



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

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

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Immigration and Asylum

UK Parliament Debate

Windrush

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-02-29/debates/00C4804B-4053-4129-8393-7C36E595B386/Windrush>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Legal Migration

David Duguid (Conservative) [901613] What steps [the Minister] is taking to reduce levels of legal migration.

Sarah Dines (Conservative) [901617] What steps [the Minister] is taking to reduce levels

of legal migration.

Reply from the Minister for Legal Migration and the Border (Tom Pursglove):

On 4 December, the Government announced a package of new measures to further reduce net migration, including but not limited to stopping overseas care workers bringing family dependants, increasing the salary threshold for skilled worker visas to £38,700 and raising the minimum income requirement for family visas in stages to £38,700. The changes are being introduced gradually from early 2024 and are not retrospective.

David Duguid: I welcome the measures taken to reduce abuses of the immigration system, but I also recognise the need to exempt critical occupations where we have a specific shortage from the new minimum salary, for example health and care workers. However, in the Migration Advisory Committee's interim review of the immigration salary list, published on Friday, several occupations have been removed because a discounted salary of around £31,000 is well above the going rate for such occupations. Given the vital and growing importance of food security across the country, will my hon. Friend commit to a review of those occupations which, although not the highest tech or highest paid jobs in our economy, are none the less critical for our food sector and our rural and coastal communities?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: There is no stronger advocate for the fishing industry in this House than my hon. Friend. He will appreciate that we have received that return from the MAC. We will look very carefully at its recommendations, but my hon. Friend knows that as a Government we have been consistently flexible in responding to the needs of the fishing sector. I would argue that there is more we can do to promote domestic employment, but let me take this matter away and consider his representations.

Sarah Dines: A key issue often raised by my constituents is the desire to see a dramatic reduction in legal migration. Bearing in mind that the Opposition appear to have no plan in that regard, can my hon. Friend reassure me that he will look at new ways to stop this migration, that he will make sure that everybody has the right to work in this country and that we will not decrease wages by bringing in cheap labour from abroad?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: My hon. Friend is very supportive of the holistic approach that the Government are taking on this issue. The measures that we have announced and are taking forward will reduce the inflows by 300,000. It is important to consider this against the back to work plan that the Department for Work and Pensions is delivering to encourage more people to take on these roles domestically. She should be absolutely certain that we as a Government will deliver on these measures and will continue to keep them under review to see whether we can go further. That stands in stark contrast to those on the Opposition Front Bench, who have no plan at all. ...

Patrick Grady (SNP): I hope the Minister will take this opportunity to recognise that the right to claim asylum is allowed under international law and that, therefore, there is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker. On that basis, perhaps he can tell us whether he or any Minister has met people with lived experience of the system and whether he will meet the people at the Maryhill Integration Network in Glasgow North to discuss these issues.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: ... I have made an undertaking to him that that meeting will happen ... at the earliest possible opportunity. I am keen to understand what the challenges are and to make sure that the support that we are providing to help facilitate move-ons, for example, is meeting the needs that exist. ...

Stephen Kinnock (Labour): Since our last Home Office questions, the list of Government failures on immigration has continued to grow relentlessly: 30,000 asylum seekers stuck in limbo, unable to be processed due to the Prime Minister's legislative fiasco; 250 visas awarded to a care home that does not actually exist; net migration trebled; and criminals free to fly into our country undetected on private jets. Having just sacked the independent

inspector of borders and immigration, is the Home Secretary sitting on 15 different reports by the inspector because he is checking for typos, or is it because he is utterly terrified of what those reports will tell us about this Government's shambolic and failing immigration system?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Let me answer that point very directly: having given proper consideration to those reports, we will be responding to them. As I said in the House last week, we will do so very soon. The shadow Minister mentioned the Government trying to dodge scrutiny. When it comes to the general aviation report, for example, it was our officials who asked the inspector to take it forward. Far from dodging scrutiny, we have invited it in that area. We will respond properly and thoroughly to that report in exactly the way that I undertook to do last week. ...

Alison Thewliss (SNP): People who come here to work, study and live make a significant impact on Scotland's economy and society, so reducing their number is entirely self-defeating. Reunite Families UK has highlighted the disproportionate impact that Tory changes to visa income thresholds will have on women. I have asked the Minister this before, and I have yet to have an answer: when will he publish the full equality impact assessment on this damaging policy?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: We will publish the equality impact assessment associated with the policy in due course. The hon. Lady will appreciate that the Government's position is clear that the current levels of net migration are not sustainable. We need to take forward a set of policy measures that deal with that and that promote domestic employment wherever possible. There is a strong moral case for the approach that we are taking. None of the measures being applied is retrospective, but we are convinced that this is the right thing to do. The British people think that action is needed, and action is what they are getting.

Alison Thewliss: ... The Government's changes to the Ukraine scheme came with very little notice and caused a great deal of uncertainty and distress in that community. Will the Minister tell me whether, for example, a wife whose husband has been injured fighting on the frontline against Putin's war machine will be able to sponsor her husband to come here under these restricted rules?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: ... the Government are very proud of the amazing response from people across this country who have opened their homes to Ukrainian refugees. There will continue to be an out-of-country route through the Homes for Ukraine scheme to facilitate people being able to come here from Ukraine. Ukrainian refugees here in the UK will be able to extend their visas. We gave that certainty way ahead of the curve, when compared with our international partners. Ukrainian nationals who would have qualified under the Ukraine family scheme will still be able to apply under Homes for Ukraine.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/1E6C8340-6F3A-49F5-B029-1F26C880BA6D/LegalMigration>

The announcement referred to above by Tom Pursglove can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-04/debates/921A08A2-F615-48F2-8C56-423A29556F9F/LegalMigration>

The Migration Advisory Committee interim review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rapid-review-of-the-immigration-salary-list/rapid-review-of-the-immigration-salary-list-accessible>

Illegal Migration: Co-operation with France

Michael Fabricant (Conservative) [901622] What recent progress [the Minister] has made with his French counterparts on tackling illegal migration.

Reply from the Minister for Countering Illegal Migration (Michael Tomlinson): Joint working with our French partners is crucial to stopping the boats. Thanks in

no small part to that joint working, small boat crossings were down by 46% last year. ...

Andrew Bridgen (Independent): Will the Minister update the House on the number of illegal migrants who have crossed the channel and are currently being accommodated in hotels at the expense of the public purse? How does that compare with the number of UK nationals who are currently homeless or sleeping rough?

Reply from Michael Tomlinson: I can confirm that the Government have beaten our target of closing 50 hotels by the end of January, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will want to welcome.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/E34FF180-700A-4E14-8193-2E7E507EFD82/IllegalMigrationCo-OperationWithFrance>

Asylum Accommodation: Safety and Wellbeing

Olivia Blake (Labour) [901621] What steps [the Minister's] Department is taking to help ensure the safety and wellbeing of asylum seekers in asylum accommodation.

Reply from the Minister for Legal Migration and the Border (Tom Pursglove): We continue to provide safe, habitable and fit-for-purpose accommodation for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. The Home Office has established procedures to hold contracted accommodation providers responsible for the provision of the safety, security and wellbeing of asylum seekers. In addition, asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 helpline to raise concerns and make formal complaints.

Olivia Blake: Recent tragic events demonstrate that even those who are at risk of suicide are ignored after repeatedly raising concerns about their mental health in asylum accommodation. Why have Ministers changed the allocation of asylum accommodation policy to make it harder for people to prove that they are at risk of harm at a particular site? Will they learn the lessons from December's tragic incident?

Reply from Tom Pursglove: I do not accept the depiction that the hon. Lady paints of the situation. We of course make appropriate case-by-case decisions about accommodation arrangements for individuals, reflecting the needs they have and with proper referrals made, as one would rightly expect, to any other agencies that may be required to ensure somebody's health or wellbeing, and that any safeguarding issues are properly addressed. Migrant Help support is of course available for people to access 24/7 and raise any issues.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/26A62B39-A64B-4C6B-BFED-3201F8C76A1E/AsylumAccommodationSafetyAndWellbeing>

Asylum Hotels

Daniel Kawczynski (Conservative) [901623] What progress his Department has made on closing asylum hotels.

Reply from the Minister for Legal Migration and the Border (Tom Pursglove): The Home Office has been clear that the use of hotels was a temporary and short-term measure to ensure that we met our statutory obligation to accommodate destitute asylum seekers during a period of unprecedented numbers of small boat arrivals. We are making significant progress in closing hotels, with more than 64 closed by the end of January.

... we are tracking ahead of profile when it comes to closing hotels, and the number of people accommodated in hotels is going down. We will continue to make progress in order to allow more closures...

