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Immigration and Asylum

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Immigration (United Kingdom Government Policies)

Clare Haughey (SNP): This week, the Home Secretary unveiled a raft of right-wing policies aimed at driving down immigration statistics. Under the plans, people on health and care visas will no longer be able to bring their families to the United Kingdom, and the salary threshold for skilled workers will be hiked to £38,700. Shockingly, Labour has made no objection to the Tory proposals. It has failed to commit to reversing them, despite the impact that they would have on the Scottish economy and the national health service and social care sectors. Does the First Minister agree that, unlike Labour and the Tories, the Scottish Government will never shy away from welcoming immigrants and valuing their contributions to Scotland?

Reply from the First Minister (Humza Yousaf): I agree strongly with Clare

Haughey. This is a really dark day for the UK—a country that once welcomed many immigrants, including my grandfather. In fact, it begged them to come here to work in factories and to drive buses due to the labour shortages that were seen at that time. Bit by bit, successive UK Governments—both Labour and Conservative—have dismantled our immigration and asylum processes since then.

On immigration, the latest announcements mean that the UK Government is asking migrants to come here to look after our family members, but in doing so to abandon their own family members back home. On asylum, the UK Government has virtually eliminated any practical legal route for people who are fleeing war and persecution. Its policies in that respect are not only morally repugnant but economically illiterate. We, the Scottish Government, value migration and its importance to our social fabric and our economy. Let me say unequivocally that the Scottish Government—and the Scottish National Party—will always say that we are proud of the benefits that migrants bring to this country and that they have chosen Scotland to be their home.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=15593&i=133067#ScotParlOR>

Immigration Policy (Impact on Scottish Universities)

Keith Brown (SNP) [S6O-02849] To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has carried out regarding any impact of United Kingdom immigration policies on universities in Scotland.

Reply from the Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans (Graeme Dey): The UK Government's latest attacks on immigration could have a devastating impact on our universities. They risk the economic, social and cultural contribution that international students make not only to campuses, but to Scotland. We want to attract more people to live, work and study here, not fewer. The simple fact is that, with independence, we could devise a principled approach to migration that would deliver for our economy, our public services and our universities.

Last month, we published plans for a new Scottish connections visa post independence that would allow international students to live and work in Scotland for five years after their studies and could lead to Scottish citizenship. It is an offering that is in line with Scotland's values and one that would also meet our economic needs.

Keith Brown: I thank the minister for his answer. At a recent meeting with the University of Stirling, which is based in my constituency, one of the issues that we discussed was the potential impact of the policy that the UK Government introduced recently that restricts many international students from bringing their dependants with them. There are real concerns that, without the ability to bring their families, many overseas students will choose to go elsewhere.

Does the minister agree that hostile immigration policies have the ability to harm the international standing of our universities and that the UK Government should devolve immigration powers to the Scottish Parliament—notwithstanding the complete silence from MSPs on the Tory benches in this Parliament—to ensure that Scotland remains an open and welcoming destination for international students, whose contribution to the economy and the social and cultural diversity of our country is very much welcomed?

Reply from Graeme Dey: The UK Government's latest doubling down on the hostile environment means not only that we could see fewer international students studying in Scotland but that it could be harder for our universities to attract international staff. The changes relating to dependants are particularly pernicious. After all, evidence shows that the ability to bring family members to Scotland encourages migrants to stay in the long term, and the additional controls mean that

families risk being torn apart by the most restrictive family reunion policy of any high-income country in the world. That approach runs contrary to the one that we should have—that of welcoming people who are making Scotland their home and are choosing to live, work or study here.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=15593&i=133084#ScotParIOR>

Information about the proposed Scottish connections visa, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-new-scotland-migration-scotland-independence/>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Asylum: Homelessness

Foyso Choudhury (Labour) [S6W-23267] To ask the Scottish Government whether it has considered targeting funding to ensure that people in Scotland who have recently been granted refugee status will not become homeless and/or potentially vulnerable to trafficking, in light of the UK Government reducing the notice period for leaving asylum accommodation to seven days.

Reply from Emma Roddick: Under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, asylum applicants are entitled to receive asylum support for a prescribed period after they have been notified of the decision on their asylum application, for positive decisions this remains 28 days. As far as the Scottish Government is aware, the UK Government has not changed the prescribed period and it remains at 28 days. However, we are aware that there have been issues with communication of decisions from the Home Office to the accommodation provider and local authorities which is impacting provision of information and support for people at the end of their period in asylum accommodation.

The Scottish Government has also raised concerns about the impact of the UK Government's Streamlined Asylum Process. I wrote to the UK Government on 28 October 2023 to request urgent funding for local authorities and to work constructively with them to ensure that people receiving a positive asylum decision are supported to move-on from asylum accommodation. I am awaiting a response. People in Scotland who have recently been granted refugee status are entitled to access homelessness support from their local authority. Most funding for homelessness is provided through the local government settlement. In addition to this, the Scottish Government have provided local authorities with £52.5m since 2018 to support the implementation of rapid rehousing transition plans and provide £30.5m annually for their work to prevent homelessness.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-23267>

The letter referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/asylum-letter-to-uk-government/>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Maggie Chapman (Green) [S6M-11607] **International Migrants Day 2023** – That the Parliament acknowledges that every year on 18 December, the world marks International Migrants Day, which is a day set aside to recognise what it sees as the important contribution of migrants, while highlighting what it considers to be the challenges that they face; notes with concern reports that, due to persistent lack of safe and regular migration pathways, millions continue to take perilous journeys each year, and that, since 2014,

more than 50,000 migrants have lost their lives on migratory routes across the world, including migrants headed to the UK; believes that, regardless of the reasons that compel people to move, migrants and displaced people represent some of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society, and are often exposed to abuse and exploitation, have limited access to essential services including healthcare, and are faced with xenophobic attacks and stigma fuelled by misinformation; highlights what it sees as the vital support that organisations, such as No Recourse North East Partnership (NRNE), Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) and Dundee International Women's Centre (DIWC), provide for migrants in the North East Scotland region, and believes that strengthening the contribution that migrants can make to sustainable and resilient communities requires collective effort to address the challenges that they face.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-11607>

UK Parliament Debate

Immigration and Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2023

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-12-04/debates/3EB459C2-DEF0-4AD7-94CE-705AFE2B2D1F/ImmigrationAndNationality\(Fees\)\(Amendment\)\(No2\)Regulations2023](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-12-04/debates/3EB459C2-DEF0-4AD7-94CE-705AFE2B2D1F/ImmigrationAndNationality(Fees)(Amendment)(No2)Regulations2023)

UK Parliament Ministerial Statements

Immigration Rules

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Cleverly) [HCWS106] I am today laying before the House a statement of changes in immigration rules.

Changes to visitor rules

As set out in the spring Budget 2023, we are amending the list of permitted business activities that can be undertaken by individuals on a UK Visit visa, including by: removing the restriction on visitors working directly with clients in an intra-corporate context, subject to the activity being incidental to their employment abroad and to the delivery of a wider project by the UK branch of their overseas employer; naming remote work as a permitted activity, providing this is not the primary purpose of the visit; expanding the list of unpaid work activities that legal professionals can undertake in the UK, allowing scientists to conduct research in the UK as part of their visit; and allowing pilots and cabin crew members to travel to the UK as part of a Civil Aviation Authority approved wet leasing agreement.

We are also reforming permitted paid engagements (PPE), by including speaking at conferences in the list of permitted engagements. By incorporating the provisions of the route into the standard visitor route, to enable easier switching between PPE activities and the other permitted business activities, and to enable easier travel across the UK border for nationalities eligible to use e-passport gates.

Introduction of new appendix statelessness

We are making changes to the partner and child rules on the statelessness route.

A partner or child will no longer be eligible to apply for permission as a dependent under the stateless route but will instead need to meet the requirements to come to, or stay in, the UK as a partner or child of a stateless person under the family rules in appendix FM. A person who already has permission as a partner or child of a stateless person under the current stateless immigration rules in part 14 will be able to continue to extend their permission or stay in the UK under those provisions.

Changes to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

The EUSS enables EU, other European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens living in the UK by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, and their family members,

to obtain the immigration status they need to continue living in the UK. We are making two particular changes where the EUSS is concerned.

First, to reinforce the Government approach to tackling illegal migration, we will prevent a valid application to the EUSS as a joining family member being made by an irregular arrival to the UK, which will include small boat arrivals, as well as by an illegal entrant. Second, consistent with the temporary protection of rights conferred on them by the citizens' rights agreements for three months from their arrival in the UK, we will require a person in the UK as a visitor to make any application to the EUSS as a joining family member within three months of their arrival subject to reasonable grounds for any delay in applying.

Changes to travel document requirements for school groups visiting the UK from France

We are making changes to allow children aged 18 and under, studying at a school in France, to visit the UK on an organised educational trip without the usual passport or visit visa requirements. EU, other EEA and Swiss national children will be able to travel on their national identity card. Visa national children will still be required to travel on their passport but will not have to obtain a visit visa.

Introduction of new appendix victim of domestic abuse

We are introducing an out of country settlement route for victims of transnational marriage abandonment.

Changes to the youth mobility scheme

The youth mobility scheme (YMS) implements the international commitments that have been made to provide cultural exchange programmes for young people.

We are adding Uruguay to the list of countries and territories participating in the YMS and making changes to reflect that the UK's existing reciprocal, bilateral arrangements with Japan and the Republic of Korea have been enhanced.

The changes to the immigration rules are being laid on 7 December 2023 and will come into effect on various dates between 7 December 2023 and 31 January 2024.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-07/debates/23120733000013/ImmigrationRules>

Rwanda Treaty

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Cleverly) [HCWS101] On 15 November, the Supreme Court handed down its judgment in relation to the migration and economic development partnership between the UK and Rwanda. The Court acknowledged that changes can be delivered to address its concerns. We have been working with the Government of Rwanda to make these changes—they are equally committed to deliver this partnership.

Yesterday, I signed a new treaty with Foreign Minister Biruta. This further strengthens our partnership and addresses the conclusion from the Supreme Court on the risk of refoulement to those individuals who are relocated to Rwanda.

The treaty can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-rwanda-treaty-provision-of-an-asylum-partnership>.

This treaty is binding in international law. It makes it absolutely clear that people relocated to Rwanda will be safe and supported and will not be removed to a country other than the UK. This ensures there is no risk of refoulement. For those who are not granted refugee status or humanitarian protection, they will get equivalent treatment which includes being granted permanent residence so that they are able to stay and integrate into Rwandan society.

Through the treaty, Rwanda will introduce a strengthened end-to-end asylum system. Individuals will have the right to appeal a decision on their asylum claim, which will be considered by a new, specialist asylum appeals body. It will have one Rwandan and one other Commonwealth co-president and be made up of judges from a mix of nationalities,

selected by the co-presidents.

The treaty also enhances the role of the independent monitoring committee which will ensure adherence to obligations under the agreement. It will have the power to set its own priority areas for monitoring and be given unfettered access to complete assessments and reports. The committee will monitor the entire relocation process, including initial screening, relocation and settlement in Rwanda. It will develop a system to enable relocated individuals and legal representatives to lodge confidential complaints directly to the committee.

The Prime Minister committed to stop the boats, and we are delivering on that. The number of arrivals is down by a third; the initial asylum backlog is down from 92,000 to less than 20,000; we have removed over 22,000 people this year; and we have already closed 50 asylum hotels.

To fully solve this problem, we need a strong deterrent as part of our wider toolkit. As our deal with Albania shows, deterrence works: Albanian arrivals are down by more than 90% this year. That is why it is essential we remove illegal migrants to Rwanda. If people know they cannot stay in the UK if they come here illegally, we will prevent people from risking their lives by making the dangerous journey across the channel.

The Prime Minister has announced we will be bringing forward legislation to complement this treaty. I look forward to introducing this to the House in due course.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-06/debates/23120651000012/RwandaTreaty>

The Supreme Court judgement referred to above can be read at
<https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2023/42.html>

UK Parliament, Ministerial Statements and Q&A

Legal Migration

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Cleverly): ... Migration to this country is far too high and needs to come down. Today, we are taking more robust action than any Government have before in order to bring it down. ...

