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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

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# House of Commons

*Friday 5 February 2010*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

## PRAYERS

*The Chairman of Ways and Means took the Chair as Deputy Speaker (Standing Order No. 3).*

**Mr. David Chaytor** (Bury, North) (Lab): I beg to move, That the House sit in private.

*Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 163).*

*Question negatived.*

## BILL PRESENTED

### TERRORIST ASSET-FREEZING (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) BILL

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported by the Prime Minister, Secretary David Miliband, Mr. Secretary Straw, Secretary Alan Johnson, Mr. Secretary Denham, Mr. Liam Byrne, Mr. Stephen Timms, Ian Pearson and Sarah McCarthy-Fry, presented a Bill to make provision for the temporary validity of certain Orders in Council imposing financial restrictions on, and in relation to, persons suspected of involvement in terrorist activity; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 62) with explanatory notes (Bill 62-EN).*

## Local Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny) Bill

*Second Reading*

9.34 am

**Mr. David Chaytor** (Bury, North) (Lab): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

My Bill will strengthen the scrutiny powers already available to local authorities, and extend the range of public service providers that can be subject to the scrutiny process. It is designed to improve accountability in order to improve outcomes and thereby drive up the standards of local public services.

I express my thanks to all those who have helped with the drafting and preparation of the Bill. I thank those local councillors and officials in both central and local government who have given me the benefit of their experience of the way in which scrutiny is working now. I thank all those people who have written to me about the Bill with very constructive suggestions, demonstrating the increasing interest of local authorities in the scrutiny process and the seriousness with which they take it. Hundreds of people from across the country have written letters or sent e-mails urging me to adopt their preferred Bill, and I hope that they will understand why it has not been possible for me to reply to them individually. I hope that they appreciate the reasons for my choice of Bill.

I recognise the work of the Local Government Association in providing extremely valuable guidance on scrutiny processes and in submitting a detailed response to the Bill. I express my gratitude for the assistance provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, both in terms of the professional expertise and advice generously made available to me and the wealth of excellent material available on the centre's website. Finally, I commend the staff of the Library for their excellent research paper on the Bill.

Before coming to the Bill and the increase in powers that it proposes, I want to say a few words more generally about local democracy and the power and role of scrutiny. For much of the second half of the last century, local councils saw their powers to influence the growth, shape and future development of the communities that they serve gradually weakened. Many of the services that councils had traditionally provided directly were centralised or privatised. Councils became increasingly dependent on central Government for their financial base. They were subject to intense political and financial pressures, locally and nationally, as the demand for quality public services grew, but taxpayers' willingness to pay for them declined. As a result, the provision of services was gradually fragmented; the quality of many services declined; the lines of accountability and responsibility became confused; and the perception grew that the provider of the service was frequently more important than the consumer.

Not surprisingly, the electorate gradually also became confused as to who was responsible, and with that growing confusion about the lines of accountability came increasing dissatisfaction with the quality of service. Voters were unsure as to who was to blame when things went wrong, and they lost confidence in the capacity of the council to put things right. Of course, as we all recognise, that was gradually reflected in declining levels of interest and turnout at local elections.

The last 10 years have given all local authorities a much more secure financial base, a much clearer view of their role and the capacity to invest heavily to improve local services and infrastructure. Yet the levels of public engagement with local democracy and public support for local authorities are still frequently far too low. That is in spite of gradual improvements in performance, as evidenced by the inspection reports, and the gradual increase in the number of four-star councils that are now performing at a very high level.

There will always be differences between the main parties about the structure and financing of local government. However, the good news is that there is now a stronger, cross-party consensus about the need for greater accountability, greater transparency and more decentralisation of decision making than has existed for many years. That was evident in the debate on the local government finance settlement earlier this week. All the major parties now agree that if local democracy is to be revived, the direction of travel has to be towards further decentralisation, increasing localism and increasing personalisation of public services. There is also growing recognition of the importance of local public service providers working in partnership on common objectives. Isolation and fragmentation of the delivery of services is ineffective and highly expensive, which is where the scrutiny function of local authorities becomes of central importance.

[*Mr. David Chaytor*]

Today, people are used to accessing high-quality services from the private sector 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Expectations of high-quality services tailored to individual need, delivered at a time convenient for the service user, are rising continually. People also want more from the public sector—from central and local government. There is growing demand for more information on local services. I must refer to an enormously important development: the launch of the data.gov.uk website, which enables everyone in Britain to access a potentially infinite amount of information on all local public services. It is the beginning of a remarkable transformation in the availability of information to the public. There is also demand for greater consultation on how local services are provided, and for greater public involvement in the shape of those services. There are also demands for action and proper complaints systems when the public feel that things do not work properly.

