government have not thought this through. It makes all sorts of vague comments like "are currently being worked through" and "will be made known in due course".

Has this even been discussed with the French authorities? Without co-operation with the French, we are not going to get anywhere. Lastly, the Answer keeps talking about "illegal" people. If they are refugees or claiming to be so then they are not illegal; they are people who have an entitlement to claim asylum status.

Reply from Baroness Goldie: ... I have endeavoured to refer to them as "migrants" because that is what they are. The MoD's role is to assist the Government's broader objectives in approaching immigration policy by dealing with this particular aspect in the channel, which has caused such concern and has been such a source of heart-breaking tragedy and worry to the migrants themselves. The noble Lord asked whether this plan had been thought through. Obviously, the detail has to be worked out but it is very positive that the MoD is gladly taking on this role, and Defence Ministers have committed to providing a Statement to both Houses once the plans for implementing defence primacy have been thoroughly worked through and refined. ...

To read this lengthy question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-01-20/debates/B05118C4-58C3-4F87-8F04-F2614302F721/MigrantCrossingsRoleOfTheMilitary>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers

Immigration: Human Trafficking

Lord Taylor of Warwick (Non-affiliated) [HL5207] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to grant leave to remain to all confirmed victims of trafficking.

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government remains committed to ensuring that the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) provides appropriate support for victims of modern slavery to help them to recover from their exploitation. Discretionary leave is currently considered, via our non-statutory guidance '*Discretionary leave for victims of modern slavery*' on an automatic basis, for all confirmed victims (those with a positive Conclusive Grounds decision) without immigration status. Part 5 of the Nationality and Borders Bill, currently before Parliament, focuses on modern slavery and will help to ensure that all victims are identified and supported as quickly as possible. Clause 64 sets out, for the first time in primary legislation, the circumstances in which a confirmed victim of modern slavery will be entitled to a grant of leave where it is necessary for the purpose of:

- assisting the person in their recovery from physical or psychological harm arising from the relevant exploitation;
- enabling the person to seek compensation in respect of the relevant exploitation; or
- enabling the person to co-operate with a public authority in connection with an investigation or criminal proceedings in respect of the relevant exploitation.

The inclusion of this clause in the Bill will provide clarity for both decision-makers and victims around the circumstances in which confirmed victims qualify for temporary leave to remain.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-06/hl5207>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040852/Discretionary_leave_for_victims_of_modern_slavery.pdf

New Publications

Updated: Help for EU citizens to prove immigration status online

<https://www.gov.scot/news/help-for-eu-citizens-to-prove-immigration-status-online/>

"We also want to be safe" - undocumented migrants facing COVID in a Hostile Environment

<https://www.jcwi.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=37f4816f-fc08-41a3-8257-565621c85efd>

News

Campaigners hail victory as HMRC loses appeal over refugees' child tax credits

<https://tfn.scot/news/campaigners-hail-victory-as-hmrc-loses-appeal-over-refugees-child-tax-credits>

Windrush descendants lose high court fight to expand scheme

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jan/14/windrush-descendants-lose-fight-to-expand-compensation-scheme>

Channel migrant crossing daily figures to end

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/channel-migrant-crossing-daily-figures-end-q3n9xdq0d>

Home Office 'burying bad news' with plan to scrap daily Channel migrants data
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/01/19/home-office-burying-bad-news-plan-scrap-daily-channel-migrants/>

English Channel migrant crossings pass 10,000 as new daily record reached
<https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/embed/editors-picks/migrants-english-channel-crossings-record-v4311201a>

Channel migrants: MPs criticise use of navy to tackle English Channel crossings
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-60042484>

Channel migrants: Armed forces set to take over English Channel operations
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-60021252>

Military set to tackle Channel migrant crisis as Priti Patel orders 'pushback' of boats to France
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/01/16/military-set-tackle-channel-migrant-crisis-priti-patel-orders/>

Royal Navy unlikely to pursue Channel refugee 'pushback' policy
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/17/military-to-be-used-to-stem-channel-crossings-as-johnson-seeks-to-stay-pm>

Royal Navy rejects Priti Patel's 'illegal' plan to push back Channel migrant boats
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/royal-navy-ditches-priti-patels-illegal-plan-to-push-back-channel-migrant-boats-k9hrc05ck>