When our country voted to leave the European Union, we also voted to take back control of our borders. ... we now have a points-based immigration system through which we can control who comes to the UK. We prioritise the skills and talent we need to grow our economy and support our NHS, and we have a competitive visa system for globally mobile talent; for example, last year we expanded health worker visa access to address the urgent need for more social care workers. The whole country can be proud that in the past decade we have also welcomed more than half a million people through humanitarian routes—people from Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan, including 85,000 from Ukraine and Hong Kong in the past year alone.

The British people will always do the right thing by those in need, but they also, absolutely rightly, want to reduce overall immigration numbers. That means not only stopping the boats and shutting down illegal routes, but a well-managed reduction in legal migration. People are understandably worried about housing, GP appointments, school places and access to other public services when they can see their communities growing quickly in numbers.

From January 2024, the right for international students to bring dependants will be removed unless they are on postgraduate courses designated as research programmes. ... We have also stopped international students switching out of the student route into work routes before their studies have been completed. These changes will have a tangible impact on net migration; around 153,000 visas were granted to dependants of sponsored students in the year ending September 2023.

Today, I can announce that we will go even further, with a five-point plan to further curb immigration abuses that will deliver the biggest ever reduction in net migration. In total, this package, plus our reduction in student dependants, will mean that around 300,000 fewer people will come to the UK in future years than came last year. ...

The first point of our five-point plan will be to end the abuse of the health and care visa. We will stop overseas care workers bringing family dependants, and we will require care firms in England to be regulated by the Care Quality Commission in order to sponsor visas. Approximately 120,000 dependants accompanied 100,000 care workers and senior care workers in the year ending September 2023. Only 25% of dependants are estimated to be in work, which means that a significant number are drawing on public services rather than helping to grow the economy. We recognise that foreign workers do great work in our NHS and health sector, but it is also important that migrants make a big enough financial contribution. Therefore, we will increase the annual immigration health surcharge this year by 66%, from £624 to £1,035, to raise on average around £1.3 billion for the health services of this country every year.

Secondly, we will stop immigration undercutting the salaries of British workers. We will increase the skilled worker earnings threshold by a third to £38,700 from next spring, in line with the median full-time wage for those kinds of jobs. Those coming on health and social care visa routes will be exempt, so we can continue to bring in the healthcare workers on which our care sector and NHS rely.

Thirdly, we will scrap cut-price shortage labour from overseas by ending the 20% going rate salary discount for shortage occupations and reforming the shortage occupations list. ...

Fourthly, we will ensure that people bring only dependants whom they can support financially, by raising the minimum income for family visas to the same threshold as the minimum salary threshold for skilled workers, which is £38,700. The minimum income requirement is currently £18,600 and has not been increased since 2012. ...

Finally, having already banned overseas master's students from bringing family members to the UK, I have asked the Migration Advisory Committee to review the graduate route to prevent abuse and protect the integrity and quality of the UK's outstanding higher education sector. ...

Immigration policy must be fair, consistent, legal and sustainable. That is why we are also taking the fight to illegal migration. Our plan to stop the boats is working. Small boat arrivals are down by a third, even as illegal migration across the rest of Europe is on the rise. ...

Yvette Cooper (Labour): ... Net migration should come down. ...

Immigration is important for Britain, and we have rightly helped Ukraine and Hong Kong. We benefit from international talent and students. That is why the immigration system needs to be controlled and managed, so that it is fair and effective, and why net migration should come down from record levels. But there needs to be a proper plan. ... Twelve months ago, I warned that work visas had substantially increased as a result of major skills shortages in the UK and that the Conservatives were not taking any serious action to address those shortages. The Leader of the Opposition warned 12 months ago that the immigration system should be linked to new requirements to train up workers at home, but the Conservatives did nothing; unbelievably they are still doing nothing.

There is nothing in this statement about training requirements or workforce plans. The Conservatives say that they want fewer shortage occupations, but it was only four months ago that they added bricklayers, roof tilers and plasterers to the shortage list. ...

Social care visas have gone up from 3,500 a year to more than 100,000 a year because the Government have failed for years to heed warnings about recruitment and retention in social care. ...

Can the Home Secretary tell us where the workforce plan is on social care, on engineering, on bricklaying and on all the shortage occupations ...

Reply from James Cleverly: ... Working with the Minister for Immigration ... since the day I was appointed, we have put forward the most substantial package of legal migration reforms that the country has ever seen. ...

Damian Green (Conservative): I am very pleased to welcome about four and a half of the five announcements that my right hon. Friend has made, particularly the crackdown on abuse of the dependants route, which has proved a weakness in the system over recent years, and the increase in the family visa rate. ...

However, may I ask him about the health and care visa, and particularly about the inability of people to bring dependants with them? How many care workers does he think will be deterred by that? How many fewer will be coming here? There is a shortage of about 150,000 in the care sector at the moment, and I hope that the new approach is not a significant contributor to the reduction in numbers. If it is, it will cause damage to the care sector.

Reply from James Cleverly: ... What we have seen through this scheme is the displacement of British workers. The total number of people in the sector has not increased by anywhere near as much as the number of people who have entered on the family visa route. We also suspect that, globally, there is significant surplus demand. Although an individual with a family might be dissuaded because of the restrictions on family members, someone who does not have those family commitments will almost certainly be willing to put themselves forward, so we do not envisage a significant reduction in demand because of the changes. It will mean, however, that we have the care workers we need and not the estimated 120,000 other people who have come with them in recent years. ...

Chris Stephens (SNP): ... On the 120,000 dependants figure, can the Home Secretary tell me how many of them are children? Is he suggesting that children should be going into work? He mentioned his discussions with the Department of Work and Pensions, but what discussions has he had with the Health Secretary? The Home Office figures show that 143,990 health and care worker visas were granted in the year ending in September. That is more than double the figure for September next year, which perhaps demonstrates the real impact that creating more barriers and red tape will have on the NHS and care sector. Finally, Professor Brian Bell, chair of the Migration Advisory Committee, recently warned that limits on overseas care worker numbers could see a situation whereby “lots of people won’t get care.”

Does the Home Secretary recognise that his proposals may cause irrevocable harm to the care sector?

Reply from James Cleverly: The point about dependants is an incredibly important one. ... we do not envisage a reduction in the number of people working in the care sector, but a reduction in the number of people coming with those workers, the vast majority of whom are not in work. Whether they are children or out-of-work adults, the simple truth of the matter is that that creates a burden on the British welfare system, the education system, housing, school places and GP’s surgeries. The offer that we are making is clear: we are supporting the health sector and the social care sector, but we are doing so in a way that minimises the additional pressure on communities.

It is incredibly easy for us to say and do things that might superficially be viewed as generous, but the people who disproportionately carry the burden of the decisions we make are those on the lowest salaries, those who are struggling to find housing, and those who are on waiting lists. We should be conscious of their needs. That is why we are being thoughtful and careful about the people we are welcoming into our country. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

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

UK-Rwanda Partnership

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Cleverly): ... Three weeks ago, the Supreme Court handed down its judgment on this Government's migration and economic development agreement with Rwanda. In that judgment their lordships upheld the view of the High Court and the Court of Appeal that it is lawful to relocate illegal migrants, who have no right to be here, to another safe country for asylum processing and resettlement, but upheld the judgment of the Court of Appeal, which means that the Government cannot yet lawfully remove people to Rwanda. That was due to the Court's concerns that relocated individuals might be "refouled"—removed to a country where they could face persecution or ill treatment. We did not agree with that assessment, but of course we respect the judgment of the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court also acknowledged that its concerns were not immutable and were not an aspersion on Rwanda's intentions, and that changes may be delivered in the future that could address its concerns. Today I can inform the House that those concerns have been conclusively answered and those changes made ... We have created a situation that addresses the concerns.

Our rule of law partnership with Rwanda sets out in a legally binding international treaty the obligations on both the United Kingdom and Rwanda within international law, and sets out to this House and to the courts why Rwanda is and will remain a safe country for the purposes of asylum and resettlement. This is a partnership to which we and Rwanda are completely committed. Rwanda is a safe and prosperous country. It is a vital partner for the UK. Our treaty puts beyond legal doubt the safety of Rwanda and ends the endless merry-go-round of legal challenges that have thus far frustrated this policy and second-guessed the will of Parliament. ...

Rwanda will introduce a strengthened end-to-end asylum system, which will include a new specialist asylum appeals tribunal to consider individual appeals against any refused claims. It will have one Rwandan and one other Commonwealth co-president and be made up of judges from a mix of nations selected by those co-presidents. We have been working with Rwanda to build capacity and to make it clear to those relocated to Rwanda that they will not be sent to another third country.

The treaty is binding in international law. It also enhances the role of the independent monitoring committee, which will ensure adherence to obligations under the treaty and have the power to set its own priority areas for monitoring. It will be given unfettered access to complete assessments and reports and to monitor the entire relocation process, from initial screening to relocation and settlement in Rwanda. It will also develop a system to enable relocated individuals and legal representatives to lodge confidential complaints directly with the committee.

But, given the Supreme Court judgment, we cannot be confident that the courts will respect a new treaty on its own, so today the Government have published emergency legislation to make it unambiguously clear that Rwanda is a safe country and to prevent the courts from second-guessing Parliament's will. ...

For the purposes of the Bill, a safe country is defined as one to which people may be removed from the United Kingdom in compliance with all the United Kingdom's obligations under international law that are relevant to the treatment in that country of people who are removed there. This means that someone removed to that country will not be removed or sent to another country in contravention of any international law, and that anyone who is seeking asylum or who has had an asylum determination will have their claim determined and be treated in accordance with that country's obligations under international law.

Anyone removed to Rwanda under the provisions of the treaty will not be removed from Rwanda, except to the United Kingdom in a very small number of limited and extreme circumstances, and should the UK request the return of any relocated person, Rwanda will make them available. Decision makers, including the Home Secretary, immigration officers and the courts, must all treat Rwanda as a safe country, and they must do so

notwithstanding all relevant UK law or any interpretation of international law, including the human rights convention; the refugee convention; the 1966 international covenant on civil and political rights; the 1984 UN convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the Council of Europe convention on action against trafficking in human beings, which was signed in Warsaw on 16 May 2005; customary international law; and any other international law, or convention or rule of international law, whatsoever, including any order, judgment, decision or measure of the European Court of Human Rights.

Where the European Court of Human Rights indicates an interim measure relating to the intended removal of someone to Rwanda under, or purportedly under, a provision of immigration Acts, a Minister of the Crown alone, and not a court or tribunal, will decide whether the United Kingdom will comply with the interim measure. To further prevent individual claims to prevent removal, the Bill disapplies the relevant provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998, including sections 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9. The Bill is lawful, it is fair and it is necessary, because people will stop coming here illegally only when they know that they cannot stay here and that they will be detained and quickly removed to a safe third country. It is only by breaking the cycle and delivering a deterrent that we will remove the incentive for people to be smuggled here and stop the boats.

This legislation builds on the Illegal Migration Act 2023, which the House passed this summer, and complements the basket of other measures that the UK Government are employing to end illegal migration—for example, the largest ever small boats deal with France. Tackling the supply of boats and parts, the arrest and conviction of people smugglers, and illegal working raids have all helped to drive down small boat arrivals by more than a third this year, even as the numbers are rising elsewhere in Europe.

Parliament and the public alike support the Rwanda plan. Other countries have since copied our plans with Rwanda, and we know from interviews that the prospect of being relocated out of the UK has already had a deterrent effect. This will be considerably magnified when we get the flights to Rwanda. This treaty and this new Bill will help to make that a reality, and I commend this statement to the House.

Yvette Cooper (Labour) ... This is the third Home Secretary to go to Rwanda with a cheque book and come back waving a piece of paper making grand promises. This is the third piece of new Tory legislation on channel crossings in two years. ...

Our Supreme Court says that the Rwanda scheme is a problem because of evidence that Rwanda is not complying with international treaties on the treatment of asylum seekers, but the only thing stopping the British Government ignoring international law completely is the Rwandan Government...

And all of this for what? For a scheme that will likely cover less than 1% of the people who arrive in this country to claim asylum and will cost hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money. Will the Home Secretary tell us about the cost? ...

Will the Home Secretary tell us how many people are going to be covered? The treaty says that it is limited by capacity in Rwanda, and the Court of Appeal said that it would be 100 people and that talk of thousands of people was “political hyperbole”. Will he now admit that even if he ever gets this failing scheme off the ground, it will cover less than 1% of the people who applied for asylum last year? ...