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat): Obviously the overwhelming majority of those seeking asylum here and who are in residential accommodation desperately do not want to be in that accommodation. They want their application to be heard and processed quickly. The

Minister knows that around three quarters of those people will be granted asylum in this country. Does he agree that part of the process, while a person is waiting for their hearing and for their decision to be made, surely should be looking at integration? Given that, is not time to give asylum seekers the right to work in this country? That would be good for them morally, but also good for the Government and the taxpayer, because they would contribute to their own upkeep.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: It is fair to say that such an approach would make a mockery of our legal migration system and people playing by the rules, lodging applications and paying the appropriate fees. It is right that where people are granted asylum, we support them to be able to move on as quickly as possible. Work is a key part of that. I just wish the hon. Gentleman had the same energy to try to help more of our people domestically to be able to take on these roles, rather than saying that we should resort to migrant labour all the time.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/B6FB98CA-D2CA-472B-BF27-5D60AB9D2E16/AsylumHotels>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answer: Rwanda Refugee Policy

Asylum: Rwanda

Stephen Kinnock (Labour) [15649] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of its policy on removing asylum seekers from the UK to Rwanda on the number of (a) English Channel crossings in small boats by asylum seekers and (b) asylum seekers undertaking small boat crossings in the next two years; and on what evidential basis the policy was introduced.

Reply from Michael Tomlinson: The Home Office is committed to ending people smuggling, and the Migration and Economic Development Partnership between the UK and Rwanda is part of a suite of measures aimed at dismantling the business model of organised crime gangs.

The Ministerial direction letter (April 2022) can be found here:- [Letter from Matthew Rycroft to Rt Hon Priti Patel](#).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-26/15649>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers: Ukraine

Visas: Ukraine

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat) [15845] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions his Department had with Ukrainian refugees ahead of the decision to extend visas by 18 months.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: In response to calls for certainty about the future of the Ukraine visa schemes from the Ukrainian community, on 18 February we announced that existing Ukraine scheme visa holders will be able to apply for permission to remain in the UK for an additional 18 months under a new Ukraine Permission Extension scheme set to open in early 2025 (before the first UKR scheme visas start to expire in March 2025).

Since the announcement, alongside colleagues in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, we have participated in extensive engagement with the Ukrainian community via an ongoing programme of stakeholder engagement.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/15845>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-stay-for-ukrainians-in-the-uk>

Information about the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information>

Refugees: Ukraine

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat) [15846] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing more integration support for Ukrainian refugees.

Reply from Felicity Buchan: Local authorities will continue to receive the £5,900 per person tariff payment to support our Ukrainian guests. We are also working across Government to identify other ways to unblock barriers, helping Ukrainians access employment, commensurate with their skill set, liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), who encourage their employer and the Refugee Employment networks to advertise job vacancies. In addition, Job Centre Plus teams also help guests with much needed CV Writing and Interview skills courses. Ukrainians with work related qualifications are directed to the UK National Information Centre (UK ENIC) for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills, as well as signposting to the relevant professional regulators, all of which is available as comprehensive guidance on GOV.UK.

For specific healthcare and education roles, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Department for Education (DfE) have provided pathways for Ukrainians, to help them understand what they need to do to work in these sectors, also available on GOV.UK.

We recognise through engagement with guests, other Government departments, local councils, VCS organisations and sponsors that English language skills is one of the main barriers to employment, and wider integration. The UK Government is funding STEP Ukraine which is a completely free, virtual 12-week English language and employment support programme for Ukrainians in the UK. Thousands of Ukrainians have already benefited from STEP Ukraine, achieving improved job prospects and English language skills whilst here in the UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/15846>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-guests>

Refugees: Ukraine

Neil Hudson (Conservative) [15505] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help support Ukrainian refugees living in the UK.

Reply from Felicity Buchan: As set out previously, local authorities will continue to receive a tariff payment to support our Ukrainian guests. Sponsors are also eligible for an 'Thank You payment' of £350 per month for the first 12 months of a Ukrainian guest's stay in the UK and £500 thereafter.

We recognise through engagement with guests, other government departments, local councils, VCS organisations and sponsors that English is one of the main barriers to employment, so we announced £11.5 million in the Spring Budget 2023 to fund intensive English language courses and employment support for up to 10,000 eligible individuals under the Ukraine visa schemes.

This programme provides free online English lessons and employment support to Ukrainian arrivals to help them improve their job prospects.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-23/15505>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Refugees: Ukraine

Mike Amesbury (Labour) [14931] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of Ukrainian refugees presenting as homeless.

Mike Amesbury (Labour) [14932] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of adequacy of (a) funding and (b) support arrangements for Ukrainian refugees.

Reply from Felicity Buchan: Local authorities will continue to receive the per person tariff payment to support our Ukrainian guests. Sponsors are eligible for an optional 'Thank You payment' of £350 per month per address, for the first 12 months of a Ukrainian guest's stay in the UK and £500 thereafter. A proportion of the tariff was always intended to fund homeless prevention for the small proportion of sponsorships that fail or Ukrainians who are unable to find housing. We also launched the Local Authority Housing Fund, details of which are available online. On Homelessness, as of 15 February 2024, 820 households are in temporary accommodation. The data has been published on Gov.UK and can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-management-information-ukrainian-nationals-england>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14931>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14932>

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

Windrush Compensation Scheme

Kate Osamor (Independent) [14665] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in each quarter since the Windrush Compensation scheme was launched, how many people who received an award applied (a) fewer than three months, (b) three to six months, (c) six to 12 months and (d) more than a year before the award.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Windrush Compensation Scheme's priority is to ensure people receive the maximum compensation as quickly as possible.

The time taken to allocate a claim for a substantive casework consideration has been reduced from 18 months to under 4 months. The 4-month period includes all essential eligibility checks, together with a Preliminary Assessment to make an initial payment of £10,000 wherever possible.

Information on the time taken from a claim being received to a compensation payment is not published.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-19/14665>

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

The following two questions both received the same answer

Visas: Married People

Deidre Brock (SNP) [14161] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when he plans to announce the start date of the new minimum income threshold for spouse visas of £34,500.

Visas: Families

Deidre Brock (SNP) [14173] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of Reunite Families

UK's report entitled UK family migration rules: spouse / partner migration rules: an initial findings report examining the mental health impact of the rules on children and families, published on 18 December 2023.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: From 11 April 2024, we will raise the minimum income threshold for family visas to £29,000, that is the 25th percentile of earnings for jobs which are eligible for Skilled Worker visas. We will incrementally increase the threshold, moving to the 40th percentile (currently £34,500), and finally to the 50th percentile (currently £38,700, and the level at which the General Skilled Worker threshold is set) by early 2025. The dates of these changes will be set out in due course.

We have reviewed the Reunite Families Report published on 18 December 2023. We will add the findings to our evidence base when formulating future reviews into family immigration policies, including the Minimum Income Requirement.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14161>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14173>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.reunitefamiliesuk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RFUK-Year-1-Initial-Findings-Mental-Health-Impact-of-the-Spouse-Migration-Rules-FINAL-and-Implemental-Report.pdf>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Visas: Married People

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [14146] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on implementing the proposed increase in minimum income requirements for spouse and partner visa applications.

Visas

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [14147] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department invited representations from stakeholders before introducing the proposed changes to the minimum income requirement threshold for (a) skilled worker and (b) spousal visas.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: From 11 April 2024, we will raise the minimum income threshold for Family visas to £29,000, that is the 25th percentile of earnings for jobs which are eligible for Skilled Worker visas. We will incrementally increase the threshold, moving to the 40th percentile (currently £34,500), and finally to the 50th percentile (currently £38,700, and the level at which the General Skilled Worker threshold is set) by early 2025.

The Government will publish an Equality Impact Assessment on this change in due course.

A fact sheet and an impact assessment can be found on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fact-sheet-on-net-migration-measures-further-detail>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/legal-migration-statement-estimated-immigration-impacts/legal-migration-statement-estimated-immigration-impacts-accessible>

The Government engages regularly with business sectors, including through a number of its advisory groups, when developing its policies and which will continue to strike the balance between reducing overall net migration and ensuring that businesses have the skills they need to support economic growth.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14146>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14147>

Migrant Workers: NHS

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [14148] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether this Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of proposed increases to the immigration health surcharge on the well-being of migrant workers in the NHS.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Migrants applying to work in the NHS on the basis of the Health and Care Worker visa are exempt from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS).

Migrants applying on other immigration routes are required to pay the IHS as part of their application. Migrants employed in the NHS on visas other than the Health and Care Worker visa are able to claim reimbursement of the IHS paid for periods employed in the health and social care sectors.

The Home Office undertook an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and an Impact Assessment (IA) alongside the IHS increase. These have been published and can be found at the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-health-surcharge-ihs-equality-impact-assessment-2023/immigration-health-surcharge-equality-impact-assessment-2023-accessible>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/55/impacts>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14148>

Undocumented Migrants: Airports

John Hayes (Conservative) [14797] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were caught attempting to enter the UK illegally through (a) airports and (b) airfields in each year since 2019.

