



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Oral Answer

#### **Business of the House**

**David Amess (Conservative):** Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the reopening of places of worship? Yesterday we heard the exchanges at Prime Minister's Question Time, but as we are easing lockdown and will allow social distancing in shops, surely to goodness we can allow social distancing in places of worship, which at this particular time mean even more to so many people.

**Jacob Rees-Mogg:** ... I have heard what His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster has had to say, and he is a very important figure in this debate. He has called for places of worship to open, and they do indeed offer a great deal of spiritual succour to many people. The Government are working with the Churches to get them reopened as soon as is practicable. Having religious succour is going to be important for those who have faith.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-04/debates/DEE4BA68-D0EB-4AB1-8076-0C988D4ADD83/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-116C0093-4CAD-4058-844B-9245DCE18778>

### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

#### **Children: Philosophy and Religion**

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated)** [HL4788] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether schools have a duty to respect the wishes of parents who want to raise their children in accordance with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

#### **LGBT People: Primary Education**

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated)** [HL4789] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Berridge on 12 May (HL Deb, cols 566–9), and to their publication, Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education: FAQs, what options will be available to parents who do not want their primary

school-aged children to be taught about LGBT relationships if their child's school decides to teach them.

### **Sex and Relationship Education**

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated)** [HL4790] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to give schools discretion over what they teach under relationships education, relationships and sex education; and if so, what safeguards there will be to ensure that such teaching will be age-appropriate and have regard for the religious background of pupils.

**Baroness Berridge:** We are making Relationships Education compulsory for primary school-aged pupils, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for secondary school-aged pupils and Health Education compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools, from September 2020.

These subjects are designed to give pupils the knowledge they need to lead happy, safe and healthy lives and to foster respect for other people and for difference. Through these subjects, children will be taught about the importance of respectful relationships and the different types of relationships that exist. This can be done in a way that respects everyone's views.

The statutory guidance states that all pupils should receive teaching on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) relationships during their school years, and that secondary schools should include LGBT content in their teaching. Primary schools are encouraged and enabled, when teaching about different types of family, to include families with same sex parents.

In all schools, the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when planning teaching, so that topics included in the statutory guidance are handled appropriately. Schools must ensure they comply with the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010. The statutory guidance is attached and can be accessed via the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/805781/Relationships Education Relationships and Sex Education RSE and Health Education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805781/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf)

Schools are also required to consult with parents when developing and reviewing their policies for Relationships Education (primary) and RSE (secondary), which will inform schools' decisions on when and how certain content is covered. Schools should ensure that parents know what will be taught and when, and clearly communicate the fact that parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE.

[HL4788](#) [HL4789](#) [HL4790](#) [PDF](#)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-20/HL4788/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-20/HL4789/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-20/HL4790/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-05-12/debates/026E3608-A524-4F51-8DD2-48D0901FB047/SchoolsRelationshipsAndSexEducation>

*The FAQs referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education-faqs>

## Religious Hatred: Islam

**Caroline Lucas (Green)** [49639] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group's report entitled Coronavirus, fear and how Islamophobia spreads on social media, what steps his Department is taking to work with (a) social media companies and (b) relevant statutory bodies to (i) address a potential rise in Islamophobia as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic and (ii) prevent a future increase in hate crimes when the covid-19 lockdown comes to an end.

**Luke Hall:** The Government takes hate crime and discrimination of any kind very seriously.

The Government is working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), civil society partners and social media platforms to encourage victim reporting of both online and offline hate crime and ensure social media companies continue to prioritise the removal of hateful content during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Government is also working with communities, civil society partners and the police to monitor and address any developments in hate crime as government Covid-19 restrictions change.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-20/49639/>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

<https://antimuslimhatredworkinggrouphome.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/research-briefing-report-7-1.pdf>

## Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [52457] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure the safe re-opening of places of worship as covid-19 social distancing measures are lifted.