The Home Secretary has a treaty and a law that he knows will not stop dangerous boat crossings. ...

Reply from James Cleverly: ... The simple truth is that Rwanda is making huge progress in professionalising and strengthening its institutions, working alongside the UK and other international partners. I believe that we are duty-bound to support countries such as Rwanda when they play their part in addressing the issues that the world is facing. They are helping to resolve problems, rather than being part of a problem, and they deserve our thanks for doing so.

We will pursue this legislation, which supports a treaty that sees Rwanda

strengthening its institutions and addressing some of the world's most intractable challenges, and we support it as it is supporting us. ...

Priti Patel (Conservative): ... Can he give us details of the assessments that have been made as to whether the disapplication of the Human Rights Act and other laws is robust, will stand up to the legal challenges and, ultimately, will ensure the delivery and the implementation of this policy to curb illegal migration?

Reply from James Cleverly: The UK takes its international obligations incredibly seriously. The Human Rights Act is, in part, being disappplied through this legislation. We were, of course, one of the founding members of the European Court of Human Rights and we regard it as an important institution, but, like many post-war institutions, it would benefit from evolution and updating. ...

The point is that we want to make sure that a country, Rwanda, which is working with us, strengthening its institutions and seeking to do the right thing by both European refugees and African refugees, is supported in doing so. We have a robust legal system and a robust parliamentary system here in the UK; we should have some more self-confidence in those systems and use our experience to help capacity building in partner countries such as Rwanda.

Diana Johnson (Labour): ... Can the Home Secretary confirm today how much additional money will be provided to Rwanda in the light of the changes in the treaty, and whether he will update Parliament more often than once a year? ...

Reply from James Cleverly: Let me make it absolutely clear: we remain committed to our promise to publish the costs of the scheme on an annual basis. To make this absolutely clear to the House, too, the Rwandans asked for no additional money in connection with this treaty. None was asked for, none was offered and none was provided. ...

Natalie Elphicke (Conservative): The Prime Minister said that he would not allow a foreign court to block his Rwanda plans—meaning, of course, the European Court of Human Rights—so can my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary explain why article 11(4)(a) of the treaty expressly requires Rwanda to enable migrants to make claims to that European Court?

Reply from James Cleverly: Throughout this plan, we have made it clear that we will remain in conformity with international law. The European Court of Human Rights does of course have an important role to play, but the point we have made is that there are many countries that are in disagreement with international courts, including the European Court of Human Rights. We are determined to do the right thing to deter the evil people smugglers, the slave traders, and those people who would seek to abuse and take advantage of vulnerable people, and to work with Rwanda, in conformity with international law, but being clear that we are not going to be deterred from acting promptly.

Alison Thewliss (SNP): ... Just by saying that Rwanda is a safe country does not make it so. Legislating does not make it so. The Home Secretary says that Rwanda is safe, yet somehow his treaty says that we will accept asylum seekers from Rwanda—from that safe country—so it is both safe and unsafe. He says that he respects the assessment of the Supreme Court, but he is here today to override it. His treaty says that they will not remove children, but the treaty is full of provisions for what happens when children do end up in Rwanda. He says that human rights are important, but they are not there for everybody, and he seeks to disapply them.

The Home Secretary comes here today while the Rwandan Minister says: “It has always been important to both Rwanda and the UK that our rule of law partnership meets the highest standards of international law, and it places obligations on both the UK and Rwanda to act lawfully. Without lawful behaviour by the UK, Rwanda would not be able to continue with the Migration and Economic Development Partnership.”

So if this deal does break international law and our treaty obligations, the deal fails to

exist. ... The Home Secretary says it does not, but it is not a matter in which they can just overlook the human rights convention, the refugee convention and all those other conventions and disapply them when it suits. International law does not work that way. This is an assault on human rights. We should not let this stand from this House, because human rights are universal and they are for everybody, not who the Home Secretary thinks they should apply to. ... Does the Home Secretary believe that human rights are universal or does he not? That is the key question on this legislation, because we have been told, on every piece of legislation we have passed so far, that it would be a deterrent, yet none of them has worked. ...

The Home Secretary's plans for Rwanda have been found to be unlawful. They are immoral. They are a waste of money. They should be scrapped. ...

Reply from James Cleverly: It is a shame that the hon. Lady's comments are clearly based on what I can only assume is a cursory and superficial skim of the legislation. She criticises it for a number of things that are not in the legislation ... We are absolutely committed to human rights. We were one of the founders of the European Court of Human Rights and our commitment to abide by international law is unwavering. It underpins the relationship we have with Rwanda and I can assure her that it will remain at the forefront of our thinking throughout. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-06/debates/5B5B3341-380B-459A-8699-4F4428F053DB/UK-RwandaPartnership>

The Supreme Court judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2023/42.html>

Information about the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill, referred to above, can be read at

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

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Small Boat Crossings: Prosecution Rates

Chris Stephens (SNP) [900553] What steps [the Minister] is taking to increase prosecution rates for small boat gangs and other people traffickers.

The Solicitor General (Michael Tomlinson): Earlier this year, the Attorney General and I visited Western Jet Foil and the joint control room in Dover to discuss the Illegal Migration Act 2023. The number of small boat crossings is down by a third this year, and we are seeing an increase in the number of prosecutions since the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.

Chris Stephens: Yesterday the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill was laid before the House. It would disapply the Human Rights Act 1998 for those seeking sanctuary. That undermines the UK's international reputation and international law. The Home Secretary said yesterday at the Dispatch Box that the Attorney General made it clear that the Bill is in conformity with international law, so can he confirm that that advice was given, and how is it meant to impact small boat crossings and prosecutions?

Reply from the Solicitor General: ... I cannot confirm or deny whether advice was even sought, let alone given, let alone its content. His question is about small boat crossings, which Government Members are determined to stop. I was disappointed that he did not support our Nationality and Borders Act, which prosecuted the people traffickers. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-07/debates/E72F85C1-62E4-4C5E-BF75-75AE7603C8A6/SmallBoatCrossingsProsecutionRates>

Information about the Safety of Rwanda Bill, referred to above, can be read at

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers:

Migration

Neil O'Brien (Conservative) [4250] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) gross and (b) net long-term migration was each year from July 1993, broken down by arrivals by (i) asylum and (ii) other humanitarian routes.

Reply from John Glen: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. ... The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published its most recent estimates of long-term international migration to and from the United Kingdom on 23 November 2023¹. These estimates of net migration, immigration and emigration are produced using methods that are based predominantly on administrative data and cover the period year ending (YE) June 2012 to YE June 2023. Estimates for earlier years remain those previously published² based on data from the International Passenger Survey (IPS).

The most recent estimates made for each year from 1993 onwards are presented in Table 1 of this response's accompanying dataset.

Methods for measuring international migration are in development, and the latest estimates for the years ending December 2022 onwards are provisional. Uncertainty associated with these estimates will reduce in future when we have more data to confirm people's long-term migration status. More information on measures of uncertainty around administrative data-based migration estimates is available from 'Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2023'³.

Administrative data-based migration estimates were developed in response to known limitations of the IPS for measuring international migration⁴. Confidence intervals that provide a measure of the uncertainty around estimates for earlier years based on IPS data are published in the tables included in Long-term international migration 1.012.

Breakdowns of immigration estimates by asylum and other humanitarian routes are also produced by the ONS and are presented in Table 2 of this response's accompanying dataset. These breakdowns have only been published for the year ending YE June 2019 to YE June 2023 for the latest administrative data-based migration estimates. Therefore, for 1993 to 2018, these breakdowns are based on Home Office data on asylum seekers and people resettled in the UK under various resettlement schemes that were included in previously published estimates based on IPS data.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/longterminternationalmigrationprovisional/yearendingjune2023/relateddata>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/longterminternationalmigrationcomponentsandadjustmentstable101>

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/longterminternationalmigrationprovisional/yearendingjune2023>

⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/improvinginternationalmigrationstatisticsusingadministratedata/2023-11-23#how-we-have-historically-collected-migration-data>

Dataset

https://gna.files.parliament.uk/gna-attachments/1673560/original/PQ4250_Neil_O'Brien_Table.xlsx

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-28/4250>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Childcare

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [4490] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of individuals who are not eligible for the extended 30 hours of childcare offer because they are subject to the no recourse to public funds condition; and what proportion of those individuals have children with British citizenship.

Childcare: Migrants

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [4491] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the eligibility criteria for the extended 30 hours childcare offer to allow migrant parents with the right to work to access that offer.

Reply from David Johnston: The government expects migrants coming to the UK to be able to maintain and accommodate themselves without the support of public funds.

The department has not made an estimate of the numbers of families who are not eligible for 30 hours because they have no recourse to public funds. The department also does not hold data on what proportion of those individuals have children with British citizenship.

The new working parent entitlement, which will be rolled out in phases from April 2024, will be available to working parents who meet the eligibility criteria. These will be the same as the current 30 hours offer for three and four year-olds.

The free childcare entitlements for the children of working parents are not within the definition of 'public funds' in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 or the Immigration Rules. However, there are requirements in the Childcare (Free of Charge for Working Parents) (England) Regulations 2022 for the parent, or one of the parents, not to be subject to immigration control, which means that where both parents have no recourse to public funds, they will not be eligible for the entitlements.

Parents with no recourse to public funds are, however, able to access the 15 hours free early education entitlement available for all three and four year-olds and, if eligible, 15 hours free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds. In September 2022, the department extended eligibility for the two-year-old entitlement to disadvantaged families who have no recourse to public funds. This is because these entitlements are intended to support children's development and help prepare them for school.

The government has no current plans to extend the early years entitlements for working parents to families with no recourse to public funds.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-29/4490>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-29/4491>

Migrants: Childcare

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [4493] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an estimate of the number of children in families with no recourse to public funds who are unable to access 30 hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition applies to millions of people, the vast majority of whom are visitors or other temporary migrants who have no need for public funds during their stay. It also applies to those without status, many of whom may not be in touch with the Home Office.

The Home Office's Chief Statistician wrote to the Office for Statistics Regulation on 3 July 2020 to explain why the Home Office does not feel that it is of practical application to produce an estimate of the total population subject to NRPF present in the UK at any one time. His letter can be found at:

<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/response-from-daniel-shaw-to-ed-humpherson-parliamentary-question-response/>

To note, 30 hours' free childcare is not considered a 'public fund' for immigration purposes. However, the eligibility criteria, as set by the Department for Education, requires at least one parent to have permission to access public funds, which means it may not be available to all families.

Parents with NRPF are able to access the 15 hours' free early education entitlement available for all three and four year olds regardless of their family circumstances and, if eligible, 15 hours' free early education for disadvantaged two year olds. These 15-hour entitlements primarily benefit the child and their educational development and outcomes. While there are some benefits to parents in reduced childcare fees, this is not the main purpose of these entitlements. The 30 hours' free childcare entitlement is primarily focused on supporting the parent(s) into work.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-29/4493>

Asylum

Dan Carden (Labour) [4245] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Minister for Immigration's oral contribution on Monday 27 November 2023, column 536, what the evidential basis is for many people claiming asylum in the UK being economic migrants making spurious claims to game the system.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: A wide body of evidence points towards key pull factors to the UK including language, diaspora, presence of friends and family, economic opportunity, and availability of education. That is why we have no plans to change right to work provisions and are trebling fines for illegal working.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-28/4245>

The oral contribution referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-11-27/debates/878D52AA-C9EB-4512-A35E-EFB9B08A1A96/IllegalMigrationSmallBoats#contribution-6D469BEA-6A4B-48B0-BF08-9369B372B237>

Asylum: Finance

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [3928] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of starting the 28 day notice period for the end of asylum support 10 days after the issue of a Biometric Residence Permit.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: Following the service of an asylum decision, an individual continues to be an asylum seeker for the purpose of asylum support until the end of the relevant prescribed period, also known as the 'grace period' or 'move on period'. This period is 28 calendar days from when an individual is notified of a decision to accept their asylum claim and grant them leave. There are no current plans to extend this period (of 28 days).

Individuals should make plans to move on from asylum support as soon as they are served their asylum decision. We offer support to all individuals through Migrant Help or their partner organisation in doing this. This 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/2023-11-27/3928>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Legal Aid Scheme: Immigration

Luke Pollard (Labour Co-op) [3673] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the remote provision of immigration and asylum advice; and whether he has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment on the remote provision of such advice.