Reply from Michael Tomlinson: The Home Office publishes statistics on detected irregular arrivals to the UK in the '[Irregular migration to the UK statistics](#)' release on gov.uk.

Data on people who have arrived in the UK as 'Inadequately documented air arrivals' are included in table Irr_01 of the '[Irregular migration to the UK detailed datasets](#)', with the latest data up to the end of September 2023.

The Home Office does not publish the requested data in any further breakdowns.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14797>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Refugees: Resettlement

Olivia Blake (Labour) [16047] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding he plans to allocate to refugee integration in 2024.

Olivia Blake (Labour) [16048] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funds he plans to provide for the UK's Global Refugee Forum 2023 pledge on continued support for the integration of refugees in the UK.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: As pledged at the Global Refugee Forum 2023, the Government remains committed to enabling resettled refugees in rebuilding their lives in the UK. That is why refugees, as well as individuals arriving via our resettlement schemes with Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK, have access to mainstream benefits and services to support their integration.

The Home Office also provides local authorities with a core tariff of £20,520 per person to cover resettlement and integration costs for those who arrive through the UK Resettlement Scheme, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy. In the first year, local authorities also receive up to £4,500 per child for education and £850 to cover additional English language provision for adults, and health partners receive £2,600 per individual to cover healthcare.

Those granted protection through the asylum system are offered support from Migrant Help or their partner organisation. This support includes providing advice on accessing the labour market, on applying for Universal Credit, and signposting to local authorities for assistance with housing.

Refugees who arrived through safe and legal routes or were granted Refugee Permission to Stay on or after 28 June 2022 have access to the Refugee Employability Programme (REP). This launched in England in September 2023 and delivers a range of activities to support refugees, including employment, English language and integration support.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/16047>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/16048>

Asylum

Stephen Timms (Labour) [14778] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he is taking steps to help ensure the adequacy of resources for supporting the integration of asylum seekers into British society in (a) local authorities and (b) organisations in the (i) voluntary, (ii) community and (iii) faith sector.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: This Government's priority is to focus our efforts and resources to support those who most need it. As not all of those who seek asylum are found to need international protection, integration resources are available to those granted permission to stay. Under the New Plan for Immigration, the Government committed to offering an enhanced integration package for refugees arriving through safe and legal routes.

Individuals granted asylum have access to the labour market and to mainstream services that support their integration, including benefits and healthcare. We are working across Government to ensure these services meet the needs of all newly granted refugees.

Support is offered from Migrant Help or their partner organisation to all individuals when they receive a decision on their asylum claim. This support includes providing advice on accessing the labour market, on applying for Universal Credit and signposting to local authorities for assistance with housing.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14778>

The New Plan for Immigration, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-plan-for-immigration-legal-migration-and-border-control-strategy/new-plan-for-immigration-legal-migration-and-border-control-accessible>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Asylum: Religion

Tim Loughton (Conservative) [13489] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his Department's procedure is for the verification of religious conversion when cited as a reason for the validity of an application for asylum.

Tim Loughton (Conservative) [13490] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the role of the Church of England is on advising on the validity of religious conversion claims where the threat of religious persecution is given as a material basis for the claim.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: All asylum and human rights claims, including those based on religion or belief, are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations, so that we do not remove anyone who faces persecution or serious harm on return to their country of origin.

Detailed Home Office policy guidance provides a framework for considering asylum claims, including those based on religious conversion, and all caseworkers receive extensive training and mentoring support before making such decisions.

Each individual assessment is made against the background of relevant case law and the latest available country of origin information. This is based on evidence taken from a wide range of reliable sources, including reputable media outlets; local, national, and international organisations, including human rights organisations; and information from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

The degree of weight to be given to evidence from church witnesses will depend on how much knowledge and experience a church witness has, and the individuals concerned, and the way in which the claimant may have engaged in church activities. Evidence from a senior church member is not considered to be determinative.

In such cases, decision-makers must decide whether a conversion is genuine on the balance of probabilities. Decision-makers must consider all evidence in the round, including, where relevant, such factors as the claimant's participation in church activities, the timing of their conversion, their knowledge of the faith, and the opinions of other members of the congregation as to the genuineness of the conversion.

Protection is normally granted where a claimant has a well-founded fear of persecution under the Refugee Convention or a claimant faces a real risk of serious harm. Those found not to need protection are refused, and the decision can be subject to legal challenge where appropriate, either via appeal to the independent courts or through a judicial review, depending on the decision in question. Once appeal rights are exhausted, they are liable for removal and enforcement action pursued where necessary.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-07/13489>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-07/13490>

Christianity: Asylum

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [13587] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church provides guidance on helping to determine that asylum seekers are genuine converts to Christianity.

Reply from Andrew Selous: The document "Supporting Asylum Seekers – Guidance for Church of England Clergy", which has been publicly available on the Church of England website for around seven years, states that clergy should assess the faith of those claiming conversion to Christianity and should rely on evidence to do so. The guidance also refers to the need for discernment – to be "wise as serpents" – in recognising mixed motives and the potential for gaming the system.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-07/13587>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/supporting-asylum-seekers-guidance-for-church-of-england-clergy-161201.pdf>

Asylum: Portland Port

Richard Drax (Conservative) [14873] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of claimed conversions to Christianity by people resident on the barge in Portland Port on their asylum applications.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: All asylum and human rights claims, including those based on religion or belief, and regardless of where or how a person might be accommodated while in the UK, are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations.

Detailed Home Office policy guidance provides a framework for considering asylum claims, including those based on religious conversion, and all caseworkers receive extensive training before making such decisions.

Those found not to need protection are refused, and the decision can be subject to legal challenge, where appropriate, either via appeal to the independent courts, or through a judicial review, depending on the decision in question. Once appeal rights are exhausted, they are liable for removal and enforcement action is pursued where necessary.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14873>

Asylum: Housing

Stephen Timms (Labour) [14777] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to notify local authorities of when (a) asylum seekers and (b) settled refugees are relocated to their area as a result of hotel closures.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The programme of hotel closures is managed carefully to ensure those asylum seekers still eligible for support are relocated to suitable alternative Home Office accommodation, which may be in a different location from their current hotel. The Home Office's accommodation providers manage the moves of asylum seekers from one location to another. Whilst we expect impacts on local authorities to be minimal, we have put in place additional resource to work with our accommodation providers and local partners to manage this process and minimise disruption. We are working with our partners, including local authorities, to provide timely notification of key events that impact them.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14777>

Bibby Stockholm: Costs

Richard Drax (Conservative) [14080] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason people accommodated on the Bibby Stockholm barge are transported to Weymouth by a full size bus; what the cost to the public purse is for this service; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of using a minibus for this service.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Those resident on the barge are not detained. Through our contracted service provider, the Home Office provides a bus service to take asylum seekers from the port to destinations agreed with local agencies. This is designed to ensure the movement of asylum seekers on and off the vessel is orderly and controlled, with the impact on the surrounding community as small as possible.

Financial assessments are carried out and reviewed regularly on the overall cost of each large site and vessel to test the value for money to the taxpayer.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14080>

Asylum: Anti-social Behaviour

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [14490] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an estimate of how many incidents of anti-social behaviour (a) on and (b) related to sites of temporary accommodation for asylum seekers there were in each of the last three years.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Our accommodation providers deliver induction briefings and information packs to all new arrivals. Asylum seekers are clearly advised of the expectations the Home Office and accommodation providers have for them to behave responsibly while they are accommodated in Home Office properties.

The Home Office expects the highest standards from its accommodation providers,

and we have a robust governance framework in place to manage service delivery of the Asylum Accommodation Support Contracts (AASC). Further details can be found at:

<http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-1112/AASC - Schedule 2 - Statement of Requirements.pdf>

The specific information you have requested is not held in a readily reportable format.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-19/14490>

Asylum: Deportation

Sharon Hodgson (Labour) [15423] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 22 February 2024 to Question 14503 on Asylum: Deportation, for what reason it would be disproportionately expensive to provide information on the number of flights cancelled; and if he will make it his policy to collect information on the number of flights cancelled in future.

Reply from Michael Tomlinson: We are determined to remove those with no right to remain in the UK – including dangerous foreign criminals.

All spending is carefully scrutinised to make sure that every pound of taxpayers' money is spent in the most effective way.

The Government's efforts to facilitate entirely legitimate and legal returns of people who have entered the UK illegally are often frustrated by late challenges submitted hours before the flight.

These claims are often baseless and entirely without merit but are given full legal consideration which can lead to removal being rescheduled, this, in some instances, leads to cancellation costs.