Plan for military to tackle crossings will help traffickers, says ex-navy chief
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-migrants-channel-navy-b1994913.html>

Home Office denies plans to use sonic devices against migrant boats in Channel
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-english-channel-sonic-device-b1995003.html>

Dramatic migrant rescue mission captured by RNLI
<https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/embed/editors-picks/migrant-rescue-footage-rnli-channel-vf1f41d04>

Coastguard audio call reveals reality of Channel migrant rescue missions
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coastguard-audio-call-reveals-reality-of-channel-migrant-rescue-missions-zvzdlzfgj>

Home Office snap judgments on whether migrants are adults or children are illegal, court rules
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/01/19/migrants-classed-adults-claiming-children-could-have-cases-reviewed/>

UK judge rules age assessment of asylum seekers was unlawful
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/19/uk-judge-rules-that-age-assessment-of-asylum-seekers-was-unlawful>

'Teen' migrants win fight with Priti Patel after 'unlawful' age assessments

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/priti-patel-kent-high-court-justice-dover-b1996614.html>

Child refugees forced to share rooms with adults after being wrongly deemed over 18

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/children-asylum-seekers-age-assessments-home-office-uk-b1992680.html>

Home Office threatened to deport asylum seekers for crimes they did not commit

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-asylum-seekers-crime-channel-b1993466.html>

Glasgow's links as a safe haven for Jewish refugees explored in new trail

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19857052.revealed-glasgows-links-safe-haven-jewish-refugees-explored-new-trail/>

TOP

Community Relations

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Ed Davey (Liberal Democrat) [853] Tamil Heritage Month 2022 – That this House recognises January as Tamil Heritage Month; acknowledges the tremendous contributions that Tamils make to British society, particularly the vital role the Tamil community has played in helping the UK tackle covid-19 as healthcare workers, teachers, and vaccine researchers; celebrates the richness of Tamil culture; notes that the Canadian Government has already recognised January as Tamil Heritage Month; further notes that January is an important month for Tamils as it marks Thai Pongal, the Tamil Harvest Festival; recognises the importance of increasing awareness about the accomplishments of the Tamil diaspora; and calls on the UK Government to formally establish January as Tamil Heritage Month.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/59347>

TOP

Equality

News

Multicultural Britain needs to reform marriage

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/multicultural-britain-needs-to-reform-marriage-x52cjhvw5>

TOP

Racism, Religious Hatred, and Discrimination

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Social Media: Hate Crime

Jim Shannon (DUP) [101725] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will include provisions in forthcoming online harms bill to prevent anonymity in social media to help tackle the prevalence of online hate.

Reply from Chris Philp: The Online Safety Bill places new requirements in relation to anonymity online. It requires companies in scope to effectively manage the risk of online anonymous abuse on user-to-user services.

Services within scope of the Bill will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content and prevent children from harmful content. Major platforms will also need to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable for adult users on their services and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. This applies whether a user is anonymous or not. If platforms fail in their duties under the Bill, they will face tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global annual qualifying turnover.

The draft Bill has been subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee which reported its recommendations on 14 December. We are considering the Committee's report and will introduce the Bill as soon as possible.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-11/101725>

The Joint Committee report referred to above can be read at

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt5802/jtselect/jtonlinesafety/129/129.pdf>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers

Hate Crime

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL5161] To ask Her Majesty's Government, following reports that the Home Secretary will seek to change how non-crime hate incidents are recorded, what plans they have to compensate people who have been recorded as having committed such incidents; and how any such compensation would be calculated.

Reply from Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government recognises the concern surrounding the recording of non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs). We have also noted the recent Court of Appeal judgment in the Harry Miller v College of Policing case that was handed down on 20 December 2021. The Court found that the recording of non-crime hate incidents is lawful provided that there are robust safeguards in place so that the interference with freedom of expression is proportionate.

Accordingly, we are bringing forward amendments to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to ensure that the recording of NCHIs is governed by a Code of Practice that is subject to Parliamentary approval. The content of the Code will be drafted in due course, and will make the processes surrounding the recording and retention of NCHI data more transparent and subject to stronger safeguards.

There are no plans to introduce a compensation scheme.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-06/hl5161>

The judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Miller-v-College-of-Policing-judgment-201221.pdf>

The following five questions all received the same answer

College of Policing: Hate Crime

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL5089] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Court of Appeal ruling that the College of Policing guidance on non-crime hate incidents was unlawful, what plans they have to suspend any guidance issued by the College of Policing.