Legal Aid Scheme: Asylum

Luke Pollard (Labour Co-op) [3674] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the proportion of asylum seekers who have had access to confidential remote legal advice in the last 12 months.

Luke Pollard (Labour Co-op) [3675] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of remote advice provision in asylum seeker accommodation sites.

Reply from Mike Freer: Legal aid is available for immigration and asylum cases, including those involving victims of domestic abuse and modern slavery, for separated migrant children, and for cases where someone is challenging a detention decision.

Earlier in November, the Legal Aid Agency published a list of immigration legal services providers that are willing and able to provide remote advice to clients in the South West of England; the list is available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-providers-south-west-support-directory> (opens in a new tab).

The ongoing Review of Civil Legal Aid is considering the broader economic context of the civil legal aid market as a whole across eleven categories (including immigration) so that it can operate sustainably in the long-term; the Review's final report is expected in March 2024. When the Illegal Migration Act 2023 is implemented, individuals who receive a removal notice under the IMA will have access to free legal advice in relation to that notice.

Section 27(2) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 allows the Lord Chancellor to make arrangements for legal services to be provided by telephone or by other electronic means. Whether legal advice in a particular case is delivered remotely or in-person is down to the discretion of the legal provider. As set out in the Government's response of 28 September 2023 to the consultation on legal aid fees for IMA work, which included an equality impact assessment

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/legal-aid-fees-in-the-illegal-migration-bill/outcome/legal-aid-fees-in-the-illegal-migration-act-government-response>

a great deal of legal advice is already provided "remotely", largely by telephone. The Government intends to allow advice to be provided remotely at Detained Duty Advice Scheme surgeries for those detained at Immigration Removal Centres. The Government acknowledges and agrees with stakeholder feedback on the need for some clients to continue to be seen face-to-face. Accordingly, conducting remote advice will be enabled at provider discretion, thus ensuring the continuation of appropriate decisions on the delivery of advice in relation to vulnerable clients.

The Department does not have data on how the advice is ultimately provided to the clients (whether face-to-face or remotely) because the decision on how to provide the service is at the discretion of the service providers, taking into account the best interests of the client. Data on the number of legal aid matters started on immigration and asylum is publicly available as part of the quarterly legal aid statistics (see tables 5.1 and 6.2 in the tables published at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/legal-aid-statistics-april-to-june-2023>

Under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, all immigration advisers must be

registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) or be regulated by a Designated Qualifying Regulator (DQR). The OISC and the DQRs are responsible for ensuring immigration advisers are fit, competent, and act in their clients' best interests. In relation to work funded under legal aid, the "Standard Civil Contract 2018: Immigration and Asylum Specification" includes a number of measures to ensure immigration and asylum advice is only provided by caseworkers who hold appropriate accreditation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-24/3673>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-24/3674>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-24/3675>

Asylum: Age Assurance and Proof of Identity

Emma Hardy (Labour) [4511] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of asylum seeker (a) age verification and (b) identity checks.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Where an individual claims to be a child without any documentary evidence, and where there is reason to doubt their claimed age, there is a need to assess their age. Determining the age of a young person is an inherently difficult task. Recent legislative reforms aim to make assessments more consistent and robust from the outset, with any disputed decisions resolved quickly and conclusively.

This includes establishing a decision-making function within the Home Office, called the National Age Assessment Board (NAAB). The NAAB consists of expert social workers whose task is to conduct Merton compliant age assessments, increasing capacity and expertise in the system. The NAAB is in the process of recruiting and training suitably experienced social workers who can carry out age assessments on behalf of the Home Office and will expand into wider regions as social worker capacity builds up. We will continue to review and monitor the impact of this board. In addition, regulations laid by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice were approved by Parliament in November 2023, which will authorise the use of X-rays in scientific age assessments, paving the way for the Home Office to improve their ability to effectively determine the age of illegal entrants making disputed claims to be children.

As part of an asylum seeker's identity checks we capture their biometric and biographical information and check them against a range of domestic and international law enforcement databases. We enrol the fingerprints of all asylum seekers aged five years or older and who are physically capable. This helps us to establish whether we have encountered them previously and helps to ensure they do not make multiple applications using multiple identities, and to identify those who pose a threat to public safety, our national security, or are likely to breach our laws. We can also check any documentary evidence they may have and authenticate them against document image archives and whether they have been reported lost or stolen.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-29/4511>

Asylum: Children

Caroline Lucas (Green) [4384] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Children's Commissioner's report entitled Unaccompanied children in need of care published November 2023, for what reasons his Department did not return the information requested by the Commissioner on whether (a) safeguarding referrals were made and (b) healthcare support was received; and if he will provide this information

for the 5,298 children housed in hotels between July 2021 and May 2023.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: For those young people determined to be under 18 who have entered the UK without a parent or guardian, we will endeavour to place them with a local authority as soon as possible after their entry into the country. For young people placed in emergency interim hotels, safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure they are safe and supported whilst we seek urgent placements with a local authority. Young people are supported by team leaders and support workers who are on site 24 hours a day. Further care is provided in hotels by teams of social workers and nurses.

The Home Office have confirmed the completion of the required Data Protection Impact Assessment for the Children's Commissioner's report. However there has been some delay in agreeing the final version. Further more, there are elements of the data which have been requested that are not in electronically retrievable form. The Home Office will not be able to provide the data as it would require a high level of manual resource to obtain.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-29/4384>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/unaccompanied-children-in-need-of-care/>

Asylum: Children

Caroline Lucas (Green) [4385] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will take legislative steps to remove the power for his Department to accommodate children in the Illegal Migration Act 2023.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Illegal Migration Act received Royal Assent on 20 July 2023. The Act seeks to ensure the only way to come to the UK for protection will be through safe and legal routes and will take power out of the hands of the criminal gangs and protect vulnerable people, including children.

Following the High Court ECPAT judgment and Supreme Court judgment on Rwanda, the Government is carefully reflecting on commencement of the powers in the Act, including those relating to the accommodation and transfer of unaccompanied children.

These powers have not yet been commenced and a decision will be made in due course. The Act does not change a local authority's statutory obligations to children from the date of arrival and that the best place for an unaccompanied child is in the care of a local authority. This is something the Government was consistently clear about during the Illegal Migration Act's passage through Parliament.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-29/4385>

The High Court judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://caselaw.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ewhc/admin/2023/1953>

The Supreme Court judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2023/42.html>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Christian Wakeford (Labour) [4298] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that private providers contracted to run asylum accommodation services deliver on their contractual obligations.

Christian Wakeford (Labour) [4299] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the safety and wellbeing of asylum seekers is prioritised while in asylum accommodation.

Reply from Robert Jenrick: We have a robust governance framework in place to manage service delivery of the Asylum Accommodation Support Contracts (AASC).

Details of the AASC can be found at New asylum accommodation contracts awarded

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-asylum-accommodation-contracts-awarded>

The Statement of Requirements sets out the delivery standards providers are required to meet. It also sets out provider obligations in adherence to legislation such as the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 as well as duties such as under section 55 of the Border, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009, and the children's duty, to safeguard children from harm and promote their welfare.

The Home Office has published Key Performance Indicator statistics covering the contractual obligations accommodation providers and others working in the asylum sector are required to deliver. This has been done since April 2020. This data is available on [.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). In all proposed accommodation sites, our accommodation providers work through a standardised regulatory checklist to verify the appropriateness of the site, including a detailed risk-assessment in advance of use. We work with our providers to carry out due diligence checks which include all relevant health and safety checks to ensure a site is able to operate in a legally compliant manner with all relevant standards met. We have also recently invested in ensuring these checks consider the mental and wellbeing aspects of asylum seekers and we are committed to working with all relevant providers to improve and build on the high service standards we expect.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-28/4298>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-28/4299>

Asylum: Hotels

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [4665] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women seeking asylum are accommodated in hotels as of 30 November 2023.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: Data on the number of supported asylum seekers in accommodation (including in contingency hotels and other contingency accommodation) is published in table Asy_D11 here: [Asylum and resettlement datasets](#). Data is published on a quarterly basis. The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of statistics which disaggregates the number of females in contingency accommodation by local authority.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-30/4665>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Asylum: Hotels

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [4666] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has published guidance on the treatment of women seeking asylum who are accommodated in hotels.

Asylum: Temporary Accommodation

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [4715] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he plans to take steps to provide women-only accommodation for women seeking asylum.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Home Office has published the Asylum Support Contracts Safeguarding Framework at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-support-contracts-safeguarding-framework>

This framework sets out a joint, overarching approach, as well as the key controls and reporting mechanisms in place, across the AASC contracts, for safeguarding arrangements.

The following three questions all received the same answer

Asylum: Finance

Scott Benton (Independent) [4757] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department has taken recent steps to provide financial support to asylum seekers housed in hotels for their voluntary return.

Undocumented Migrants: Repatriation

Scott Benton (Independent) [4758] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps his Department has taken to help encourage the voluntary return of illegal migrants; and if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of his voluntary return schemes for reducing illegal immigration.

Scott Benton (Independent) [4759] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding his Department has provided for the operation of voluntary return schemes for illegal migrants in the 2023-24 financial year.

Reply from Tom Pursglove: The Home Office will always look to support those who wish to depart the United Kingdom voluntarily, and the extent of that support is based on a case-by-case assessment of an individual's needs. General eligibility criteria can be found online at: [Get help to return home if you're a migrant in the UK: Who can get help](#).

The Home Office publishes statistics on all types of removals from the UK, which include voluntary departures. The latest statistics are available at [Immigration system statistics quarterly release](#). Published datasets for voluntary returns are available at: [Returns and detention datasets](#).

The cost of a voluntary return depends on the individual circumstances of the case, and therefore we are not able to provide a definitive figure.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-30/4757>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-30/4758>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-30/4759>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Oral Answers

Legal Migration

[The Minister's statement in the House of Commons](#) was read in the House of Lords

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede (Labour): My Lords, legal migration is important to the British economy, but it needs to be properly controlled and managed. In the past decade we have welcomed more than half a million people through humanitarian routes, principally from Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan. We in the Labour Party support these humanitarian routes, but the overall figures, which are way above these humanitarian routes, are out of control. People are understandably worried about housing, getting local GP appointments and access to public services when they can see that their communities are growing. The net migration figure stood at 672,000 last year, which is three times the amount at the 2019 general election. There has been a 65% increase in work migration visas this year, and this includes a 150% increase in health and care visas. ...

The Labour Party has said repeatedly that net migration should come down and called for action to scrap the unfair 20% wage discount, raise salary thresholds based on economic evidence, and bring in new training requirements linked to the immigration system as well as a proper workforce plan for social care. While the Government have been forced to abandon the unfair wage discount that they introduced, they are still failing to introduce more substantial reforms that link immigration to training and fair pay requirements in the

UK, meaning that many sectors will continue to see rising numbers of work visas because of skills shortages. ...

As of October, the number of legacy asylum cases waiting over a year for a decision to be made stood at 32,109. There were, in addition, 85,000 cases under a year old that had not been dealt with; thus, the overall backlog has not been reduced.

The Home Office has now hit its target for the number of caseworkers working on asylum cases, reaching 2,500 full-time staff by the end of the summer. However, the turnover of staff rose between April and August 2023 to 36%, having previously dropped to 25%. This puts into question the level of expertise in the team and the quality of decisions being made.

Following changes to Immigration Rules, which make it easier to withdraw an application on behalf of an asylum applicant, the number of asylum withdrawals has risen to 17,000. In a recent Select Committee hearing, the Permanent Secretary stated that he did not know the whereabouts of these 17,000 people. It may be that the length of time that cases are being left before being processed allows people to abscond, or that details have become incorrect over time, particularly when they move address so frequently; or it may be that the Home Office is being stricter with its criteria for withdrawing cases.

I understand that the reason for the withdrawal is not noted. I ask the Minister: why is the reason for withdrawal not noted and does he believe that it should be? Either way, losing track of 17,000 asylum seekers is representative of the danger of allowing such a backlog to build up in the first place. Of course, legal immigration is important to our economy and, of course, we should meet our humanitarian obligations. But with net migration figures at 672,000 last year, with government policies that flip and flop, and local public services under pressure, it is inevitable that the voting public become sceptical and disillusioned. ...