As almost all public services are delivered locally, the efficiency and effectiveness of local government is crucial, and in recent years much has already been done to bring that about. The past decade has seen many improvements. We now have greater financial stability, with three-year financial settlements enabling local authorities to plan ahead in a more stable manner. There is a reduction in the number of central targets and inspection regimes, and associated greater flexibility locally. There is greater financial flexibility through a more prudential borrowing scheme, too.

**Mr. Andrew Dismore** (Hendon) (Lab): One of my concerns about my hon. Friend's Bill is that there is no provision that addresses the question, "quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" or "who will guard the guardians?" To take up his point about flexibility, my local authority has decided to axe the sheltered housing warden service. As a result of all the local opposition and the High Court decision, it is now revisiting the issue. There seems to be no way to hold the local authority to account. Is there any way, in his Bill, of holding the local authority to account in those circumstances?

**Mr. Chaytor:** My hon. Friend raises a very important point. In the Bill there is no such way, but through the ballot box there is. Another answer to his question is that increasing emphasis is being given to the power of the public to influence and pressurise local authorities, through the community call for action, the councils' call for action, and the new emphasis on petitions. All those were introduced in recent local government legislation. That, in addition to the normal power through the ballot box, gives the public more power to influence local authorities' decisions.

I want to draw attention to an important change in recent years: local authorities now have a general power of well-being, after calling for it for many years. They are no longer shackled by central Government restrictions on how they interpret the long-term needs of their areas. Of course, the role of councillors and councils, with their unique democratic mandate, is absolutely critical to making sure that local services respond to the needs of local communities, although I fully accept that, as my hon. Friend has mentioned, decisions by local authorities do not always reflect the needs of their communities.

Councils must be given the powers that they need to act decisively and effectively on behalf of their citizens, and the powers and capacity to scrutinise, influence and shape all public services, including those delivered by other providers, which may be in the private sector or the third sector, or that may be agents of central Government. That is a new, much stronger role for local government, placing it firmly at the centre of decision making in the community. It is central to the long-term process of rebuilding public confidence in the democratic process overall.

I want to say a word about the role of scrutiny and how it has developed in recent years. Although the separation of local authorities' powers into executive and scrutiny functions has been in place for barely 10 years, enormous progress has been made in many local authorities, where the power of scrutiny is clearly understood. In some parts of the country, oversight and scrutiny panels have started to shape the local delivery of health and crime prevention policies. In the more successful authorities, the panels have already led to an increase in public engagement and a greater recognition by service providers of the need to respond to public concerns.

It would be naive to assume that every local authority has fully grasped the potential of the new scrutiny function, but I think that it is generally recognised that understanding is increasing, and the number of people calling for a return to the old system is dramatically reducing. Now is the time to move forward and ensure that scrutiny is an outward-looking process that considers the wider impact of how effectively public money is spent across all public services in a local area.

The growth of local strategic partnerships and the establishment of comprehensive area assessments mean that councils must now take responsibility for the effective use of public funds across their whole area, and they should be able to hold all public service providers to account on behalf of the communities that they represent. At a time of rising public aspirations and increased aversion to higher levels of taxation, councils and other public service providers need to find ways to deliver ever more personalised and flexible public services with the same level of resource. Effective scrutiny processes can help them to find ways of doing more with less.

**Mr. Dismore:** My hon. Friend has a very good Bill, and there are some important points raised by it. I have a question to ask him about designation, which will be done by the Secretary of State. I assume that it is not intended that Parliament, or Members of Parliament, should be among those who can be designated, because that could raise important issues relating to privilege.

**Mr. Chaytor:** My hon. Friend raises a really important point. From my point of view, the groups that he mentions will not be subject to the regulations that will be published. It is a matter for the Government which organisations and individuals they include, but in all the discussions about the Bill to which I have been party, there was no suggestion that Parliament should be designated in the regulations.

**Matthew Taylor** (Truro and St. Austell) (LD): On that point, I am never particularly in favour of giving Ministers all sorts of discretionary powers; one never knows who the Minister will be at any given time. I am not quite sure why the hon. Gentleman has taken the

approach of handing over the designation of the bodies that will be scrutinised to Ministers, because the definition in the Bill could cover a very wide range of organisations that are in receipt of some sort of public funding, including charities and others; all sorts of such organisations deliver services in my constituency in that way. There might be concern about how widely the definition is drawn in practice.