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL5090] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of the 110,000 people who have been recorded as having committed non-crime hate incidents; and what plans they have, if any, to assist such individuals in bringing legal action against the College of Policing.

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL5091] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to suspend guidance produced by the College of Policing until such guidance can be laid before Parliament as regulations.

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL5093] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, (1) to investigate, and (2) to dismiss, those in the College of Policing who approved the non-crime hate incidents guidance.

Hate Crime

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL5092] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to remove the people recorded as having committed non-crimes hate incidents from police records.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government recognises the concern surrounding the recording of non-crime hate incidents (NCHIs). We have also noted the recent Court of Appeal judgment in the Harry Miller v College of Policing case that was handed down on 20 December 2021. The Court found that the recording of NCHIs is lawful provided that there are robust safeguards in place so that the interference with freedom of expression is proportionate.

Accordingly, we have tabled amendments to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to ensure that the recording of NCHIs is governed by a Code of Practice that is subject to Parliamentary approval. The content of the Code will be drafted in due course, and will make the processes surrounding the recording and retention of NCHI data more transparent and subject to stronger safeguards.

The College of Policing will also reflect on the Court of Appeal's judgment carefully and make any changes that are necessary to its existing guidance which will remain in force in the interim period before the new Code enters into effect.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-05/hl5089>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-05/hl5090>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-05/hl5091>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-05/hl5093>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-05/hl5092>

The judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Miller-v-College-of-Policing-judgment-201221.pdf>

A revised version of the guidance referred to above can be read at

<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/hate-crime/responding-to-non-crime-hate-incidents/#recording-non-crime-hate-incidents>

Press Release

Ben John's sentence increased following personal intervention by the Solicitor General
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ben-johns-sentence-increased-following-personal-intervention-by-the-solicitor-general--3>

News

Police struggle to cope as new hate crime law leads to surge in reports
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/police-struggle-to-cope-as-new-hate-crime-law-leads-to-surge-in-reports-rhmv7jp6k>

Nusrat Ghani: Muslimness a reason for my sacking, says ex-minister
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-60100525>

Tory MP Nusrat Ghani: I was sacked as a minister 'because of my Muslim faith'
<https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/19868090.tory-mp-nusrat-ghani-sacked-minister-because-muslim-faith/>

Chief whip comes forward as person behind 'Muslimness' sacking claim
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jan/22/tory-mp-says-muslimness-given-as-reason-for-losing-job>

Nusrat Ghani needs to make formal Islamophobia complaint, says Raab
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jan/23/nusrat-ghani-needs-to-make-formal-islamophobia-complaint-says-raab>

Ben John, the Nazi sympathiser who chose Hitler over Jane Austen, is jailed
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/01/19/nazi-sympathiser-jailed-judge-quashes-lenient-book-reading-punishment/>

Ben John: Neo-Nazi terror offender ordered to read Jane Austen jailed after 'unduly lenient' sentence quashed
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/neo-nazi-jane-austen-ben-john-b1996407.html>

How Nazi Ben John went from having to 'read classic lit' to prison for terror offence
<https://tellmamauk.org/how-nazi-ben-john-went-from-having-to-read-classic-lit-to-prison-for-terror-offence/>

Royal Shakespeare Company director criticises 'disgraceful' racist backlash to Black cast
<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/news/shakespeare-racism-rsc-black-cast-b1996955.html>

What Covid taught us about racism – and what we need to do now
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/dec/16/systemic-racism-covid-gary-young>

Holocaust Memorial Day: Why it matters more than ever before
<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/holocaust-memorial-day-why-it-matters-more-than-ever-before-professor-joe-goldblatt-3531694>

Duchess of Cornwall: ‘Let us not be bystanders to injustice or prejudice’

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/royal-family/2022/01/20/duchess-cornwall-urges-public-let-us-not-bystanders-injustice/>

Do not be ‘bystanders to injustice or prejudice’, Camilla tells nation

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/eva-schloss-joanna-lumley-anne-frank-azeem-rafiq-duchess-of-cornwall-b1997380.html>

Adama Traoré to tackle racism in football: ‘It’s important I use my platform’

<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/jan/18/adama-traore-to-tackle-racism-in-football-its-important-i-use-my-platform>