... is the Minister able to outline timescales in terms of reference for the Migration Advisory Committee's review of the graduate route visa?

Secondly, do any changes to the salary threshold and financial requirements for work and family visas apply to new entrants only and, if so, what is the situation for existing visa holders? Thirdly, can the Minister give clarification on what the new salary discount will be for roles listed on the immigration salary list if they are not part of the 20%? ...

Lord German (Liberal Democrat): ... The Statement, when examined for the sorts of people that the country needs who are going to be excluded by the regime, includes such people as butchers, chefs, welders and joiners. It is quite clear to anyone who has been around this country looking at the hospitality and tourism sectors that there are significant shortages of people to fill those places. ...

The issue of social care visas is obviously one of a lack of investment in the past. The Migration Advisory Committee has previously said that the Government's persistent underfunding of local authorities, which of course fund adult social care, is the most important factor in the staffing crisis. The Government now say in the Statement that care workers without families will ensure that we have enough people to meet the demands of our caring services.

Equally, we are assured that the CQC will now oversee all this information, but there are problems for the CQC because its inspections do not actively address the working conditions and well-being of care workers. ...

... what number of our population have partners from another country, given that £38,700 is a large figure for someone to be able to bring their partner to this country to live with them?

The danger here is that, in that development of a partnership between two people, the British citizen could think, "I can't bring my partner to this country, so I will go to their country instead". If they decide that, we might lose some of the vital people whom we need for our country, especially remembering that we are heading towards a time in our society where, for every elderly person, we will have only two people of working age. ...

Have the Government assessed how these restrictions to legal migration will impact the

numbers on overstaying visit visas? How many British citizens will be driven out of the country to live with their partners and children elsewhere in the world, as in the question I just addressed? Will the restrictions apply to workers who are already sponsored? Sometimes people have to renew and, when they do, will the restrictions that apply in this new Statement apply to them when they renew their work permissions in this country? Will an existing migrant worker's salary have to rise in order to extend their visa? Finally, have the Government considered the disproportionate impact that the increase in family visa requirements will have on British citizens who live outside the south of England and London, because of the wage disparities around the rest of the United Kingdom? ...

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): ... the level of legal migration remains too high. As a result, we have announced the five-point plan ... and this package of measures, taken in addition to the measures on student dependants that we announced in May, means that around 300,00 people who were eligible to come to the UK last year would not be able to in future.

... the UK has experienced unprecedented levels of immigration since the pandemic. The figures are widely understood, and this is partly because of our generosity towards people fleeing conflict and persecution in Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan. Over 80,000 people have immigrated to the UK on our Ukraine, BNO and resettlement schemes in the last year. However, it is also because of the rising numbers of overseas students and care workers that the Government have taken action to address the rise in legal migration.

The new package involves a number of measures—five, which have been noted. We will reduce the numbers on health and social care visas and end the abuse of that route by stopping overseas care workers from bringing in family dependants and requiring social care firms in England to be CQC registered before they can sponsor migrant visas ... We will remove the right for care workers and senior care workers to bring dependants from spring 2024. Care workers and senior care workers arriving through the health and care visa also bring a large number of dependants per main applicant, with approximately 120,000 dependants accompanying 100,000 care workers and senior care workers in the year ending September 2023. As has been noted, we will increase the earnings thresholds for those arriving on the skilled worker route, with the minimum threshold rising by 48%, from £26,200 to £38,700 from spring of 2024. Those coming on the health and social care visa route will be exempted, so we can continue to bring the healthcare workers that our care sector and NHS need. ...

We will ensure that people can bring only dependants whom they can support financially by raising the minimum income for family visas to the same threshold as the minimum salary threshold for a skilled worker. We have also asked the Migration Advisory Committee to review the graduate route to ensure it is fit for purpose, to prevent abuse and to protect the integrity and quality of our UK higher education. ...

The changes we are introducing ... apply only to those who come here on new visas. That means that workers with dependants already in the UK will be able to stay. ...

We do not believe that these measures will discourage carers who contribute to the UK economy. It is still an extremely competitive offer. ...

I will answer the questions from the noble Lord, Lord Ponsonby, about withdrawal from asylum processing. I do not know why we do not record that information. ...

Lord Davies of Brixton (Labour): ... Unfortunately, we have developed a system of funding higher education that depends on legal migrants; the education of UK citizens and residents depends on generating a flow of overseas participants in higher education who count as legal migrants. If the number of foreign students declines, that will have a direct

and immediate impact on the education that we provide for UK residents. ...

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... More than 100,000 people last year to September 2023 were issued visas for the graduate route. We have asked the Migration Advisory Committee to review this route to ensure that it is fit for purpose and prevent abuse, protecting the quality and integrity of UK higher education. ...

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green): ... on the Government's own figures they expect there to be 140,000 fewer people coming in through student routes. How much income is expected to be lost to UK universities overall from that? ...

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, the figures that I have are in terms of sponsored study to the year ending June 2022. There were actually more than 400,000 main applicants granted and 152,000 dependants were granted—so it is the dependants who will not be coming. In terms of dependants, about half of them are adults and only half of them actually work, so I suspect that the economic impact of their non-arrival will be very minimal.

The Lord Bishop of Norwich: ... We know that there are 152,000 vacancies in social care in England, as reported by Skills for Care. This is of course a concern for the well-being of vulnerable people. The National Farmers' Union reports a national shortage of 80,000 vacancies in the horticultural and agricultural sectors, but His Majesty's Government estimate 40,000. This of course leads to a massive reduction in production and has an economic impact. ...

My second point is that families come in all shapes and sizes, but when they are together they are stronger and more resilient. Families help individuals, communities and our society to flourish. ...

Finally, many faith communities greatly benefit from the presence of religious workers from overseas. The Church of England benefits from the ministry of clergy from all around the Anglican Communion, enriching our communities and resourcing individuals' ministry for life, often equipping them for when they return to their country of origin to minister in places of conflict and abject poverty. Many UK clergy, me included, have benefited from overseas experiences. Will the Minister consult faith communities about exemptions for religious workers, many of whom earn below the published threshold?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... Of course, there is no barrier to recruiting people to the Church, as long as £38,700 is paid to them. I do not think that unreasonable ... As for recruiting to the health and care sectors, I think I answered that question earlier. Again, there are exemptions in place for those people and we obviously value their work and their service here. ...

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle: ... I want to pick up on the point from the noble Lord, Lord German, about British people bringing foreign spouses and children into the UK. The Minister may be aware that in 2015, the Children's Commissioner for England produced a report identifying up to 15,000 children who belonged to what were then called Skype families: children whom the Children's Commissioner said were suffering from stress and anxiety by being separated from a parent by the rules brought in in 2012 that demanded a salary for the sponsoring partner of £18,600 for a partner and even more for children. There have long been complaints that there is no allowance made for the potential income of an incoming spouse, who may well be able to find a job and be a high earner; only the British resident can be counted to sponsor their spouse in.

We are now in a situation where the salaries of 60% to 70% of British workers would not be enough to sponsor a foreign spouse to come into the UK. I have been speaking to people affected by this, many of whom have found that even their MP does not understand the situation. Many people say, "You're a Briton—of course you must be able to live in your own country with your spouse and your children must be able to come here", yet 60% to 70% of British people will now be unable to live in their own country with a foreign spouse and will be separated from their children. Do the Government really think that is an acceptable state of affairs?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, as I have indicated, we estimate that only around 25% of dependants work when they come to the UK—half of the adult dependants; the other half are children. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-12-05/debates/06EF92B6-C3F1-44B4-93A3-B0F9213FC5BD/LegalMigration>

UK-Rwanda Partnership

The Minister's statement in the House of Commons was read in the House of Lords

Lord Coaker (Labour): ... How on earth have we reached the situation where three Home Secretaries have gone to Rwanda but not a single asylum seeker? ...

This is the third Bill on channel crossings in two years. Why will this one work? How much have we spent so far on all of this, and how much is the budget? ...

Given the central importance the Government have attached to Rwanda, can the noble Lord give us some numbers? Is all of this for a scheme that will likely cover less than 1% of the people who arrive here to claim asylum? How many people are going to be covered? ...

We need to clear the asylum backlog, go after criminal gangs, tackle problems at the source and come to new arrangements with our European neighbours. ...

The plain fact of the matter is that this is real chaos. We have a Rwanda policy that, in the words of their own former Ministers, is doomed and unworkable. ...

Lord German (Liberal Democrat): ... Disapplying legal protections to a specific group is a threat to anyone who may need the protection of a judge in future. Human Rights are universal: either you have them or you do not. If you take them away from one group of people, they are no longer human rights; they are rights for some humans. It is a dangerous, slippery slope when the Government seek to disapply them to asylum seekers. Which group of people out of favour with the Government will be next?

In effect, we are being asked to believe that the facts established by the Supreme Court are now wrong—in essence, that black is white. When the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Rwanda was unsafe, based on a whole range of facts, but said that at some stage in future things might be different, there was no expectation that this could be achieved by last Monday. One simple line taken from the Government's Statement proves just that: "Rwanda will introduce a strengthened end-to-end asylum system".

It does not say "has introduced" but "will introduce". The fact will be demonstrated by seeing a new system in place, not simply by producing a statement of expectation. The Statement is simply incorrect in stating that these Supreme Court matters are "concerns". They are not; they are facts. That is what our highest court ruled on: the facts. Will the Minister acknowledge that the Supreme Court ruled on the basis of facts?

Let us have some facts. By when, exactly, will Rwanda have introduced a strengthened end-to-end asylum system that meets all the international treaties, laws and rules to which the United Kingdom has signed up? What will be the cost of the creation of a new, specialist asylum appeals tribunal in Rwanda and who will meet it? What will be the ongoing annual costs of the running of the tribunal, including the salaries of judges from across the Commonwealth?

How much are the UK Government setting aside for paying for the provision of legal services to asylum seekers in Rwanda? How will the judges be selected? How can we be assured that the judges will be mindful and live to the protection rights of people with protected characteristics—for example, sexual orientation, women who have experienced gender-based violence, religion or race? ...

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): ... The partnership with Rwanda is now set out in a new treaty, which is binding in international law. It has been agreed by the UK and the

Government of Rwanda and was worked on by both parties with close care and attention. ... The treaty, crucially, addresses the conclusion from the Supreme Court on the risk of refoulement to those relocated to Rwanda. ...

The treaty is binding in international law, and it makes it clear that Rwanda will not remove any individuals relocated there to a third country, ensuring that there is no risk of onward refoulement. Relocated individuals will be given safety and support in Rwanda. Those not granted refugee status or humanitarian protection will instead be granted permanent residence so that they are able to stay and integrate into Rwandan society. Once individuals are relocated to Rwanda, they will have their needs looked after while their claims are being considered, including having safe and clean accommodation, food, healthcare and amenities. People are free to leave if they wish and will not be detained. ...

The treaty does not override the Supreme Court's judgment; rather, it responds and adapts its key findings to ensure that the policy can go ahead.

The court recognised that changes might be delivered in future which would address the issues that it raised. These are those changes. ...

The monitoring committee will be responsible for developing a system to enable relocated individuals and legal representatives to lodge confidential complaints directly to the committee. These can be regarding any concerns about the treatment of individuals or alleged failure to comply with the obligations in the treaty. This will provide an additional layer of assurance and ensure that the asylum decision-making process is robust and identifies any issues at an early stage. ...

Our aim must be to deter the dangerous and illegal journeys to the UK and disrupt the business models of the criminal gangs. ...

... the costs here are massive—and they are not just in money but also in lives. We saw an example of that in French waters only a couple of weeks ago. So far, however, the UK has provided Rwanda with an initial £140 million to assist in the economic development of Rwanda and with upfront operational costs. We will not be providing a running commentary on other costs. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-12-07/debates/9A35367E-0244-420A-A9C8-0F14DC551303/UK-RwandaPartnership>

Rwanda Treaty

Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government what additional costs they expect to be incurred as a result of this week's signing of a treaty to facilitate the removal of migrants to Rwanda.

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): My Lords, the Government of Rwanda did not ask for money to sign the treaty, nor did we offer any. Costs and payment will depend on the numbers of people relocated, timing of when it occurs and outcomes of individual cases. Spending on the migration and economic development partnership will be disclosed in the annual Home Office accounts.