**Mr. Chaytor:** That is an important point, and that concern has been raised by a number of organisations. However, given that the measure is a radical step forward in giving local authorities powers to scrutinise a wide range of organisations, there probably does need to be more time to build up consensus about the range of organisations included. The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 lists, I think, 20 public agencies that can now be scrutinised as part of the local area agreement process. That list could well be specified in regulations under my Bill, but there are other agencies and providers that could be specified, too, not least the utility companies and public transport providers. Further debate is probably needed before the regulations are issued, rather than specifying in the Bill which bodies should be included.

Since the development of scrutiny in the Local Government Act 2000, enormous progress has been made. Initially, councils had to set up at least one scrutiny committee to examine decision making across the council, acting as a check and balance on the powerful council executives. Those committees had Select Committee-style powers, and were able to call in officers and members to give evidence. They could also require information to be given, but only in relation to council executive decisions.

Scrutiny committees were also provided with wide ranging powers to examine any issue of importance in a council's area and make recommendations to the council, but in such reviews the scrutiny committees did not enjoy the same Select Committee-style powers as they did when looking at executive decisions. The co-operation of external bodies in these circumstances was entirely voluntary, and frequently it was difficult to find that co-operation.

The Health and Social Care Act 2001 provided upper-tier local authorities with the power to review the planning, provision and operation of health services in the area and to make reports and recommendations to local NHS bodies. Scrutiny committees may require NHS bodies to provide information, attend scrutiny meetings, answer questions and respond to recommendations made by the scrutiny committee. Under the 2001 Act, NHS bodies must also consult the relevant local authority scrutiny committee about proposals for substantial service changes. If the committee is unhappy with the proposed changes, the issue can be referred up to the independent regulator.

A further step forward was made when the Police and Justice Act 2006 required every local authority to have a crime and disorder committee with powers to scrutinise decisions made or actions taken by the crime and disorder reduction partnership. As with the health scrutiny regime, crime and disorder scrutiny committees can require information, require officers to attend meetings to answer questions, and require a response to the recommendations that they make.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 extended the Select Committee-style powers. The new arrangements have made scrutiny more outward-looking, and it can focus on the activities of public sector partners such as Jobcentre Plus, joint waste authorities and the Highways Agency in respect of agreed local priorities.

**Mr. Dismore:** Would my hon. Friend's Bill extend to railway contractors? I have in mind the appalling record of First Capital Connect on the Thameslink line, which has affected so many of my constituents since the dispute, and its failure to restore proper services. Would my local authority be able to call the company to account through the scrutiny process?

**Mr. Chaytor:** Again, my hon. Friend makes an important point. As he knows, that would be the subject of future regulations, but railway contractors as well as the train operating companies, other public transport services and other public transport maintenance companies that are wholly or partly financed by public funds could potentially be listed in the regulations. My hon. Friend's intervention reinforces the point that a further period of debate and discussion is probably needed about the individual organisations and providers that should be included in the future regulations.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 required local authorities for the first time to provide a dedicated scrutiny officer. That requirement should be in force by 1 April this year. Only this week, the Flood and Water Management Bill increased the powers of local authorities to scrutinise the various risk management authorities on the exercise of their flood and coastal erosion functions.

The Bill takes forward proposals in last year's local government Green Paper, "Strengthening local democracy," on which there was a substantial public consultation in the last few months of 2009. It extends councils' scrutiny powers to the next logical stage. It will enable scrutiny powers to cover a wide range of external bodies from the public and private sector. It will be a matter for future debate and for the Government as to which bodies are designated in the regulations. It will designate bodies that carry out activities which impact heavily on the day-to-day lives of local people.

The Bill enables more effective scrutiny of local public services. It does so by establishing a framework for broadening their scrutiny powers and extending them to cover a wider range of organisations. That means that in future, when undertaking their scrutiny function, councils will be less reliant on the voluntary co-operation of external organisations. Under the new regime the external bodies subject to scrutiny may be required by a local authority's overview and scrutiny committee to provide information to the committee and to attend scrutiny meetings to answer questions. Both measures will help council scrutiny committees to be fully and properly informed. The external bodies will be required to respond to the scrutiny committee's reports and to have regard to the recommendations.

The framework established by my Bill provides that bodies subject to the regime will be specified in future regulations, so decisions will be a matter for the Government, as has been mentioned, but the Bill enables the maximum reach and scope. I hope that the Government will be ambitious and imaginative in deciding which organisations will be specified in the regulations.