Adama Traore reveals plan to stand up against racism in football

<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/adama-traore-racism-common-goal-b1995294.html>

Nathan Blake: There could be a union for black players in bid to tackle racism

<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/wales-people-fifa-blackburn-wolves-b1997761.html>

TOP

Other Scottish Parliament and Government

Scottish Parliament Motion

Sandesh Gulhane (Conservative) [S6M-02816] Kidney Research UK’s Scottish South Asian (Sikh, Hindu and Muslim) Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Project –

That the Parliament recognises the work of Kidney Research UK’s Scottish South Asian (Sikh, Hindu and Muslim) Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Project; understands that those from a South Asian background are five times more likely to start dialysis than those from other backgrounds and that registration on the organ donor register is low in these populations; notes that Kidney Research UK’s peer educator programme works with community volunteers to educate, discuss and answer questions on kidney health, disease and organ donation, and praises Kidney Research UK for adapting its ways of working during the COVID-19 pandemic by holding online webinar services via Zoom, to continue raising awareness of what it considers an important issue in Scotland.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/votes-and-motions-search/S6M-02816>

New Publication

Recorded Crime in Scotland: December 2021

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-december-2021/>

TOP

Other UK Parliament and Government

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Social Media: Harassment

Carla Lockhart (DUP) [99411] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions officials in her Department have had with representatives of social media platforms on tackling the use of anonymous accounts to abuse people.

Reply from Chris Philp: Officials have regular meetings and discussions with social media platforms on a range of issues, including the use of anonymous accounts.

The Online Safety Bill will require companies in scope to manage the risk of online anonymous abuse. Companies will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content and prevent children from harmful abuse. Major platforms will also need to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable for adult users on their services and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. This applies whether a user is anonymous or not.

If platforms fail in their duties under the Bill, they will face tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global annual qualifying turnover.

The draft Bill has been subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee which reported its recommendations on 14 December. We are considering the Committee's report and will introduce the Bill as soon as possible.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-07/99411>

The Joint Committee report referred to above can be read at

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt5802/jtselect/jtonlinesafety/129/129.pdf>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Higher Education: Muslims

Matt Western (Labour) [104380] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of potential impact on Muslim students' participation in higher education of the absence of Sharia-compliant student finance.

Students: Finance

Matt Western (Labour) [104381] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to introduce Sharia-compliant alternative student finance.

Reply from Michelle Donelan: The government has been carefully considering an alternative student finance product, alongside wider reforms to the higher education system, and an update will be provided alongside the conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding. The interim conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding was published on 21 January 2021, and we will conclude the Review in full at a future date.

The government undertook an assessment of the impact of interest-bearing loans on Muslim students in the impact assessment for the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, which was published in December 2017, and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-and-research-act-impact-assessments>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104380>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-14/104381>

The Review referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/953332/Interim_Conclusion_of_Review_of_Post-18_Education_and_Funding.pdf

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Out-of-school Education: Islam

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL5056] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Answer by Baroness Barran on 15 December (HL Deb col 297), what estimate they have made of (1) the number of madrassas in England, and (2) the number of children that attend them; whether they have made an assessment of whether radical Islamist views are being taught in those madrassas; and if so, what were the conclusions of that assessment.

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL5057] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Answer by Baroness Barran on 15 December (HL Deb, col 297), what plans they have to encourage Ofsted to inspect all madrassas in England, regardless of whether they provide teaching for fewer than 18 hours per week.

Reply from Baroness Barran: The department does not hold a register of madrassas and has not made an estimate of the number of madrassas or the number of children attending them.

Madrassas are generally considered to be out-of-school settings, which are not captured by a single dedicated regulatory framework, and are not subject to inspections by Ofsted or the department.

Local authorities are, however, legally responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in their areas, including when attending out-of-school settings. To support local authorities with their existing safeguarding duties, the department has been taking forward a package of measures to enhance safeguarding in out-of-school settings, safeguarding children from all forms of harm, including extremism and terrorism.

This package of activity has included over £3 million of targeted funding to selected local authorities to examine ways to boost local capacity to identify and intervene in out-of-school settings of concern, and to test the utility of existing powers and engagement approaches for undertaking safeguarding activity in these settings. The final phase of this work concluded end of December last year, and we are currently considering the next steps for this work.