Lord Collins of Highbury: ... In April 2022, when the economic transformation and integration fund was established, it was clearly part of the refugee scheme. The announcement then also said that the United Kingdom is funding the processing costs for each person relocated, saying that we anticipated the amount would be comparable to processing costs incurred in the United Kingdom. So what are the anticipated costs now, in the light of the provisions of the treaty, which changes fundamentally the original scheme? ...

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... Yesterday, as noble Lords will be aware, the Permanent Secretary sent a letter to the Home Affairs Select Committee to

disclose a further payment made to the Government of Rwanda through the migration and economic development partnership. This disclosed that a further £100 million had been paid in April as part of the ETIF. The letter also set out that, in the year 2024-25, we anticipate another payment of £50 million, in April 2024, again as part of the ETIF, as agreed with the Government of Rwanda when the migration and economic development partnership was signed. This brings the total spend so far to £240 million. ...

Lord Bailey of Paddington(Conservative): My Lords, there has been a great deal of focus on the cost of the partnership. Can the Minister please tell me how much money has been spent on housing asylum seekers in hotels and what the overall cost to the taxpayer is of the immigration system?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My noble friend makes a good point. Those focusing solely on the costs of the partnership are somewhat missing the point. The simple fact of the matter is that the daily cost of hotels for migrants is now £8 million. The cost of the UK's asylum system has roughly doubled in the past year and now stands at nearly £4 billion. So the payments so far made to Rwanda represent about 30 days' hotel costs. ...

The Lord Bishop of Chelmsford: My Lords, will the monitoring committee, as outlined in the economic development partnership and now the treaty, review how funds have been allocated by the Rwandan authorities towards meeting the needs of refugees?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The treaty enhances the role of the independent monitoring committee. It will ensure that obligations under the treaty are adhered to in practice and will be able to take steps to prevent errors at an early stage. It will have the power to set its own priority areas for monitoring and will have unfettered access for the purposes of completing assessments and reports that will monitor the entire relocation process from the beginning, including screening, to relocation and settlement in Rwanda. It will be responsible for developing a system to enable relocated individuals and legal representatives to lodge confidential complaints direct to the committee and it will undertake real-time monitoring of the partnership for at least the first three months. There is plenty of scope in there for it to get involved in everything. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-12-08/debates/A5D31E43-EEDF-4A39-B683-65BB2BE7DD65/RwandaTreaty>

The letter referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6572215b58fa30000db140fe/Matthew_Rycroft_letter_to_PAC_and_HASC_-_FINAL_071223_2_1.pdf

Children Seeking Asylum

Lord Scriven (Liberal Democrat): To ask His Majesty's Government, in the past two years, how many unaccompanied children seeking asylum aged 12 and under have been placed in hotels while waiting for local authority placement.

Reply from Lord Gascoigne: My Lords, the well-being of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is our priority. We maintain that the best place to accommodate these children is in the care of the local authority. From November 2021 to November 2023, 32 unaccompanied children aged 12 and under were temporarily accommodated in hotels, awaiting placement. It is important to clarify that this data has been extracted from live operational databases and is not available in routine published data.

Lord Scriven: ... A report last week by the Children's Commissioner on unaccompanied children seeking asylum who have been placed in Home Office hotels showed that, while on their way to the UK and once here, 198 reported beatings or assault, 25 reported rape

or sexual assault, 34 referred to torture, and there were some indicators of organ harvesting on or before their journey to the UK. However, the Home Office could not confirm that all these children had received healthcare or appropriate safeguarding measures while in Home Office hotels. What will change to make sure that this lack of care and safeguarding never happens again?

Reply from Lord Gascoigne: ... We should probably thank the Children's Commissioner for looking into this; I understand that she has written to the Home Secretary, who will respond in due course. The cases the noble Lord raises are obviously distressing, but it is worth saying that the well-being of children continues to be our top priority and we will continue working with other departments to ensure their safety. We will continue to evaluate this and try to make improvements, as we go forward. ...

The Lord Bishop of Worcester: ... I note that Kent County Council announced last week that new arrival centres for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are being planned in the area but that the council is waiting for funding from central government. As the Minister said, the right and best place for separated children is under local authority care. What is the timeline for the funding to be issued to support Kent County Council fulfilling its statutory duty, especially given that it is responsible for hundreds more children than the prescribed limit under the national distribution system? We do not want to return to the use of hotels.

Reply from Lord Gascoigne: ... He is absolutely right to say that local authority care is the right place for the children in question—we have been very clear about that. I know that the Government have provided funding support to local authorities. If he has specific examples where he feels that that has not been done then I will happily take them away. I am sure that the department is already aware of them.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (Crossbench): Is the Minister aware that, according to the Children's Commissioner, over 5,000 children under the age of 18 were in hotel accommodation between 2021 and May 2023—that is not quite up to date? None of those children was given any safeguarding support. The support apparently came from other people in the hotels and the hotel staff. The question asked by the commissioner, and which I now ask, is this: what on earth are the Government going to do about safeguarding children in the future?

Reply from Lord Gascoigne: ... there are lessons to be learned from this. I am sure there are circumstances that noble Lords may be able to give as examples, but the department and the whole of government take very seriously the care, welfare and well-being of these children. ...

To read this very long question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-12-05/debates/04297640-7CD9-48BC-A1C6-A43C204C0160/ChildrenSeekingAsylum>

Asylum Seekers: Deportation from France

Lord Lilley (Conservative): To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have received about the remarks by Gérald Darmanin, the French interior minister, that his government is prepared to deport asylum seekers deemed dangerous, in breach of rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.

Reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom): My Lords, French policy on asylum is a matter for the French Government. His Majesty's Government continue to co-operate closely with France to tackle illegal migration and to keep our borders and citizens safe.

Lord Lilley: ... Does he recall warnings from human rights lawyers and Foreign Office mandarins that if we were to set aside a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights we would become pariahs, along with Russia and Belarus? Is it not passing strange that, when

France announced its intention to do so, there was no outcry? ...

Is there one rule for our friends in Europe and another for Britain?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, I think it would be wise for me to restate what the Prime Minister has said, which is that he is taking “the extraordinary step of introducing emergency legislation”.

He made that point on 15 November. He went on to say that he does not believe that “anyone thinks the founding aim of the European Convention on Human Rights was to stop a sovereign Parliament removing illegal migrants to a country deemed to be safe in Parliamentary statute and binding international law. I do not believe we are alone in that interpretation”.

So I say to my noble friend that I look forward to informed discussion on the recent French decision. ...

Viscount Hailsham (Conservative): My Lords, in the event that the Government decide to derogate from any part of the convention, would Ministers agree to publish in advance, before doing so, a paper identifying which of our international obligations might be impacted by such a decision?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: My Lords, I cannot anticipate what may or may not be in the Bill. Obviously, the Bill will be presented to Parliament in the usual way. ...

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, deciding whether an asylum seeker is dangerous is subjective. Does the Minister agree that our system is less discriminatory in treating all asylum seekers as a lesser form of life?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: I am afraid not.

Baroness Meacher (Crossbench): My Lords, can the Minister give the House an absolute assurance that the Government will never consider making a decision that would be in breach of a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: As I said earlier, I am not going to speculate as to what will be in future legislation. That will be presented to Parliament in the fullness of time. ...

Baroness Chakrabarti (Labour): My Lords, does the Minister agree that the recent decision of the Supreme Court is a decision of a domestic court, not a foreign one? Does he also agree that its rationale was predominantly based on not the European convention but the refugee convention and various domestic statutes?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Yes, I agree with both those comments.

Lord Cormack (Conservative): My Lords, would it not make much more sense if we talked to the French a little more about processing applicants in France, rather than all this rubbish talk about Rwanda?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... In March, the Prime Minister and President Macron agreed the largest-ever deal with France to tackle small boat crossings, building on our existing co-operation. As a result of this deal, we have seen a significant uplift of personnel deployed to tackle small boats across northern France and the procurement of new, cutting-edge surveillance technologies and equipment to detect and respond to crossing attempts. So far, over the last calendar year, those efforts ... have stopped, I think, 22,000 attempted crossings. It is probably more by now. ...

Lord Harris of Haringey (Labour): My Lords, can the Minister assist me? I heard on the “Today” programme this morning that one thing being considered by government—I am not asking him to guess what might be in forthcoming legislation—is that the UK would send to Rwanda people to process the applications and consider their legality, and that if the decision was not to grant asylum, the individuals concerned would be returned to the UK. Why would we waste all that money on airfares if we are simply saying that we will process people but in another country?

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The noble Lord said that he is not asking me

to guess what is in the legislation, but he just has.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-12-04/debates/6EC15879-0FE5-41D2-B383-4EFA0C145175/AsylumSeekersDeportationFromFrance>

The Supreme Court decision referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2023/42.html>

UK Parliament, House of Lords Written Answers: Rwanda Refugee Policy

Asylum: Rwanda

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Liberal Democrat) [HL481] To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the costs incurred to date of the asylum transfer scheme with Rwanda.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The UK has provided Rwanda with an initial investment of £120m into its economic development and growth as part of the Economic Transformation and Integration Fund (ETIF). Investment has been focused in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, and job creation. A separate payment of £20m in advance of flights was also paid last year to support initial set up costs for the relocation of individuals. Beyond this, spend will be reported as part of the annual Home Office Reports and Accounts in the usual way.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-21/hl481>

Asylum

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Liberal Democrat) [HL482] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with governments of countries other than Rwanda about the transfer of asylum seekers.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: We are unable to comment on discussions or negotiations that may be being held with other countries.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-21/hl482>

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

Asylum: Bibby Stockholm

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Liberal Democrat) [HL483] To ask His Majesty's Government how many asylum seekers are currently housed on the Bibby Stockholm; and for how long they intend for asylum seekers to be housed there.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The capacity of the Bibby Stockholm is around 500 people. The number of asylum seekers onboard the vessel at any one time is likely to vary due to a number of factors.

Numbers will increase in a phased approach as part of a carefully structured plan. We are conscious of the need to manage arrivals in a way that local services can support.

We are assessing how long asylum seekers will be accommodated. The maximum expected length of stay on the vessel is likely to be up to 9 months. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-21/hl483>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service

Lord McColl of Dulwich (Conservative) [HL557] To ask His Majesty's Government how many children and young people were supported by the Independent Child Trafficking Guardian service between January and September; and, of those, how many (1) were supported by a direct worker, and (2) were under the oversight of a Regional Practice Coordinator.

Lord McColl of Dulwich (Conservative) [HL558] To ask His Majesty's Government how many children and young people who were supported by the Independent Child Trafficking Guardian service between January and September had experienced (1) sexual exploitation, (2) criminal exploitation, (3) labour exploitation, and (4) domestic servitude.

Lord McColl of Dulwich (Conservative) [HL559] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the final report of the Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, published on 22 May 2019, and the Interim Guidance for Independent Child Trafficking Guardians, updated on 18 November 2021, how many children and young people who had someone with parental responsibility were supported with one-to-one support from the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians service between January and September; how many young people had support from the Independent Child Trafficking Guardians service continued after their 18th birthday, between January and September; and when they intend to publish evaluations of the tests of those models.

Reply from Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) operate in two thirds of local authorities across England and Wales, in addition to the statutory support provided to children by local authorities.

ICTGs provide an additional source of advice and support for potentially trafficked children, irrespective of nationality, and somebody to advocate on their behalf to ensure their best interests are reflected in the decision-making of the public authorities involved in their care.

The ICTG service model provides one-to-one support for children with no parental responsibility for them in the UK via an ICTG Direct Worker and an expert ICTG Regional Practice Co-ordinator for children where there is someone with parental responsibility for them in the UK.

The data requested regarding ICTGs for the timeframe specified has not previously been published and has not yet been verified. We are therefore unable to release the information at this time.

Data tables published in November 2021 in the UK Annual Report on [Modern Slavery: 2021 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery](#) show the numbers of children referred to Direct Workers and Regional Practice Coordinators, broken down by region, in 2019 and 2020.