The information requested in PQ14503 on cancellation reasons, with specific reference to the costs recorded on page 193 of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23, would require a manual reconciliation of the individual cases against financial records to see if a cancellation cost was levied. This could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

[Home Office annual report and accounts: 2022 to 2023.](#)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-23/15423>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-19/14503>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answer: Immigration and Asylum

Asylum: Appeals

Lord Bailey of Paddington (Conservative) [HL2462] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the asylum seekers' appeal system is not intentionally undermined, with the result that rejected applications are subsequently accepted.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Where a person has been refused asylum and makes further submissions, there will only be a right of appeal if the further submissions amount to a fresh claim. There will be a fresh claim only if the further submissions have not previously been considered and, taken together with the previously considered material, created a realistic prospect of success. In the vast majority of cases where there is a right of appeal, the Home Office is represented by Presenting Officers who are specially trained on immigration law and practice, including cross-examination, to ensure any credibility issues are raised before the

tribunal, and that decisions are robustly defended at appeal where it is right to do so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-14/hl2462>

UK Parliament, Home Affairs Committee

Publication of correspondence: Letter to Home Secretary following David Neal session

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/200152/publication-of-correspondence-letter-to-home-secretary-following-david-neal-session/>

Evidence session with the former Inspector of Borders and Immigration

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14348/html/>

UK Parliament, Joint Committee on Human Rights

Evidence session: Human Rights of Asylum Seekers in the UK

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14333/html/>

UK Parliament Petition

Family Visa Minimum Income Thresholds

Afzal Khan (Labour) [P002916] I rise to present a petition urging the Government to reverse their decision to increase the minimum income threshold for family visas. This policy, which will see the income threshold for family reunification visas almost double, will lead to multinational families being torn apart. It will entrench the UK's hostile immigration environment, and is likely to be overwhelmingly discriminatory against ethnic minorities, particularly British Asians. Most concerningly, it threatens the European convention on human rights, which grants everyone the right to family life. I believe that Britain is better than cruel policies like this. ...

The petition ... Declares that multinational families are facing separation due to the Government's decision to increase the income threshold for family reunification from £18,600 to £38,700; notes that there were 82,395 family-related visas granted in the year ending September 2023, with the most common origin countries being Pakistan, India and the USA; further declares that workers of Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage have the lowest median hourly pay of any ethnic group which may lead this policy to be overwhelmingly discriminatory against British Asians; and further declares that the European Convention of Human Rights grants everyone the right to family life which this policy could threaten.

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Government to not implement the increase in the minimum threshold for family visas to £38,700. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-27/debates/B65E6A97-BF12-4015-83C5-3A31FE214897/FamilyVisaMinimumIncomeThresholds>

Press Releases

Suspected members of Albanian people smuggling ring arrested

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/suspected-members-of-albanian-people-smuggling-ring-arrested>

Court of Justice of the European Union: An asylum application based on a religious conversion taking place subsequently to the departure from a person's country of origin may not be rejected automatically as abuse

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2024-02/cp240038en.pdf>

UK: Rwanda Bill threatens to undermine independence of judiciary, UN experts say

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/uk-rwanda-bill-threatens-undermine-independence-judiciary-un-experts-say>

New Publications

Migration Advisory Committee: Rapid review of the Immigration Salary List

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rapid-review-of-the-immigration-salary-list/rapid-review-of-the-immigration-salary-list-accessible>

Regional and local authority data on immigration groups

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/immigration-system-statistics-regional-and-local-authority-data#full-publication-update-history>

Reports from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

An inspection of asylum casework June – October 2023

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e06d45f1cab36b60fc47ad/An_inspection_of_asylum_casework_June_to_October_2023.pdf

Government response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-an-inspection-of-asylum-casework-june-to-oct-2023/response-to-an-inspection-of-asylum-casework-june-to-oct-2023>

A re-inspection of the use of hotels for housing unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e07349f1cab36b60fc47ba/A_re-inspection_of_the_use_of_hotels_for_housing_unaccompanied_asylum-seeking_children_September_to_October_2023.pdf

Government response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-a-report-on-the-use-of-hotels-for-housing-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children/response-to-a-report-on-the-use-of-hotels-for-housing-unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children>

An inspection of illegal working enforcement August – October 2023

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e06f5ff1cab36b60fc47af/An_inspection_of_illegal_working_enforcement_August_to_October_2023.pdf

Government response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-an-inspection-of-illegal-working-enforcement/response-to-an-inspection-of-illegal-working-enforcement>

An inspection of the Home Office's Afghan resettlement schemes: October 2022 – April 2023

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e081203f6945001d035fcd/An_inspection_of_the_Home_Office_s_Afghan_resettlement_schemes_October_2022_to_April_2023.pdf

Government response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-a-report-on-afghan-resettlement-schemes/the-home-office-response-to-the-independent-chief-inspector-of-borders-and-immigrations-report-afghan-resettlement-schemes>

Inspection report on Home Office country of origin information, Albania and Pakistan

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e079e97bc329001ab8c195/Inspection_report_on_Home_Office_country_of_origin_information_Albania_and_Pakistan_October_2023.pdf

Government response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-a-report-on-country-of-origin-information-albania-and-pakistan/response-to-a-report-on-country-of-origin-information-albania-and-pakistan>

Inspection report on Home Office country of origin information: statelessness

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e07b012f2b3b001c7cd773/Inspection_report_on_Home_Office_country_of_origin_information_-_Thematic_report_on_the_coverage_of_statelessness_February_2023.pdf

Government response

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/response-to-a-report-on-country-of-origin-information-statelessness/the-home-office-response-to-the-independent-chief-inspectors-reports-country-of-origin-information-statelessness>

Immigration system statistics, year ending December 2023

Summary of latest statistics

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/summary-of-latest-statistics>

How many people come to the UK each year (including visitors)?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-each-year-including-visitors>

Why do people come to the UK? To work

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/why-do-people-come-to-the-uk-to-work>

Why do people come to the UK? To study

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/why-do-people-come-to-the-uk-to-study>

Why do people come to the UK? For family reasons

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/why-do-people-come-to-the-uk-for-family-reasons>

Safe and legal (humanitarian) routes to the UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/safe-and-legal-humanitarian-routes-to-the-uk>

How many people do we grant protection to?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/how-many-people-do-we-grant-protection-to>

How many people are granted settlement or citizenship?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/how-many-people-are-granted-settlement-or-citizenship>

How many people are detained or returned?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned>

EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, December 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-december-2023/eu-settlement-scheme-quarterly-statistics-december-2023>

Irregular migration to the UK, year ending December 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-december-2023/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-december-2023>

House of Commons Library Briefing: Asylum statistics

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01403/SN01403.pdf>

Scottish Parliament Information Centre: Ukraine visa schemes – what has changed?

<https://spice-spotlight.scot/2024/02/29/ukraine-visa-schemes-what-has-changed/>

Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme Information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information/ukraine-permission-extension-scheme-information>

Updated: Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by age and sex of applicant

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1158985/Ukraine_Sponsorship_scheme_visas_-_by_age_and_sex_to_31_March_2023.ods

Updated: Migrants detected crossing the English Channel in small boats – last 7 days

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-detected-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats/migrants-detected-crossing-the-english-channel-in-small-boats-last-7-days>

Global community must take collective action on migration

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/global-community-must-take-collective-action-on-migration>

News: Rwanda Refugee Policy

UK to pay at least £370m to Rwanda for asylum deal, watchdog says

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-68440653>

UK will pay Rwanda £171,000 for every deported migrant

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/01/uk-pay-rwanda-171000-every-migrant/>

Rwanda plan to cost UK £1.8m for each asylum seeker, figures show

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/01/rwanda-plan-uk-asylum-seeker-cost-figures>

The Rwanda plan will cost us £2m per refugee. Cruelty has rarely been so lavishly funded

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/cost-rwanda-plan-rishi-sunak-kagame-b2504982.html>

Rwanda plan costs soar to £500m – but will it ever work?