**Simon Clarke:** On 11 May, the Government launched the document "Our Plan to Rebuild", which outlined the steps it would be taking to ease the lockdown restrictions;

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/884760/Our\\_plan\\_to\\_rebuild\\_The\\_UK\\_Government\\_s\\_COVID-19\\_recovery\\_strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884760/Our_plan_to_rebuild_The_UK_Government_s_COVID-19_recovery_strategy.pdf)

The current assumption that places of worship will open no earlier than 4 July. As part of the steps to ease the restrictions, the Government launched a Places of Worship Taskforce to look at how they can reopen and operate safely to ensure those who visit and those who work there, are protected. Meetings are being led by the Secretary of State for Communities, or the Faith Minister, and comprise of representatives from the country's major faiths. The taskforce is working towards the safe reopening of places of worship as soon as possible, including for individual prayer, and services and ceremonies such as weddings. It will also address the specific issues that places of worship face in the course of reopening safely.

Places of worship are essential in bringing our communities together, which is why we want them to reopen them as soon as we can. However, no place of worship will be able to reopen before a final decision by the Government and the accompanying changes to the legal position in the published regulations. Even after we permit places of worship to reopen fully, some may choose to reopen in stages or at a slower pace depending on their local circumstances.

Guidance to support the safe reopening of our places of worship will be published in due course.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/52457/>

## Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [52458] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has had discussions with representatives from the Muslim Council of Britain on the safe re-opening of mosques as covid-19 social distancing measures are lifted.

**Luke Hall:** No discussions have taken place with the Muslim Council of Britain regarding the safe reopening of places of worship. The Government has set up a taskforce through which the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has met with national faith leaders to prepare for places of worship to re-open safely at the appropriate time. Membership of the taskforce includes representation from the Muslim community.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/52458/>

## House of Lords Written Answer

### Food: Coronavirus

**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Labour)** [HL3610] To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the nutritional standards for the food parcels that they are delivering to those in priority health categories; and what oversight is in place to ensure that the standards are maintained.

**Lord Bethell:** The food parcels delivered to those at highest risk from COVID-19 contain a basic selection of food and other essential items. They are a standardised package designed to be suitable for the majority of people and deliver the nutritional requirements for one person for one week, as reviewed by nutritionists and key industry groups.

Substitutions of various items can be made to provide variety from one week to the next. Those receiving the boxes are advised, via a letter in the box, to contact their local authority if they have any particular dietary requirements, including cultural and religious needs that are not met through the contents of the box.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-28/HL3610/>

## Government Equalities Office

### Next steps for work on COVID-19 disparities announced

... Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, said: "This government is rightly taking seriously the initial findings from the PHE report published earlier this week. However, it is also clear that much more needs to be done to understand the key drivers of the disparities identified and the relationships between the different risk factors. ...

The full terms of reference for this work will be as follows:

- Review the effectiveness and impact of current actions being undertaken by relevant government departments and their agencies to directly lessen disparities in infection and death rates of COVID-19. Factors to be considered – but aren't limited to – should include age and sex, occupation, obesity, comorbidities, geography, and ethnicity; ...
- Commission further data, research and analytical work by the Equality Hub to clarify the scale, and drivers, of the gaps in evidence highlighted by the Report;
- Consider where and how the collection and quality of data into the disparities highlighted can be improved on, and take action to do so ...

- Build on and expand the stakeholder engagement undertaken by PHE ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-steps-for-work-on-covid-19-disparities-announced>

The Public Health England report referred to above can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/889195/disparities\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/889195/disparities_review.pdf)

## Scottish Parliament Written Answer

### Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

**S5W-29137 Liam Kerr (Conservative):** To ask the Scottish Government which advocacy groups and organisations it has consulted regarding the protection of rights to freedom of speech and assembly in relation to the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill.

**Humza Yousaf:** Following recommendations made by Lord Bracadale's Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland, the Scottish Government engaged extensively with stakeholders and the wider public. On 14 November 2018 the Scottish Government launched the 'One Scotland: hate has no home here' consultation and ran 11 public awareness events throughout Scotland. A series of stakeholder engagement events and bilateral meetings were also undertaken. The 'One Scotland: hate has no home here' consultation asked respondents if they agreed with Lord Bracadale's recommendation that there should be a protection of freedom of expression provision for offences concerning the stirring up of hatred. Altogether, there were 108 organisational responses to the consultation. This included responses from: Amnesty International UK; Humanist Society Scotland; Equality and Human Rights Commission; and many more third sector, faith, and public sector organisations. Subsequently the Scottish Government contracted independent external analysts who undertook the analysis of the consultation responses and produced a report, published by the Scottish Government in June 2019. You can view the report – which includes a list of organisational respondents – here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-amending-scottish-hate-crime-legislation-analysis-responses/>