To date, two evaluations on the ICTG service have been published: [An evaluation of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians - early adopter sites: Final report](#) and [An assessment of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians](#)

There are currently no plans to publish the evaluation report of changes to the ICTG service from the Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-23/hl557>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-23/hl558>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-23/hl559>

The Independent Review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-the-modern-slavery-act-final-report/independent-review-of-the-modern-slavery-act-final-report-accessible-version>

The Interim Guidance referred to above can be read at

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Apsana Begum (Labour) [169] Migrants and domestic abuse – That this House notes that domestic abuse can have profound long-term effects on survivors and is concerned that it is very difficult to speak out about domestic abuse and often those that do are subject to further silencing tactics; is concerned that police forces potentially sharing migrant data with Immigration Enforcement could prevent migrants experiencing domestic abuse from reporting to the police and others due to the fear that they will be treated as an offender themselves and face potential criminalisation, detention and deportation; is further concerned that many migrants experiencing domestic abuse are left without support due to the No Recourse to Public Funds policy; believes that everyone experiencing domestic abuse must feel able to report abuse and access justice and safety, and that perpetrators should not be allowed evade justice by using immigration status in order to silence, abuse and control; and calls on the Government to introduce a firewall between all public services and the Home Office and to scrap the No Recourse to Public Funds policy.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61639>

Press Releases

Home Secretary unveils plan to cut net migration

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-unveils-plan-to-cut-net-migration>

Treaty signed to strengthen UK-Rwanda Migration Partnership

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/treaty-signed-to-strengthen-uk-rwanda-migration-partnership>

Bill to make clear Rwanda is a safe country and stop the boats

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bill-to-make-clear-rwanda-is-a-safe-country-and-stop-the-boats>

Rwanda scheme: Committee Chairs demand transparency on costs to taxpayer

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/198910/rwanda-scheme-committee-chairs-demand-transparency-on-costs-to-taxpayer/>

Helping Ukrainians into longer term housing

<https://www.gov.scot/news/helping-ukrainians-into-longer-term-housing/>

New Publications

Letter from the Prime Minister to Robert Jenrick MP, former Minister for Immigration

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6570dfc1739135000db03c49/The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6570dfc1739135000db03c49/The_Rt_Hon_Robert_Jenrick_MP.pdf)

Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 246

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6570aec3746930000d488949/E03033999 - HC 246 - Immigration Rules Changes Web Accessible .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6570aec3746930000d488949/E03033999_-_HC_246_-_Immigration_Rules_Changes_Web_Accessible_.pdf)

House of Commons Library Briefing: The UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9568/CBP-9568.pdf>

Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Rwanda for the Provision of an Asylum Partnership Agreement to Strengthen Shared International Commitments on the Protection of Refugees and Migrants

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65705fd474693000d4888dc/CS_Rwanda_1.2023_UK_Rwanda_Agreement_Asylum_Partnership_Protection_Refugees_Migrants.pdf

Explanatory Memorandum on the Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Rwanda for the Provision of an Asylum Partnership Agreement to Strengthen Shared International Commitments on the Protection of Refugees and Migrants

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6570603674693000124888df/EM_CS_Rwanda_1.2023_UK_Rwanda_Agreement_Asylum_Partnership_Protection_Refugees_Migrants.odt

Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda: payments – Letter from the Permanent Secretary Matthew Rycroft to Dame Diana Johnson, Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee and Dame Meg Hillier, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6572215b58fa3000db140fe/Matthew_Rycroft_letter_to_PAC_and_HASC_FINAL_071223_2_1.pdf

House of Commons Library Briefing: Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9918/CBP-9918.pdf>

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee Report: Human Trafficking

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/42482/documents/211207/default/>

Updated Guide: Scotland for Ukrainians: a guide for displaced people

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-for-ukrainians/>

Immigration system statistics, year ending September 2023

Overview of the immigration system

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-september-2023/overview-of-the-immigration-system>

Summary of latest statistics

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

How many people continue their stay in the UK or apply to stay permanently?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-september-2023/how-many-people-continue-their-stay-in-the-uk-or-apply-to-stay-permanently>

How many people are detained or returned?

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

Windrush Compensation Scheme data: October 2023

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/656a11db0f12ef07a53e0101/WCS+data+-+October+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>

Updated: Diphtheria: cases among asylum seekers in England, monthly data tables

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/diphtheria-cases-among-asylum-seekers-in-england-2022/diphtheria-cases-among-asylum-seekers-in-england-weekly-data-tables>

News: Rwanda Refugee Policy

New Rwanda asylum treaty deals with Supreme Court concerns, says James Cleverly

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67627696>

Big ifs continue to surround UK's Rwanda migrant plan

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67630252>

UK paid Rwanda an extra £100m for asylum deal

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67656220>

Extra £100m for Rwanda will save taxpayer money in long term, says No10

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/12/08/extra-100m-rwanda-save-money-long-term-downing-street/>

Robert Jenrick resigns as immigration minister over Rwanda legislation

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67640833>

Immigration minister Robert Jenrick quits over Sunak's Rwanda plan

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/westminster/23973359.immigration-minister-robert-jenrick-quits-sunaks-rwanda-plan/>

Robert Jenrick: Rishi Sunak rocked as immigration minister quits after new Rwanda legislation unveiled

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/robert-jenrick-rishi-sunak-rocked-as-immigration-minister-quits-after-new-rwanda-legislation-unveiled-4436719>

Emergency Rwanda legislation is doomed to fail, says Robert Jenrick

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67669609>

Ross backs plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-67649421>

Conservative splits emerge ahead of Rwanda migration law

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67634887>

Ministers hiding soaring costs of Rwanda deportation plan, says MP

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/03/ministers-hiding-soaring-costs-of-rwanda-deportation-plan-says-mp>

UK taxpayers to bear extra cost over Rwanda treaty

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/05/uk-taxpayers-to-bear-extra-cost-over-rwanda-treaty>

British lawyers could be sent to Rwandan courts as part of asylum plans

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67610480>

Can the new Rwanda bill work and what could stop it?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67643900>

Is the Rwanda policy a vote winner? One High Street has its say

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67630766>

News: New Immigration Rules

Tougher visa rules unveiled in plan to cut migration

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67612106>

Changes to UK visa requirements: Key points at-a-glance

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67623131>

New UK visa rules: How is the government's immigration policy changing?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-48785695>

Too many migrants to integrate into society, says Jenrick

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/12/08/too-many-migrants-integrate-society-jenrick/>

Migrant visa changes will harm families, archbishop warns

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67661489>

Couples 'devastated' by migration visa rule changes

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67630258>

Foreign spouses could be told to leave UK under plans to cut legal migration

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/foreign-spouse-visa-uk-migration-crackdown-b2459168.html>

Migration rules: What impact might the changes have on the care sector?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67620262>

Five-point plan to cut UK immigration raises fears of more NHS staff shortages

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/dec/04/five-point-plan-to-cut-uk-immigration-raises-fears-of-more-nhs-staff-shortages>

Migration UK: Scottish universities could face skilled labour shortage due to skilled worker salary threshold hike

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/migration-uk-scottish-universities-could-face-skilled-labour-shortage-due-to-skilled-worker-salary-threshold-hike-4434751>

News: Other Immigration and Asylum

Asylum seekers plan for disused RAF stations lawful, judge rules

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-67637439>

Government explores shipping containers for housing refugees

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/government-considers-truck-containers-for-housing-refugees-v55thkhrs>

TOP

Equality

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Race Equality Action Plan: Islamophobia

Foysoil Choudhury (Labour) [S6W-23364] To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure scrutiny of Education Scotland and the Race Equality Action Plan, in light of the recommendations of the report of the public inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland.

Reply from Emma Roddick: The Race Equality Action Plan concluded in 2021 with a final report outlining the progress made in implementing actions.

Education Scotland play a significant part in the Scottish Government's Anti-Racism in Education Programme, particularly in the development and delivery of their award-winning Building Racial Literacy Programme.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-23364>

The Race Equality Action Plan, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/race-equality-framework-scotland-2016-2030/>

The report of the Inquiry into Islamophobia in Scotland can be read at

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/qbhdjty3rnpix09/Islamophobia-public-inquiry-report-1.pdf>

Information about the Building Racial Literacy Programme, referred to above, can be read at <https://education.gov.scot/professional-learning/learn/programmes/building-racial-literacy/>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Ministry of Defence: Ethnic Groups

Maria Eagle (Labour) [4063] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to encourage people from ethnic minorities groups to join his Department.

Reply from Andrew Murrison: Defence operates optimally when it recruits and retains the best talent, drawn from the broadest diversity of thought, skills, and background, and reflects the society it serves. The Armed Forces Race Action Plan has been designed to set in motion significant change by ensuring that race equality is a fundamental principle in Defence. The plan is centred around three objectives; to be an inclusive employer better able to deliver operational effect, increasing representation, and improving progression and retention.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-28/4063>

The Action Plan referred to above is not available online.

Armed Forces: Ethnic Groups

Luke Pollard (Labour Co-op) [4846] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of people recruited as service personnel to the armed forces were from a black, Asian and ethnic minority background in each of the last five years.

Reply from Andrew Murrison: The requested information is published in the UK Armed Forces Biannual Diversity Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-index>

Specifically, tables 8 and 24 of the supporting datasheets provide information on, respectively, intake by ethnicity to the UK Regulars and Future Reserves 2020.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-01/4846>

New Publication

Attitudes to Human Rights in Scotland

<https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2571/attitudes-to-human-rights-in-scotland.pdf>

News

Increase in support for human rights in Scotland

<https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/news/increase-in-support-for-human-rights-in-scotland/>

UK minority ethnic transplant patients face double inequity, MPs say

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/dec/04/uk-minority-ethnic-transplant-patients-face-double-inequity-mps-say>

TOP

Racism, Religious Hatred, and Discrimination

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Islamophobia

Foyso Choudhury (Labour) [S6W-23365] To ask the Scottish Government what it has done to ensure that initiatives regarding Islamophobia in Scotland pay specific attention to any gendered nature of Islamophobia.

Reply from Siobhian Brown: Islamophobia has no place in our society. The Scottish Government is committed to tackling all forms of Islamophobia, wherever it may take place.

All policy and delivery is subject to an impact assessment process which would include consideration of intersectional factors such as the intersection of faith and gender.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-23365>

UK Parliament Debate

Tackling Islamophobia

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-07/debates/370FAD96-8357-415D-82D7-1ED9ECF0A5B1/TacklingIslamophobia>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Oral Answers

Antisemitism

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [900432] What recent assessment [the Minister] has made of trends in the level of antisemitism.

Reply from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove): Tragically, we have seen a significant increase in antisemitism since the events of 7 October. The Community Security Trust recorded 1,500 antisemitic incidents between 7 October and 22 November, the highest total in a 47-day period since records began in 1984 .

Andrew Percy: Despite the first-hand accounts of survivors such as Yoni Saadon and organisations such as ZAKA—whose members collected the bodies following the Palestinian terror attack of 7 October, and have described mutilated genitals and women’s bodies having been so badly abused that their pelvises were broken—there are some in the pro-Palestinian movement who continue to deny that these atrocities took place. Whether we are talking about dead babies or gender-based violence against Jewish women, it appears that Jews do not matter. Does the Secretary of State agree that this risks fuelling further the antisemitism that we have seen in this country since those attacks?

Reply from Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; the events of 7 October were uniquely horrific. It was an exercise in calculated, premeditated sadism which everyone in the House condemns. However, as my hon. Friend says, some voices, including some prominent media voices, have considered it appropriate to cavil, to question and to prevaricate in the face of this violence. It is vitally important for us to recognise—even as we recognise that all life is precious, and even as we recognise that it is vital for us to do what we can to minimise casualties in this conflict—that the events of 7 October stand out as the biggest slaughter of Jewish civilians since the holocaust, and for that reason there can be no quibbling when we face such a transparent evil.

John Cryer (Labour): I agree with everything that was said by the previous questioner. Could the Secretary of State engage with his opposite number in the Department for Education and argue for the promotion of education about the events of the holocaust? I have believed for a long time that one of the reasons behind the increase in antisemitism, notwithstanding recent events, is the fact that the holocaust is now slipping from memory into history, and we need to perpetuate the analysis and grasp of that particular period of history.

Reply from Michael Gove: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, and it gives me an opportunity to thank the Holocaust Educational Trust, which enjoys support across the House. The work done by its chief executive, Karen Pollock, is exemplary. As the hon. Gentleman rightly points out, as the voices of survivors fade and the holocaust moves from memory to history, it is vital that we ensure that every successive generation appreciates the unique evil of that event, the origins of antisemitism and the need to be vigilant against its recrudescence.