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/politics-explained/rwanda-scheme-cost-stop-the-boats-rishi-sunak-b2505633.html>

News: Channel Migrants

Hundreds of small boat migrants charged with illegal entry to UK after new powers come into force

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/small-boat-migrants-asylum-uk-b2502514.html>

Three migrants die trying to cross Channel

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/28/three-migrants-die-trying-to-cross-channel/>

One dead and two missing after Channel crossing rescue

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68429901>

One dead and two missing after migrants fall from boat in Channel

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/one-dead-and-two-missing-after-migrants-fall-from-boat-in-channel-qlnshr3df>

English Channel: Girl, 7, dies after boat capsizes near Dunkirk in France

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-68461794>

People smugglers can be stripped of British citizenship

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/02/people-smugglers-stripped-british-citizenship-home-office/>

News: Other Immigration and Asylum

‘Sacked for doing my job’: Immigration chief says he was fired on Teams call after ‘speaking truth to power’

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/david-neal-immigration-border-sacked-home-office-b2503354.html>

James Cleverly sacked as borders inspector. He should focus on a migrant strategy gone awry

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/feb/29/james-cleverly-borders-inspector-migrant-strategy-home-secretary>

UK asylum backlog falls with record approvals

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68435629>

Sunak faces fresh asylum backlash after record 1.4m visas granted

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/sunak-faces-fresh-asylum-backlash-after-record-14m-visas-granted-sqzsrd7c6>

Sunak's asylum laws trapping 55,000 people in 'perma-backlog', says UK thinktank

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/28/sunaks-asylum-laws-trapping-55000-people-in-perma-backlog-says-uk-thinktank>

Cleverly says UK's goodwill towards migrants 'not a bottomless font'

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/james-cleverly-home-secretary-suella-braverman-reid-hoffman-southeast-asia-b2503385.html>

James Cleverly: Trade is key to solving immigration crises

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/james-cleverly-trade-is-key-to-solving-immigration-crisis-bndq5xwdl>

Help people to thrive in their own country to stop migration crisis – Cleverly

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/james-cleverly-home-secretary-rishi-sunak-new-york-home-office-b2502884.html>

Asylum backlog at over 120,000 despite record number of refugees granted protection

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asylum-backlog-home-office-migrants-small-boats-b2504616.html>

Child asylum seekers in UK made to play game about who gets foster care places

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/29/child-asylum-seekers-in-uk-made-to-play-game-about-who-gets-foster-care-places>

Former BA employee 'ran £3m immigration scam from Heathrow check-in desk'

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-airways-employee-heathrow-immigration-scam-b2503787.html>

Let's stop pretending all migration is the same

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lets-stop-pretending-all-migration-is-the-same-krkjwxtjk>

TOP

Equality

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers

Air Pollution: Ethnic Groups

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (Green) [HL2670] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to work with health professionals to address the disproportionate impact of air pollution on Black and racialised communities.

Reply from Lord Markham: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has published guidance on air pollution which includes recommendations on advice health professionals can provide to people who may be affected by poor air quality. A copy of the guidance is attached.

NHS England focuses on reducing healthcare inequalities at both national and system level in the most deprived and underserved communities, through its

Core20PLUS5 programme. This programme sets out a target population comprising of the poorest 20 percent of the population, along with ethnic minorities and inclusion health groups. [Air pollution](#)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-21/hl2670>

Air Pollution: Ethnic Groups and Poverty

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (Green) [HL2667] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with civil society groups about the disproportionate impact of air pollution on (1) people living in poverty, and (2) ethnic minority communities.

Reply from Lord Douglas-Miller: The Government recognises there is more to do to protect all people in our society and the environment from the effects of air pollution. This is why we are taking the significant and wide-ranging action to drive improvements to air quality as set out in our Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. As part of the Air Quality Information System (AQIS) review, officials engaged in a series of semi-structured interviews with civil society groups with the aim of learning directly from groups who either: (1) have first-hand experience communicating messages about air quality directly to communities; or (2) represent communities that may be disproportionately impacted by air pollution. The insights from these interviews will be incorporated into the AQIS recommendations which will be published in summer 2024.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-21/hl2667>

New Publication

British Muslims – Striving for Fairness: 2021 Census findings with a focus on social mobility

<https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/MCB-Striving-For-Fairness-Full-Report.pdf>

TOP

Racism, Religious Hatred, and Discrimination

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Home Department

Chris Stephens (SNP): ... [The Minister] will be aware that there has been a 335% increase in Islamophobic hate cases in the UK since 7 October, and a 589% rise in antisemitic incidents compared with 2022. That is affecting our most marginalised and vulnerable groups. What steps is the Minister taking to protect worshippers and faith schools and to reduce unprecedented levels of hate across these islands?

Reply from Tom Tugendhat: Over the past year this Government have increased the funding to the Community Security Trust by around £3 million, taking the total to around £18 million. We have spent a similar amount on other places of worship—only last week I approved spending on security measures to mosques and churches around the country, exactly to counter the kind of hate crimes that the hon. Member described. We have engaged with not just the Community Security Trust but organisations such as Tell MAMA, which do a fantastic job of engaging with us on anti-Muslim hatred. It is extremely important that we all work together, not just to support and protect every religion and community in our country but to ensure that we lower the tension so that we can all be free to express our views.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-803BC42C-D1DE-44E9-A41F-0DECDD3614AB>

Topical Questions: Home Department

Yvette Cooper (Labour): Last week, Tell MAMA reported that anti-Muslim hate incidents have trebled. That follows recent reports that antisemitic incidents have hit a record high. We all must challenge all forms of threat, prejudice, racism and hate. Having heard the words from the former deputy chair of the Conservative party of a Muslim Mayor, who said that his “mates” are Islamist extremists and that he has been taken over by “Islamists”, is any Home Office Minister now prepared to stand up and say not only that those words about the London Mayor are wrong, but that they believe they were Islamophobic and should be condemned as such?

Reply from Tom Tugendhat: Within 24 hours of those words being used, this Prime Minister took immediate action by removing the Whip from that individual. If only all leaders of every political party were as quick to remove the Whip from those who spread hatred in our community. As Rochdale sadly demonstrates, they are not.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-7E871E98-23BF-41A6-A5E9-5BFECDE6DC9E>

The report of anti-Muslim hate incidents referred to above can be read at <https://tellmamauk.org/greatest-rise-in-reported-anti-muslim-hate-cases-to-tell-mama-since-oct-7th/>

The report of antisemitic incidents referred to above can be read at <https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2024/02/15/antisemitic-incidents-report-2023>

The comments from the former deputy chair of the Conservative party (Lee Anderson), referred to above, can be heard at <https://twitter.com/leeandersonmp/status/1761118637589500224>

Topical Questions: Home Department

Michael Ellis (Conservative): In respect of the projection of an antisemitic, terrorist-originating slogan on to the Big Ben tower last week, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner claims that he is powerless. That is utter nonsense. Among other options, the police could use section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986, which refers to the use of “threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour” with “intent to cause...harassment, alarm or distress”.

It was behaviour, and it was insulting to Jews and many others. The police could also have reasonably feared a breach of the peace, ordered the removal of the projection machine, and, if there was non-compliance, arrested the individual for obstructing a constable under the Police Act 1996. I have personally prosecuted people for these offences. Police who fail to do their duty can be disciplined for neglect of that duty. Will the Minister act?

Reply from Chris Philp: I am sure that all Members were horrified when those political statements, one of which, by implication, called for the destruction of Israel, were beamed on to the Big Ben tower. It was totally unacceptable, and, incidentally, it was also a breach of planning law. I do expect the police to take action; my right hon. and learned Friend, a former Attorney General, has set out a number of grounds on which it could have been taken, and he can rest assured that I have forcefully communicated that to the commissioner already.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-D0156312-7BA3-45CC-A2EF-1CC13A8F9421>

Topical Questions: Home Department

Rachel Maclean (Conservative): The slogan that was projected on to Big Ben last Wednesday was extreme and antisemitic. To many, it calls for the destruction of Israel and is seen as a genocidal statement. Decent people around the country—not just Jews—find that appalling. Does the Minister agree that there are criminal offences that could be used for prosecutions, and will he reiterate his calls for the police to prosecute those responsible?

Reply from Chris Philp: I share my hon. Friend's view. As the former Attorney General my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Northampton North (Sir Michael Ellis) pointed out a few minutes ago, there were a number of bases on which the police could have acted to prevent that projection. Big Ben is not a canvas for political campaigning, particularly where the slogans are deeply offensive in nature, and that is a view I have made very clear to the commissioner.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-26/debates/DD293C74-52C1-4ADD-B61A-57425BF625F6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-5DB89C1F-1F65-423B-A473-6436D483B704>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Islamophobia

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [16017] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to appoint an independent adviser on tackling Islamophobia.

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [16018] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will hold discussions with the Minister for Women and Equalities on the potential merits of appointing an independent adviser on tackling Islamophobia.

Reply from Lee Rowley: We continue to work closely with community groups, charities and schools to inform our position on tackling racially and religiously motivated discrimination as a whole – including anti-Muslim discrimination.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/16017>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/16018>

Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [16019] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what policy recommendations his Department received from the Anti-Muslim Hatred working group since 2019; and whether he is taking steps to implement them.

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) [16020] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish (a) minutes of each quarterly meeting of and (b) all annual reports prepared by the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group since 2019.

Reply from Lee Rowley: This Government is committed to tackling the scourge discrimination in all forms, including anti-Muslim discrimination head-on through a coordinated cross-departmental effort. From ensuring the safety of worshippers to community engagement and supporting the victims, swift action has been taken to address anti-Muslim discrimination and institute safeguards. For example, Tell MAMA has been provided with nearly £5 million between 2016 and 2023 to monitor and combat anti-Muslim hatred.