The responses to the consultation and public awareness events have yielded valuable information both from individual and organisational perspectives; helping to inform the development of the Bill.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-29137>

Lord Bracadale's review, referred to above, can be read at

<https://tinyurl.com/y8of8le6>

## Scottish Government

**Updated: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for funeral directors on managing infection risks when handling the deceased and funeral services**

<https://tinyurl.com/y8nqelkg>

**Updated: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for cremation authorities and burial authorities on managing their services and funeral services**

<https://tinyurl.com/y9vmnzyo>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### **Gaza: Coronavirus**

**Abena Opong-Asare (Labour)** [52590] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he plans to make to his Israeli counterpart on access to healthcare for Palestinians in Gaza affected by covid-19.

**James Cleverly:** I discussed our concerns about the impact of a COVID-19 outbreak in Gaza with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 31 March. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv are also in regular contact with the Israeli authorities and last raised access to healthcare for Palestinians in Gaza with them on 26 May. UN agencies, the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government are working together to ensure that essential medical supplies and staff are able to access Gaza. As I made clear during a meeting with Israeli Director General Rotem, Palestinian PM Shattyeh, and international donors on 2 June, we continue to welcome this ongoing cooperation. The UK is providing vital support to help respond to COVID-19 in the OPTs. Our \$1 million funding contribution will enable the World Health Organization and UNICEF to purchase and co-ordinate the delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline public health personnel and scale up laboratory testing capacity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/52590/>

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**James Cleverly:** Useful virtual visit to the #OPTs is clear evidence of how we can use technology to build ties and continue diplomatic engagement despite #coronavirus. We must work together to combat this virus and unprecedented challenge

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1268527745291649029>

**James Cleverly:** Today I was proud to announce £20m of UK funding to provide support to combat coronavirus in the OPTs. This will help health workers provide life-saving medical services. Fighting coronavirus around the world helps protect us here in the UK

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1268579140841676803>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

#### **Inquiry into the impact of coronavirus on ethnic minorities**

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a light on long-standing, structural race inequality in Britain, and raised serious issues that have yet to be fully answered.

Our decision to use our legal powers to undertake an inquiry builds on our previously published [Roadmap to Race Equality](#), which called for a government-wide strategy to address long-standing racial inequalities in all areas of life, focusing on education, employment, health, housing and criminal justice. This announcement is only a first step. This in-depth analysis will help develop clear, evidence-based recommendations for urgent

action to tackle entrenched racial inequalities in a specific area. It will also take account of the differences and opportunities in England, Scotland and Wales. ...

The first step of the process will be to meet race equality leaders to discuss our proposals for an inquiry. ...

David Isaac, Equality and Human Rights Commission Chair, said: "Now is a once in a generation opportunity to tackle long-standing entrenched racial inequalities. We intend to use our statutory powers to address the loss of lives and livelihoods of people from different ethnic minorities.

"Only by taking focused action to tackle race inequality across Britain will we become a fair country in which every individual can reach their full potential. Everyone must live and work together in order to create a strong economy and a cohesive society.

"This inquiry is part of our long-term strategic approach to tackle the structural inequalities that the coronavirus pandemic has laid bare. This is an important step towards ensuring that the deep-rooted inequality faced by ethnic minorities is meaningfully addressed as we rebuild." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/inquiry-impact-coronavirus-ethnic-minorities>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/assisteddying.html>

#### **Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

#### **Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/educationassemblies.html>

#### **Genocide Determination Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/genocidedeterminationbill.html>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

#### **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageandcivilpartnershipminimumage.html>

### **Scottish Parliament**

#### **Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

## **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill**

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

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

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

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

### **Protecting places of worship** (closing date 28 June 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

### **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill** (closing date 24 July 2020)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/115038.aspx>

### **Legislative proposals for religion, values and ethics [Wales]** (closing date 28 July 2020)

<https://gov.wales/legislative-proposals-religion-values-and-ethics>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438