[*Mr. Chaytor*]

It is always important to consider the potential effect of the enhanced regime on the bodies to be brought within it, and it will be vital to strike the right balance between enabling constructive and challenging scrutiny, while avoiding the process becoming overly time consuming or burdensome to the new bodies brought into the regime. Measures will be needed to ensure that the burdens are minimised and that operational independence is not compromised. My Bill recognises this. There will be new provisions to minimise burdens, duplication and effort, and to maximise the efficiency, effectiveness and benefits of constructive scrutiny.

In addition to the framework for the enhanced regime, the Bill recognises the increased importance of scrutiny as a key council function. It will require the council's scrutiny officers to be fully and sufficiently resourced. We know that councils are now required to have a designated scrutiny officer. Across the country the number of councils with a designated team is quite small. In most councils the scrutiny function tends to be shared between a number of officers. The average number of officers engaged in scrutiny is currently about three, though obviously there is a wide range, reflecting the size of local authorities. My Bill's provision to ensure that the scrutiny officer is sufficiently resourced will make a significant improvement and lead to greater quality and thoroughness in the scrutiny process.

The impact assessment published alongside the Bill indicates that the total cost of compliance on the new providers brought within the regime is likely to be less than £300,000 per annum. The cost of ensuring that scrutiny officers are properly resourced to do the job will be less than £4.5 million per annum and will be fully funded by the Department.

I shall refer briefly to some of the scrutiny work that my local authority, Bury metropolitan district council, has done in recent years. It is an authority without a dedicated team of officers. Nevertheless, it has adjusted to the new regime and started to get to grips with serious issues affecting the borough. It has built strong relationships with its partner providers, and it has a good track record on work on, for example, domestic violence, hard to reach young people, town centre safety, the future of the music service, safeguarding children, alcohol misuse and residential care. As the lead authority for the joint committee for the Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, my authority has contributed to a much larger review of dementia services, stroke services and health care-acquired infections.

I draw the attention of the House to the annual awards made by the Centre for Public Scrutiny—the good scrutiny awards. There is an impressive list of authorities that have won awards under different headings—for the best team, for financial scrutiny, for community engagement, and for scrutiny of health policy. This is the best example, which is available on the website of the Centre for Public Scrutiny, showing the range, depth and growing innovation in scrutiny processes.

There are probably four characteristics of good scrutiny, and my Bill will enhance all four. It is important that the scrutiny role adopts the approach of a critical friend. Scrutiny should not be hostile, aggressive or designed to subvert or destroy; it should, as I have said, act as a critical friend. Scrutiny must respond to and reflect

genuine and deep public concerns; it cannot be arbitrary. It must be owned by people with an independent mind who are not subject to predetermined thinking on the issue that they investigate and scrutinise, and the object of scrutiny must be to drive improvement in public services.

In conclusion, I again thank all those who have contributed to the development and preparation of the Bill. It is based on principles that are now supported in all parts of the House, and it makes provision for new powers that build on those that have been agreed to in previous legislation. Those new powers are designed to improve the quality of public services through greater accountability in order to help renew public confidence in the local democratic process. I commend the Bill to the House.

10 am

**Justine Greening** (Putney) (Con): The Opposition very much appreciate the Bill's intention, which is to give councils much greater powers to scrutinise local public services. We all recognise that the delivery of those local public services has changed over time, and a variety of providers not just in the private sector but increasingly in the third sector now provide essential public services for local communities throughout the country. A local authority's scrutiny functions are therefore a vital tool in promoting accountability and ensuring transparency in local decision making, and that allows local communities to become involved in the decisions that affect their daily lives. Given the importance of the powers that the Bill confers, and the Government's previous commitments to introduce them, we are slightly concerned that the actual legislation before us is a private Member's Bill. It appears to all intents and purposes to be a Government Bill.

Having said that, I turn to the broad sweep of the Bill, the intention behind which we support. We have some concerns about the wording of certain clauses, and before the Bill goes into Committee we would like to flag up those concerns so that Ministers and the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Chaytor) take them on board and we have a more constructive debate in Committee.

Overview and scrutiny committees perform an important function, reviewing policy and performance and holding local public service providers to account. Currently, those committees have the power to require information from a range of organisations including councils, NHS bodies, law and order bodies and partner authorities that are involved in local area agreements. The committees can also summon representatives of most of those bodies to appear before them, and they can require such officials to respond to reports and recommendations that have been issued to them. However, that does not happen with all bodies—for example, partners that are involved in delivering local area agreement objectives. Indeed, many other local bodies are not required to submit to the same level of scrutiny by local authorities, so their voluntary participation in scrutiny is not guaranteed.

There is a growing recognition that overview and scrutiny committees need to have powers over a wider range of external organisations as they become more involved in local public services, and that councils should provide sufficient resources and support to those committees so that they can undertake more scrutiny.