We are taking a broad approach to religious discrimination which will develop on the work of the previous Working Groups; seeking the views and perspectives of British and international experts in this field to explore how religious discrimination

is experienced by British communities, and how it affects different faiths and individuals. This engagement will explore the breadth and depth of religious hatred and will consider the question of terminology and definitions for hatred across and within religious communities, including anti-Muslim discrimination. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/16019>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-27/16020>

Travellers

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [14297] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to tackle racism against Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities.

Reply from Lee Rowley: All forms of discrimination are unacceptable, and they have no place in our communities.

No one should ever be a victim of discrimination because of their race, or their religion or belief, and the Government continues to work with police and community partners to monitor and combat it.

True Vision is an online reporting portal, maintained by the police and funded by the Government. We will continue to support the police to maintain this and reinforce their relationships with communities so that they feel confident to report any instances of illegal discrimination.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14297>

True Vision, referred to above, can be accessed at

https://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force

The following two questions both received the same answer

Universities: Judaism

Bridget Phillipson (Labour) [14034] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of (a) the Jewish chaplain and (b) Jewish staff and students at the University of Leeds.

Bridget Phillipson (Labour) [14035] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to help ensure the safety of Jewish chaplains at universities in England.

Reply from Robert Halfon: Antisemitism, intimidation and threats of violence must never be tolerated on university campuses. University Jewish Chaplains play a vital role in supporting Jewish students and staff across the country. The disgraceful abuse targeted at the Chaplain in Leeds is appalling and extremely disturbing. The government has worked closely with West Yorkshire Police to ensure robust action is taken in relation to these matters. As the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, I have visited Leeds University, spoken to the Vice Chancellor to seek reassurances that the University is taking appropriate action in the wake of these appalling incidents and have met with the Chaplain and his wife. The department remains in regular contact with the University Jewish Chaplaincy, the Community Security Trust and West Yorkshire Police and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Last week's report by the Community Security Trust highlights the devastating increase in antisemitic incidents in higher education. This government takes antisemitism extremely seriously and is deeply concerned about the growth in antisemitic incidents on campus since 7 October 2023. That is why, on 22 November 2023, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced in his Autumn Statement an additional £7 million over three years to tackle

antisemitism in education. The department has issued an invitation for interested organisations to tender for contracts to deliver a comprehensive package of measures across schools, colleges and universities and aim to have suppliers in place for the start of the new financial year. A link to the report by the Community Security Trust can be found here:

[https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023.1707834969.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic%20Incidents%20Report%202023.1707834969.pdf)

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to all schools, colleges, and universities on 11 October 2023, urging them to respond swiftly to hate-related incidents and actively reassure Jewish students that they can study without fear of harassment or intimidation. The department wrote again to Vice Chancellors on 16 November 2023, further emphasising the use of disciplinary measures and the importance of police engagement, as well as the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national. This was one of the key actions set out in the five point plan for tackling antisemitism in higher education, which was published on 5 November 2023. The plan involves:

- Calling for visas to be withdrawn from international students who incite racial hatred.
- Writing to Vice Chancellors emphasising the use of disciplinary measures, the importance of police engagement, and the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national (sent on 16 November 2023).
- Liaising with the Office for Students on its role in reviewing incidents and any potential actions.
- Continuing to make it clear in all discussions that acts that may be criminal should be referred to the police.
- Establishing an antisemitism quality seal, which universities will be invited to sign up to demonstrate a commitment to tackling antisemitism. This is a key element of the invitation to tender published on 6 February 2024. More information on the five point plan can be found here:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/05/how-were-protecting-jewish-students-on-university-campuses/>

The department will not hesitate to take further action across the education estate to stamp out antisemitism and harassment of Jewish pupils, students and staff.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14034>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14035>

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023/autumn-statement-2023-html>

The 11 October letter referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/GillianKeegan/status/1712461243267829960>

The 16 November letter referred to above is not available online.

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: Higher Education

Matthew Offord (Conservative) 14842] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the number of higher education institutions that have not adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

Reply from Robert Halfon: Last week's report by the Community Security Trust highlights the unprecedented increase in antisemitic incidents in higher education. All antisemitism is abhorrent and universities should have robust systems in place to deal with incidents of support for unlawful antisemitic abuse and harassment. This government takes antisemitism extremely seriously and is deeply concerned

about the growth in incidents on campus since 7 October 2023. This is completely unacceptable. The department will not tolerate unlawful harassment or the glorification of terrorism. A link to the report can be found here:

[https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic Incidents Report 2023.1707834969.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic%20Incidents%20Report%202023.1707834969.pdf)

The government has formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. The department is pleased to see that as of 21 February 2024, 245 providers in England have adopted the definition, including the vast majority of universities. While adoption of the IHRA definition is not compulsory for universities, as they are autonomous, the department continues to strongly encourage providers to adopt the definition for universal clarity on what constitutes antisemitic behaviour. However, the department recognises that the IHRA definition alone is not enough. That's why the department is working to introduce the tackling antisemitism quality seal. This is a framework of measures that will allow universities to demonstrate support for Jewish students and staff. This quality seal is part of the package resulting from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement announcement of an additional £7 million over three years to tackle antisemitism in education.

The Quality Seal is an award for universities demonstrating exemplary standards in addressing antisemitism. It encompasses policies related to communication with Jewish students, training programs, and robust complaint processes. The department has invited bids from capable organisations to implement this initiative. The deadline for bids is 7 March 2024 and the department aims to appoint a contractor in April 2024. A Tackling Antisemitism Champion, respected by both the Jewish community and higher education sector, will be appointed to help universities meet these standards and strengthen universities' ability to deal with the rising levels of antisemitism on campuses. Additionally, funding allocated for combating antisemitism in education will support universities in achieving the required benchmarks.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-20/14842>

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023/autumn-statement-2023-html>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Football: Racial Discrimination

Thangam Debbonaire (Labour) [15098] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of racism in football in England.

Thangam Debbonaire (Labour) [15099] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of racism in (a) management, (b) coaching and (c) academy football roles in England.

Reply from Stuart Andrew: There is no place for discrimination in sport, or in wider society. I am committed to ensuring sport does all it can to tackle racism and all forms of discrimination.

Fans can be charged with a Football Banning Order and fined if found to use racist slurs towards players at football games. Sentences can be more severe if it has been recorded as a hate crime.

The Government has also amended legislation to extend the use of Football Banning Orders, so that online abusers can be banned from stadiums for up to 10 years in the same way violent individuals are barred from grounds.

We welcome the recent changes to the Code for Sports Governance and the ongoing work of the FA, the leagues, and organisations such as Kick It Out and the Black Footballers Partnership in challenging discrimination.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-21/15098>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-21/15099>

UK Parliament Early Day Motions

Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat) [428] Islamophobia – That this House condemns the recent rise in Islamophobic and antisemitic incidents across the UK; regrets that leading charity TellMAMA recorded more than 2,000 anti-Muslim hate cases since Hamas's terror attacks on 7 October 2023; notes with concern that this represents a 335% increase on the same period last year; further notes with the concern the gendered aspect of these attacks, as women were the target of 65% of these cases; acknowledges that there have been similarly concerning increases in anti-Semitism across the UK in the same time period; condemns the Government's decision not to bring forward an official definition of Islamophobia; emphasises the importance of standing up to religious hatred in all its forms; and urges the Government to appoint an independent adviser on Islamophobia to help tackle anti-Muslim prejudice in our communities.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61923>

Dawn Butler (Labour) [431] Conduct of the hon. Member for Ashfield and the Rt hon. Members for Fareham and South West Norfolk – That this House is shocked and appalled by the recent conduct of certain Members in respect of their remarks relating to Muslims; believes that the recent remarks made by the hon. Member for Ashfield and the Rt hon. Members for Fareham and South West Norfolk are Islamophobic and constitute a breach of the Nolan Principles of Leadership; condemns the reported 365% rise in reports of Islamophobia; notes with concern the Prime Minister's reluctance to use the word Islamophobia in the House of Commons; calls for the Prime Minister to withdraw the Whip from the aforementioned Members and any other found to use anti-Muslim remarks; and further calls for increased effort and funding towards tackling the scourge of Islamophobia including the appointment of an independent adviser.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61926>

The MP for Ashfield is Lee Anderson (formerly Conservative, now Independent); the MP for Fareham is Suella Braverman (Conservative); and the MP for South West Norfolk is Elizabeth Truss Conservative).

Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat) [430] Conduct of the hon. Member for Ashfield – That this House censures the hon. Member for Ashfield for his comments on 23 February 2024 regarding the Mayor of London, which were Islamophobic, damaging, divisive and risk bringing the House collectively into disrepute; and calls on the hon. Member for Ashfield to come to the House and apologise for these remarks.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61925>

The MP for Ashfield is Lee Anderson (formerly Conservative, now Independent).

Press Release

Record funding will protect Jewish communities from harm

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-funding-will-protect-jewish-communities-from-harm>

Rishi Sunak says he is 'living proof' the UK isn't racist

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lee-anderson-comments-sadiq-khan-rishi-sunak-islamists-8nqn0p72q>

Islamophobia and anti-semitism: Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer can't be seen to take sides over different forms of prejudice

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/islamophobia-and-anti-semitism-rishi-sunak-and-keir-starmer-cant-be-seen-to-take-sides-over-different-forms-of-prejudice-scotsman-comment-4536966>

Former Tory MP Anderson says 'Islamist' comments 'clumsy' not bigoted

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24144652.former-tory-mp-anderson-says-islamist-comments-clumsy-not-bigoted/>

Lee Anderson was not 'intending' to be Islamophobic when he claimed 'Islamists' had control of Sadiq Khan, Deputy PM says

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/lee-anderson-was-not-intending-to-be-islamophobic-when-he-claimed-islamists-had-control-of-sadiq-khan-deputy-pm-says-4532349>

Lee Anderson comments: Language of former deputy Tory party chairman and Suella Braverman fuelling 'cesspit' of Islamophobia online, says Anas Sarwar

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/lee-anderson-comments-language-of-former-deputy-tory-party-chairman-and-suella-braverman-fuelling-cesspit-of-islamophobia-online-says-anas-sarwar-4537067>

Dear Lee Anderson, redneck Islamophobia is a gift to the Conservatives'

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/dear-lee-anderson-redneck-islamophobia-is-a-gift-to-the-conservatives-opponents-john-mclellan-4533729>

Muslim group demands Tories investigate 'structural Islamophobia'

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/muslim-islamophobia-conservatives-lee-anderson-b2502248.html>

The anti-Muslim rhetoric of rightwing politicians is fuelling hate crime – I've experienced it myself

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/feb/26/anti-muslim-rightwing-politicians-hate-crime-lee-anderson>

Islamophobia and antisemitism are not the same

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/islamophobia-and-antisemitism-are-not-the-same-nxgrqvxbt>

What is Islamophobia and why does Tory government not accept definition?

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2024/feb/27/what-is-islamophobia-and-why-does-tory-government-not-accept-definition>

What is Islamophobia? Definition of anti-Muslim prejudice as Tories suspend MP over rant

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/islamophobia-meaning-tories-lee-anderson-b2503034.html>

'Islamophobia' is today's blasphemy – wrongspeak may be criminalised
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/27/islamophobia-is-todays-blasphemy-wrong-speak-criminalised/>

Prince William condemns rise in antisemitism during synagogue visit
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68436226>

William condemns rise in antisemitism as he visits synagogue
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/prince-of-wales-jewish-london-amas-israel-b2504756.html>

Prince William tells Jewish community 'people do care' about rising anti-Semitism in UK
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/royal-family/2024/02/29/prince-william-antisemitism-royal-family-gaza-middle-east/>

BBC is 'institutionally anti-Semitic' says former attorney general
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/27/bbc-is-institutionally-anti-semitic-says-sir-michael-ellis/>

PM announces £72 million to fund security for Jewish communities
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/community-security-trust-jewish-rishi-sunak-amas-british-b2504331.html>

Tory accused of 'fanning racism' over traveller site opposition says he won't be silenced
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/03/01/tory-mp-accused-fanning-flames-of-racism-traveller-site/>

White supremacist who distributed extremist stickers jailed
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/white-supremacist-who-distributed-extremist-stickers-jailed-fmk8bllxk>

Some diverse areas of England face car insurance 'ethnicity penalty'
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-68349396>

Three men charged with planning attack on Islamic education centre
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68411163>

Three men charged 'with 'Right-wing' terrorism planned to attack Islamic centre
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/27/uk-northeast-right-wing-terrorism-three-men-charged/>

TOP

Other Scottish Parliament and Government

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

People of Jewish ancestry: BRCA testing

Monica Lennon (Labour) [S6W-25450] To ask the Scottish Government whether it will consider offering BCRA testing to NHS Scotland patients with Jewish ancestry, in light of NHS England establishing a national BRCA gene-testing programme for such patients.

Reply from Neil Gray: NHS Scotland currently offers a whole gene screening panel for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer to test for faults in both BRCA1 and BRCA2 and a range of other target genes. At present, this testing is available to people from specific population groups (including those of Ashkenazi Jewish heritage) if they meet clinical criteria that indicate a higher genetic risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

The Scottish Strategic Network for Genomic Medicine (SSNGM) was established in 2022 to develop a fully considered and sustainable genomic medicine service for Scotland. The SSNGM contains specialist Scottish Genomics Test Advisory Groups (SG-TAG) for both cancer and rare and inherited conditions, whose role is to review and assess the clinical validity and utility of new tests, and changes to the referral criteria for existing tests.

The SSNGM plan to initiate a review of the existing hereditary cancer testing pathways in 2024. This review will include both the referral criteria for our existing genomic test offering and alternative testing methods and will make recommendations via the SG-TAG process.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-25450>

Press Release

Recorded Crime in Scotland, year ending December 2023

<https://www.gov.scot/news/recorded-crime-in-scotland-year-ending-december-2023/>

New Publication

Recorded Crime in Scotland, year ending December 2023

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/recorded-crime-scotland-year-ending-december-2023/>

TOP

Other UK Parliament and Government

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Muslim Council of Britain

Stephen Timms (Labour) [15545] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what the basis for his policy of non-engagement with the Muslim Council of Britain is.

Stephen Timms (Labour) [15546] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with which organisations, other than the Muslim Council of Britain, the Government has a policy of non-engagement.

Reply from Lee Rowley: The Government, under successive administrations, has a long-standing policy of non-engagement with the Muslim Council of Britain. Previous MCB leaders have taken positions that contradict our fundamental values and these have not been explicitly retracted.

The Government is committed to engaging with a broad range of leaders and organisations across many different communities and civil society groups.

Engagement with communities can strengthen our democracy, our policymaking and our society.

However, as highlighted in the Independent Review of Prevent, where best practice is not followed engagement can create risks. It may inadvertently provide a platform or legitimacy for groups or individuals who oppose our shared democratic values and institutions, and allow them to gain greater influence, including in the eyes of those communities to whom they aim to promote their narratives.

In its response to the Independent Review of Prevent, the Government committed to ensuring it neither funds, works or consults with extremism-linked groups or individuals. DLUHC is working closely with the Home Office and key cross-government partners, including the Commission for Countering Extremism, to implement this recommendation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-26/15545>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-26/15546>

The Independent Review referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63e26968d3bf7f17385a3421/Independent_Review_of_Prevent.pdf

The Government response referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63e2399de90e07625faf56c6/The_response_to_the_Independent_Review_of_Prevent.pdf

Sikhs: Safety

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [15142] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment the Government has made of potential impact of the security situation for the Sikh community in North America on the safety of the Sikh community in the UK.

Reply from Tom Tugendhat: The UK Government holds the British Sikh community in the highest esteem. British Sikhs are an important and vibrant part of our society and make an enormous contribution to British life. We are firmly committed to promoting and protecting the right to freedom of religion or belief and being a strong voice internationally in defence of this fundamental right.

We are in close touch with our US and Canadian partners about the allegations they have raised. It is vital that we allow independent investigations to run their course. It would be inappropriate to comment on, or pre-determine, their conclusions at this time.

The Government continually assesses potential threats to individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety. Wherever we identify such threats, we will use all measures, including through our world leading police and intelligence services, to mitigate risk to individuals.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-21/15142>

Woodhill Prison: Islam

Ruth Cadbury (Labour) [14257] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the HM Inspectorate of Prisons publication entitled Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Woodhill, published on 28 November 2023, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that Muslim prisoners can access Friday prayers on a weekly basis.

Reply from Edward Argar: Staff and prisoners have been trained together as peace promoters and they run mediation sessions to ease conflicts between groups. These have been working to support all prisoners being able to attend communal worship. Additionally, potential conflicts between groups or individuals are discussed at a weekly Violence Reduction meeting to manage these risks

moving forward. This co-ordinated, partnership approach has resulted in the successful offer of Friday Prayers to all Muslim prisoners at HMP Woodhill since 9 February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-16/14257>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/11/Woodhill-web-2023.pdf>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers

Forced Marriage Unit: Training

The Lord Bishop of St Albans [HL2410] To ask His Majesty's Government how many professionals the Forced Marriage Unit delivered training to in 2023; and how many people took the Forced Marriage Unit's "Awareness of Forced Marriage" free online course in 2023.