In addition, the department has also published a voluntary safeguarding code of practice to support providers, such as madrassas, to understand what they need to do to run a setting safely, and accompanying guidance for parents and carers to help them make more informed choices, including the red flags to look out for and what steps to take where they might have concerns. This is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings>

If the department became aware of a setting where extremist activity was taking place or where children were at risk of harm, we would work closely with relevant agencies, such as the local authority, Ofsted and the police, to take action.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/hl5056>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/hl5057>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-12-15/debates/8973CC98-51BB-4694-B869-E8D8B38D5297/AlternativeEducation#contribution-7AEE3176-FFB3-40DE-A351-09587CF42D96>

TOP

Health Information: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

NHS

Coronavirus helpline

People living in Scotland who don't have any symptoms but are looking for general information can call the coronavirus helpline. If you're a non-English speaker you can still use this service. Phone 0800 028 2816, tell the call handler that you need an interpreter, give the name of your preferred language and you will be connected to a Language Line interpreter. You will not have to pay for this.

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>

Book a flu or coronavirus booster vaccination

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

Get a record of your coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination status

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine/after-your-vaccine/get-a-record-of-your-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-status>

Protect-Scot contact tracing app

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

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/>

Scottish Government Press Release

Distance Aware

<https://www.gov.scot/news/distance-aware/>

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/>

UK Government Publications

The R value and growth rate

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-r-value-and-growth-rate>

PM statement to the House of Commons on COVID-19: 19 January 2022

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-to-the-house-of-commons-on-covid-19-19-january-2022>

News

Scotland to lift most remaining Covid restrictions

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-60042339>

Covid in Scotland: Restrictions impact 'worth it', says Sturgeon

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-60102560>

Shield badges for Scots to distance from Covid

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-60082436>

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Other News

It's back - The Gathering returns for 2022

<https://tfn.scot/news/its-back-the-gathering-returns-for-2022>

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Bills in Progress

** new or updated this week

UK Parliament

Asylum Seekers (Accommodation Eviction Procedures) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2995>

Asylum Seekers (Permission to Work) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2918>

Asylum Seekers (Permission to Work) (No. 2) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3003>

Asylum Seekers (Return to Safe Countries) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2961>

Barnett Formula (Replacement) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2982>

Housing Standards (Refugees and Asylum Seekers) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3002>

**** Human Trafficking (Child Protection) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2953>

Bill as introduced

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-02/0071/220071.pdf>

Human Trafficking (Sentencing) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2963>

Illegal Immigration (Offences) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2986>

Immigration (Health and Social Care Staff) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3005>

Modern Slavery (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2892>

**** Nationality and Borders Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

Joint Committee on Human Rights Legislative Scrutiny Report: Nationality and Borders Bill (Parts 1, 2 and 4) – Asylum, Home Office Decision Making, Age Assessments, and Deprivation of Citizenship Orders

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8549/documents/86371/default/>

**** Online Safety Bill (Draft)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Evidence session: Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Sub-Committee on Online Harms and Disinformation

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/3304/html/>

Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2883>

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Consultations

**** new or updated this week**

**** closes this week!**

Napier Barracks planning application (closing date 30 January 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/napier-barracks-planning-application>

Draft Northern Ireland Refugee Integration Strategy (closing date 21 February 2022)
<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/draft-refugee-integration-strategy>

Review of the operation of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland
(closing date 7 March 2022)
<https://tinyurl.com/2h pz9wu9>

Fearless Scotland – National Youth Survey (closing date not stated)
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/fearless-Scotland>

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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

**** Workplace Equality Fund**

Closing date for applications: 11 April 2022

Scottish Government funding to support employers in identifying, addressing, and diminishing longstanding barriers facing particular priority groups in entering and progressing within the labour market. The central goal of the fund is to incentivise and support collaborative projects that aspire to reduce employment inequalities and cultivate positive, fair, and inclusive workplace practices, with the intention of improving employment opportunities and progression policies within Scottish workplaces; particularly for the identified priority groups, improving knowledge, skills, and practices with respect to addressing employment inequalities; thereby engendering significant improvement for priority groups, and create and maintain an inclusive working environment through employees and employers working in partnership. For information and to apply see

<https://equalityadvice.scot/>

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Events, Conferences, and Training