Julian Lewis: I thank the Secretary of State for his robust answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy). Does he agree that the sight this weekend of bereaved family members from both the Muslim and Jewish communities joining together in a combined rally against Islamophobia and antisemitism was an inspiring sight that we should all hold in our hearts and honour? Does that not serve as a lesson to those people from one community or the other who preached hatred against others who are in fact innocent victims?

Reply from Michael Gove: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. All of us approach any conflict with a sense of horror and foreboding for what it may mean for innocent civilians, and it is in that spirit that the vigil that he mentions was held. It was great to see people from across communities expressing solidarity. I had the opportunity last week to talk to leaders from various Muslim community groups across the United Kingdom, and I pay tribute to them for their work in challenging extremism of all kinds.

Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat): If we are to tackle the reality of antisemitism in the present, it is vital that we learn from the past. In the summer of 1945, 300 Jewish children who had survived the death camps in Nazi Germany made their lives and were rehabilitated on the banks of Windermere lake at Troutbeck Bridge. They are affectionately and proudly known by all of us as the Windermere boys. As we work together to celebrate their legacy, and to use that legacy to ensure that we fight antisemitism in every part of our country, will the Secretary of State meet me and the people involved with the project to discuss how we can build a lasting memorial to the legacy of those wonderful young children who built a new life in this country and overcame the horrors of Nazi Germany?

Reply from Michael Gove: I am really grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding us of that episode in our history, and I would be absolutely delighted to work with him to ensure that that signal moment in our history is properly celebrated. It has been a feature of the United Kingdom that we have always recognised the importance of standing up against antisemitism and providing refuge to those fleeing persecution, so I look forward to talking to him in due course.

Michael Ellis (Conservative): The London Borough of Havering has now reversed the appalling decision it made last week to cancel its Hanukkah festivities for the Jewish community. It is impossible to imagine any local authority in the country trying to cancel the annual celebrations of any other faith group. Does my right hon. Friend agree that all local authorities should be careful to avoid any such rash action at this sensitive time, and that they should use intelligence and common sense in their decisions?

Reply from Michael Gove: My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely correct. I understand that the London Borough of Havering has now reversed its decision, but it seems to me that it was based on a misconception, which is that the idea of the celebration of any faith should be seen as provocative at this time. We know

that there are individual Jewish citizens who feel uncomfortable wearing the kippah or any outward symbol of their faith, and to have a London borough saying that the menorah should not be lit because it would be provocative at this time is wholly wrong. Freedom of religion—the chance for us all to express our faith—is fundamental to British values, and he is right to say that other local authorities should not go down that same route.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-12-04/debates/8EF8DCDD-3FE0-4EA7-BC78-0CAE6D7D7ABD/Antisemitism>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Written Answers

Racial Discrimination: Education

Andrew Bridgen (The Reclaim Party) [3837] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number of books that discuss critical race theory in school libraries.

Reply from Damian Hinds: All pupils deserve to be taught a knowledge-rich curriculum that promotes the extensive reading of books and other texts, both in and out of school. School libraries complement public libraries in allowing pupils to do this. It is for individual schools to decide how best to provide and maintain a library service for their pupils, including which books the library stocks, or whether to employ a qualified librarian.

Given this autonomy, which is granted to schools, the department does not collect information about book stocks.

In February 2022, the department published guidance to help schools understand their legal duties regarding political impartiality. The law is clear that schools must remain politically impartial, not promote partisan political views and should ensure the balanced treatment of political issues.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-27/3837>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools/political-impartiality-in-schools>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Islamophobia: Finance

Naz Shah (Labour) [4675] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, how much funding his Department has provided to tackle islamophobia since 2010.

Antisemitism: Finance

Naz Shah (Labour) [4676] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much funding his Department has provided to tackle anti-semitism since 2010.

Reply from Lee Rowley: I refer the Hon Member to my answer to Questions UIN 2961 on 29 November 2023, Question UIN 201247 on 23 October 2023 and Question UIN 117512 on 16 January 2023. As set out previously, antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred have no place in our society and we will continue to fund programmes that help tackle all forms of religious hatred.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-30/4675>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-30/4676>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-21/2961>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-10-13/201247>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-06/117512>

Press Release

Combating Anti-Semitism and Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/address-by-the-osce-personal-representatives-on-combating-anti-semitism-and-combating-racism-xenophobia-and-discrimination-uk-response>

New Publication

House of Commons Library Briefing: Tackling Islamophobia

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2023-0218/CDP-2023-0218.pdf>

News

Tell MAMA recorded 1,202 anti-Muslim cases in 55 days

<https://tellmamauk.org/tell-mama-recorded-1202-anti-muslim-cases-in-55-days/>

Thousands gather at mass vigil to speak out against antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/vigil-london-archbishop-of-canterbury-b2457728.html>

Pig heads and cars on fire: How Britain's Jewish and Muslim communities have both suffered since Hamas massacre

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/palestine-israel-hate-crime-antisemitism-b2456827.html>

Archbishop of Canterbury: We must get rid of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/03/justin-welby-hamas-israel-rally-peace-clean-up-uk/>

Shapps says daughter endured anti-Semitic chants at university

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/12/08/shapps-daughter-endured-anti-semitic-chants-university/>

Councillor quits as chair amid Gypsy comment probe

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3g255p1y89o>

Anti-Semitism is being normalised in British life

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/09/anti-semitism-is-being-normalised-in-british-life/>

Met Police: Ex-officers sentenced over racist WhatsApp posts

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-67650961>

Six former Met officers who sent racist Whatsapps about Meghan and Sunak spared prison

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/met-police-whatsapp-racist-sentence-b2460377.html>

Police investigating claims Jewish children prevented from getting on London buses
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/jewish-antisemitism-israel-bus-tfl-b2456673.html>

Bristol professor stripped of titles for antisemitic post
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/police-investigating-professor-bristol-university-blow-up-jewish-venue-tweet-9dtknw9q8>

Academic who suggested ‘blowing up’ Jewish Labour conference venue stripped of honorary titles
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/08/retired-professor-social-media-blow-up-jewish-labour/>

Police investigate professor’s call to ‘blow up’ Jewish Labour meeting
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/jewish-labour-professor-blow-up-antisemitic-b2460935.html>

UK law firms’ deafening silence on campus anti-Semitism
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/12/09/uk-law-firms-silence-anti-semitism-university-campuses/>

TOP

Other Scottish Parliament and Government

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Marriage: Legal Age

Fulton MacGregor (SNP) [S6W-23651] To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its consideration regarding the legal age of marriage.

Reply from Siobhian Brown: Members will be aware that we have been gathering views and evidence from a range of stakeholders around the minimum age of marriage and considering next steps following the recent concluding observation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child that we prohibit all marriages of under 18s in Scotland.

Whilst very few 16- and 17-year-olds marry or register a civil partnership in Scotland each year (in 2022 out of over 30,000 marriages, only 18 involved a party or parties under 18), we are cognisant of the concluding observations. Therefore I have now decided that the Scottish Government should consult formally in this area in 2024. Reaching a view on reform of the age of marriage is a potentially cross-cutting area given the other rights that we permit 16- and 17-year-olds to exercise whether with or without additional protections. Consequently, we need to carefully consider the full implications of any change in the minimum age of marriage and civil partnership and whether any change may be needed to the existing criminal law on forced marriage.

I also intend to include a number of other areas of family and succession law as part of this consultation.

We will consult on the Scottish Law Commission’s draft Bill to reform the law on a cohabitant’s financial rights against their former partner when they separate. We committed in the Family Justice Modernisation Strategy in 2018 to consulting on whether the simplified forms-based divorce and dissolution procedure should include cases where a couple have children under 16 and they are not in dispute

about their welfare, and this will also be included in the consultation. Following on from a previous consultation on succession law and from views raised during the passage of the Trusts and Succession (Scotland) Bill, our consultation will also explore a cohabitant's entitlement to financial provision from their deceased partner's estate where that partner has died without a will. In addition, we have not yet implemented a provision in the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 on creating qualifying requirements for religious and belief bodies with celebrants who solemnise marriage and register civil partnerships. The aims of this provision include ensuring the continuing dignity and solemnity of ceremonies and tackling forced marriages and civil partnerships. We are planning therefore to also consult formally on the options here. We will aim to publish the consultation on this substantial range of issues by summer 2024.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-23651>

Press Release

First Minister's Chanukah Message

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1732789994832490771>

New Publication

Court of Session judgement concerning the UK Government block on royal assent for the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/cos-general-docs/pdf-docs-for-opinions/2023csoh89.pdf?sfvrsn=f2051764_1

News

Court says Scottish gender reform block is legal

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-67659791>

Scottish Parliament defeated by UK Government in landmark court ruling over gender reform law

<https://news.stv.tv/scotland/scottish-parliament-defeated-by-uk-government-in-landmark-court-ruling-over-gender-reform-law>

What's happening with Scotland's gender reform plans?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-60221034>

Ministers should not appeal against gender ruling - Forbes

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-67669425>

Why does the Scottish government keep losing court cases?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-67648200>

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Other UK Parliament and Government

Press Releases

UKHSA urges people from ethnic minority groups to protect themselves with vaccines

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsa-urges-people-from-ethnic-minority-groups-to-protect-themselves-with-vaccines>

The Prime Minister's message for Chanukah 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-prime-ministers-message-for-chanukah-2023>

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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

Gap between haves and have-nots widening, report warns

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67661494>

Renters and disabled adults more likely to face cost-of-living squeeze

<https://www.independent.co.uk/business/renters-and-disabled-adults-more-likely-to-face-costofliving-squeeze-ons-b2458019.html>

Cost of living blamed as gap between rich and poor students grows

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cost-of-living-blamed-as-gap-between-rich-and-poor-students-grows-xmcx028gh>

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Other New Publication

Volunteering Scotland: Start your volunteering journey

New volunteer search website to make it easier for anyone and everyone to volunteer.

<https://volunteer.scot/>

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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>

Court of Session judgement concerning the UK Government block on royal assent for the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/cos-general-docs/pdf-docs-for-opinions/2023csoh89.pdf?sfvrsn=f2051764_1

Scottish Secretary statement on Court of Session judgment

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/scottish-secretary-statement-on-court-of-session-judgment>

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>

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

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

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

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

Bill as introduced

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0038/230038.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0038/en/230038en.pdf>

European Convention on Human Rights Memorandum

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0038/ECHRmemo.pdf> \

House of Commons Library Briefing: Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill 2023-24

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9918/CBP-9918.pdf>

First Reading, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2023-12-07/debates/C26D6A4F-7AFB-45CA-9DFA-8E6DA3C0F1C3/BBCFunding#contribution-821E7FA0-8071-498C-93D5-8F0E1C36E9CF>

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

Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill (closing date 20 December 2023)

https://yourviews.parliament.scot/health/abortion-services-saz-bill/consult_view/

Democracy Matters (closing date 28 February 2024)

<https://consult.gov.scot/local-government-and-communities/democracy-matters/>

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

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

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

Democracy Matters Community Engagement Fund 2023/24

Closing date: 26 January 2024

Scottish Government funding of up to £300 (possibility of higher funding to assist with accessibility) to support organisations and groups to host conversations and gather the views of people across Scotland on how we can create a system of inclusive local democracy. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/4ds8r9h2>

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

**** applications close this week!**

Exploring the Holocaust: UK-wide Residential Course

Application deadline 11 December 2023

9-13 February 2024 (Leicester)

Holocaust Educational Trust course for teachers and trainees to advance knowledge and inform classroom practice about the context of the Holocaust, Wartime persecution and murder, and Reactions to the Holocaust. For information see <https://tinyurl.com/46u8fdx7>

Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre School's Holocaust Memorial Day Event 2024

23 January 2024 (Glasgow, 10.00–1.30)

Scottish Jewish Heritage Centre event for secondary school pupils, providing an opportunity to hear people whose parents were survivors of the Holocaust, and who made a life in Scotland. For information see <https://sjhc.org.uk/news/hmd2024/>

Rights and Entitlements of EEA Nationals

14 February 2024 (online, 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>

Rights of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

15 February 2024 (online, 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>

No Recourse To Public Funds

21 February 2024 (online, 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 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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