Reply from Lord Benyon: In 2023, the Forced Marriage Unit delivered training to a total of 3657 professionals through their bespoke training and workshops.

We currently do not have the figure for how many people took the free online course in 2023 - these will be released in due course. In 2022, 5,029 people from a wide range of professions took the Government's "Awareness of Forced Marriage" free online course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-12/hl2410>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Female Genital Mutilation: Prosecutions

The Lord Bishop of St Albans [HL2408] To ask His Majesty's Government how many female genital mutilation offences were recorded between April 2022 and March 2023; and of those, how many prosecutions have occurred.

Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage

The Lord Bishop of St Albans [HL2409] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Stewart of Dirleton on 29 March 2023 (HL6584), when the government-funded feasibility study on the prevalence of female genital mutilation and forced marriage in England and Wales will be published.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Since April 2019, the Home Office has required police forces to provide quarterly data returns on the number of offences they have recorded as being related to 'honour'-based abuse, which includes FGM. In October 2023, the Home Office published the fourth set of these annual statistics, which included 84 offences relating to FGM covering the year to March 2023. Data on prosecutions is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) recorded one offence which was charged by the police under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. This was discontinued at its first hearing due to an incorrect charge submitted by the police. Separately, in October 2023, a defendant was found guilty of aiding the female genital mutilation of a non-UK person contrary to section 3 of the Act. This defendant was originally charged in 2018.

In April 2023, the Home Office commissioned the University of Birmingham to conduct a feasibility study to determine whether it is possible to produce a robust prevalence estimate of FGM and forced marriage. This work is ongoing and decisions about next steps will be taken in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-12/hl2408>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-12/hl2409>

The statistics referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/so-called-honour-based-abuse-offences-2022-to-2023/statistics-on-so-called-honour-based-abuse-offences-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023>

TOP

Cost of Living

Scottish Government Website

Help during the cost of living crisis

Most households are concerned about the cost of living, with worries about issues such as rent and mortgages, food and utility bills, energy costs, and debt.

In response, the Scottish Government has launched a new website that provides information to help people access support with

- Energy and Bills
- Benefits and Income
- Children and Families
- Debt and Money
- Health and Wellbeing

Your local council might be able to help if you need urgent help with money, food or fuel – contact the council for information.

<https://costofliving.campaign.gov.scot/>

News

'Huge' gap between incomes and £166k cost of raising a child

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24142711.huge-gap-incomes-166k-cost-raising-child/>

Scheme to reduce energy bills will take 60 years to complete

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/scheme-to-reduce-energy-bills-will-take-60-years-to-complete-p2rsqhkklk>

Chancellor urged to keep cost of living support for vulnerable families

<https://www.independent.co.uk/money/chancellor-urged-to-keep-cost-of-living-support-for-vulnerable-families-b2505031.html>

TOP

Other News

Five tips to improve your charity's cyber safety and security

<https://www.oscr.org.uk/news/five-tips-to-improve-your-charity-s-cyber-safety-and-security/>

More help available for charities as cyber threats persist

<https://www.oscr.org.uk/news/more-help-available-for-charities-as-cyber-threats-persist/>

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Bills in Progress

** new or updated this week

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/police-ethics-conduct-and-scrutiny-scotland-bill>

UK Parliament

Asylum Application (Entry to the United Kingdom) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3530>

Asylum Seekers (Permission to Work) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3627>

The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 [Draft]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2023/9780348253191/contents>

Family Visas (Minimum Income) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3684>

Housing Standards (Refugees and Asylum Seekers) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3618/stages>

Illegal Immigration (Offences) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3649>

Immigration and Nationality Fees (Exemption for NHS Clinical Staff) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3660>

**** Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3540>

Amendment Papers

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/54451/documents/4486>

and

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/54466/documents/4502>

and

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/54486/documents/4508>

and

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/54498/documents/4516>

Scottish Law Officers (Devolution) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3665>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

Workforce Information (Ethnicity) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3522>

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Consultations

** new or updated this week

**** closes this week!**

Health and Social Care Workforce – Help Us to Tackle Racism (closing date extended to 4 March 2024)

<https://uk.surveymonkey.com/r/7K3359S>

**** closes this week!**

Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Bill (closing date 6 March 2024)

https://yourviews.parliament.scot/sppa/scottish-elections-bill/consult_view/

Your Police 2023-2024 (closing date 31 March 2024)

<https://consult.scotland.police.uk/strategy-insight-and-innovation/your-police-2023-2024/>

Ending conversion practices in Scotland (closing date 2 April 2024)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-conversion-practices-scotland-scottish-government-consultation/>

ITV/Tell MAMA survey on mosque safety in the UK (closing date not stated)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/V7V5B6L>

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Job Opportunities

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

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Funding Opportunities

** new or updated this week

Alwaleed Community Grant Scheme

Closing date: 11 March 2024

Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World funding of up to £5,000 for projects which engage with the following themes: Interfaith and intra-faith relations, Islam and the environment, Education and skills development, and Digital Islam. For information see <http://tinyurl.com/4atszf5m>

Ethnic Minority Development Fund

Closing date: 15 April 2024

National Lottery Community Fund grants from £500 to £15,000 for projects run by ethnic minority-led third-sector organisations in Scotland that bring ethnic minority people together and build strong relationships across communities, help more ethnic minority people to be the best they can be, by supporting them as soon as possible, or improve places and spaces that matter to ethnic minority communities. For information see <https://cemvoscotland.org.uk/emdf/>

Cost-of-Living Support Scotland

Application deadline not stated

National Lottery funding from £10,001 to £75,000 for projects to help support individuals, families and communities currently experiencing hardship as a result of the cost-of-living increases. The programme aims to fund activity that reduces the impact of, or prevents financial insecurity so that people have more resilience and are more able to identify ways to deal with the impact of increased cost of living in their lives, are able to shape activity in their community to address the increased cost-of-living, and have more access to support and services that will help them to deal with the increased cost of living. For information and to apply see

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/cost-of-living-support-fund>

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Events, Conferences, and Training

** new or updated this week

**** this week!**

Anti-Racist Training

7 March 2024 (Glasgow. 9.30–2.30)

CEMVO training in partnership with the Ethnic Minority Climate Action Hub Engagement Programme to prepare, support, equip and empower individuals and organisations for racial equity and justice for all ethnic minority people and communities. For information see

<https://tinyurl.com/pfyyn86p>

**** this week!**

How To Be a Political Commentator - Broadcast Media Training for Women of Colour

8 March 2024 (Glasgow. 10.30–5.30)

Pass the Mic and Women in Journalism Scotland are working together to host a media commentator training day exclusively for women of colour who are based in Scotland. The purpose of the day is to give you a chance to experience giving interviews on radio and TV. You will meet journalists and presenters, and lunch will be provided. For information see

<https://passthemicscotland.org/2024/01/20/media-commentator-training/>

**** The Basics: A Human Rights and Equalities First Approach**

13 March 2024 (online, 10.00–12.00)

14 March 2024 (online, 10.00–12.00)

THRE course to find out what human rights and equalities are and why they matter, what a human rights and equalities first approach is and why it is relevant to you and your organisation, and how we can start a conversation and talk constructively about human rights and equalities. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/yajruabu>

**** Governance - A Human Rights and Equalities First Approach**

20 March 2024 (online, 10.00–12.30)

THRE introduction to what a human rights and equalities approach means for third sector

boards and committees. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/3npb6d7f>

**** PANEL Workshop: A Human Rights and Equalities First Approach in Practice**

25 March 2024 (online, 1.00–4.00)

THRE course about to find out about the PANEL principles, and how they can help you apply a human rights and equalities first approach. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/2srdmx62>

Rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

13 May 2024 (Glasgow, 10.00–12.30)

PAIH course explore how the asylum system works from the perspective of a claimant and the process involved in making a claim for asylum. The course also explores the journeys and barriers faced by both refugees and asylum seekers reaching and building a new life in Scotland and their respective entitlement to services. For information see <https://www.paih.org/what-we-do/migrants-rights-courses>

Rights and Entitlements of EEA Nationals

15 May 2024 (Glasgow, 10.00–12.30)

PAIH course to find out about fundamental issues of housing, homelessness and welfare entitlements of EEA nationals and look at how service users might prepare themselves for an economy in recession and cost of living spiralling. For information see <https://www.paih.org/what-we-do/migrants-rights-courses>

No Recourse To Public Funds

22 May 2024 (Glasgow (10.00–12.30)

PAIH course to help frontline workers identify a tenant's current status, clarify what this means in terms of access to public funds and plan effective support where difficulties arise. For information see <https://www.paih.org/what-we-do/migrants-rights-courses>

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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>

New Scots <https://newscots.scot/>

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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