** new or updated this week

**** this week!**

One Day: National Holocaust Memorial Day, Scotland

26 January 2022 (online, 6.00–7.00)

Official National Holocaust Memorial Day Event for Scotland to pay respects to those who lost their lives in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, and attempt to learn the lessons from humanity's dark past. The program will include contributions from Holocaust survivor Henry Wuga, Rwandan genocide survivor Eric Eugene Murangwa, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, and Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government Shona Robison. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/2p8fv445>

**** this week!**

Light the Darkness: UK Holocaust Memorial Day 2022

27 January 2022 (Glasgow and online, 6.30–8.30)

Households across the UK will be lighting candles and safely putting them in their windows to remember those who were murdered for who they were, and stand against prejudice and hatred today. Join Interfaith Scotland either in person or online for a film screening of the UK-wide commemorative event, candle lighting ceremony, and, for those participating in person, light refreshments. For information about the in-person event see <https://tinyurl.com/3ftrje99> and about the online event see <https://tinyurl.com/mr3whtbf>

Refugees: Asylum and Resettlement

3 and 4 February 2022 (online, 11.30–3.30 both days)

29 and 30 March 2022 (online, 11.30–3.30 both days)

16 and 17 June 2022 (online, 11.30–3.30 both days)

6 and 7 September 2022 (online, 11.30–3.30 both days)

27 and 28 October 2022 (online, 11.30–3.30 both days)

Scottish Refugee Council 2-day course drawing on the experiences of people seeking asylum and people who have been resettled in the UK, to examine why people might need to flee their own country, how they seek asylum in the UK, and what opportunities exist for rebuilding their lives here in the UK. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/jd2tey6w>

**** Welcoming refugee families in Scotland through Community Sponsorship**

3 February 2022 (online, 5.30–6.30)

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees information session to explain how community sponsorship works, hear from a family who has been resettled through this programme and the faith community that welcomed them, and find out possible next steps for community sponsorship in your context. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/39c4m3d5>

**** Refugee Week Conference**

7 February 2022 (online, 10.30–12.45)

11 February 2022 (online, 10.30–12.45)

Online conference to share inspiration, learning and ideas ahead of Refugee Week 2022 in June. The Refugee Week conference is for anyone who is interested in taking part in Refugee Week, an annual festival celebrating the contributions of refugees. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/2p9bdva9>

Supporting Refugee Integration

15 and 16 February 2022 (online, 1.00–4.30 both days)

28 and 29 April 2022 (online, 1.00–4.30 both days)

11 and 12 October 2022 (online, 1.00–4.30 both days)

15 and 16 December 2022 (online, 1.00–4.30 both days)

Scottish Refugee Council 2-day course to enable participants to understand the principles of a refugee-led integration framework, understand how dependency is created and how to build on people's resilience, and feel confident to facilitate refugee-led integration effectively. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/ukvn5rs5>

Rights and Entitlements of EEA Nationals

2 March 2022 (online, 10.00–12.30)

PAiH training on 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 see <https://tinyurl.com/24ba4stk>

Rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

9 March 2022 (online, 10.00–12.30)

PAiH 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 see <https://tinyurl.com/24ba4stk>

Working with Interpreters

15 and 16 March 2022 (online, 1.00–4.30 both days)

27 and 28 September 2022 (online, 1.00–4.30 both days)

24 and 25 November 2022 (online, 1.00–4.30 both days)

Scottish Refugee Council 2-day courses to enable participants to understand the legal context and qualifications governing interpreters in the EU, UK and Scotland, know the different types of interpreting, identify the differences between an interpreter and a bi-lingual support worker, and who to use when, and recognise when it is inappropriate to use a family member, a friend or a community member to interpret. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/puykxxnu>

Working with Unaccompanied Refugee Children

21 and 22 April 2022 (online, 11.30–3.30 both days)

10 and 11 November 2022 (online, 11.30–3.30 both days)

Scottish Refugee Council 2-day course to enable participants to recognise the legal difference between children seeking asylum, children who have been trafficked, refugees and migrants, appreciate the journeys that children have made to be in the UK including being trafficked, understand the Age Assessment process, identify the rights and entitlements of separated children, and become familiar with the statutory responsibilities of the Scottish Guardianship Service. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/3fedr5xn>

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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>

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/disclosure-types>

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
Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and
Cultural Minority Communities

***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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