The Bill seeks to address a number of issues, and we welcome its intention to increase local scrutiny powers. However, I want to flag up a number of concerns about how the Bill, as currently worded, will work in practice, so that in Committee we can have a proper debate about the range of challenges that the Bill poses. I shall quickly go through the Bill, clause by clause.

One of the most important measures in the Bill is the power to scrutinise a “designated person or authority”, and there are questions about how that designation will be defined. It would therefore be helpful if the Minister could either set out his views on the organisations that could come under the Bill’s designation or state whether he intends to publish a draft list of such bodies. That would be helpful, because many Members would then have a better idea of the Bill’s sweep.

The hon. Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) rightly raised not concern but his interest in understanding how broad the designation will be, because clause 1 is vague. Subsection (2) defines a matter “of local concern”, but it does so relatively, stating:

“A matter is ‘of local concern’ in relation to a local authority only if it affects the authority’s area or the inhabitants of that area to a greater degree than it affects the areas of other local authorities or the inhabitants of other such areas.”

I am not clear about how that definition will work in practice, or about whether we actually want that provision.

**Mr. Dismore:** First Capital Connect—my example—has seriously affected not only my constituents but those of all MPs all the way along the line, from Bedford down to the south coast. On that basis, the test to which the hon. Lady refers might not be met. However, that example would clearly meet the test of a matter of great local concern.

**Justine Greening:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important practical example, demonstrating why we want the Bill to be improved and more tightly worded. The other obvious example is the post office closure programme, which was incredibly controversial in many local communities. It affected all local communities, including my own, but, based on clause 1 as drafted, it would not fall within the scope of an overview and scrutiny committee. The committee would not be able to question Post Office managers about the way its service proposals might affect local communities and businesses, and we have some concerns about that.

Clause 1 also includes the power to designate

“(a) generally, or

(b) in respect of services”.

Does the Minister feel that there is a danger of the designation becoming broader than necessary? We want to ensure that the Bill is effective, but that it does not become so broad that it ends up being cumbersome for all concerned. More clarity from the Minister would help our understanding of the clause’s breadth. Specifically, will regional development agencies be included? The hon. Member for Hendon is clearly concerned about transport providers, and many London MPs regard them as bodies providing public services that their local councillors may well want to scrutinise.

Once we have agreed which public service providers come under the designation, the next question is, what activities will be scrutinised? The Bill’s definition of a matter “of local concern” is vague, so will the issues that it covers be consistent with those that were outlined

in the Department’s 2009 Green Paper, “Strengthening Local Democracy”? That document mentioned police strategies, fire and rescue authority plans, council delivery of education and wider issues that were not related to local area agreement targets. Given that the Bill follows on from that Green Paper, will it be consistent, to all intents and purposes, with that document’s list of issues?

The Department’s press notice on 1 February stated that the scrutiny arrangements “could” mean that service providers were held to account on issues “like” energy companies leaving repairs unfinished, station safety and facilities and the availability of rural bus services. Will the remit extend to local matters that have not occurred but might do, such as a potential post office closure, or a potential change? People are often concerned about such change before it occurs. Many local authorities will want to scrutinise decisions before they are taken, but the Bill restricts them to scrutinising decisions that have already been taken.

I shall move on, as I do not want to detain the House for too long. The Bill also covers the information that scrutiny committees can require from the relevant bodies and services. An appropriate representative can be required to appear before the committee to answer questions and the organisation can be required to reply to reports or recommendations. We see the merit in that.

Obviously, granting councils a full range of scrutiny powers over local bodies is a step in the right direction, but we need to be careful that the regulations brought in by the Secretary of State do not impose an excessive burden on organisations affected by the Bill. It would help if the Minister told us a little more about the breadth and formulation of those regulations. What criteria might the Secretary of State and the Minister use to determine any limits on these powers? Clause 3(1) talks about committees having information that they “reasonably” require; in Committee, it will be important to talk in more depth about what, in practice, that reasonableness test might be.

The impact assessment accompanying the Bill estimates that the private and public sectors could face an extra £285,000 and £35,000 respectively in compliance costs. Ministers must have made some sort of detailed assessment to come up with such figures, and I should like to know about that assessment in a bit more detail.

I deal now with the issue of having executive council members on the committee. I want to flag up a concern about that, as it seems to go against what Ministers were saying back in 2000, when they brought forward the more dramatic changes to the management of councils. The Bill starts to go back on the distinction between councillors involved in delivering policy and those involved in scrutiny. It would be helpful to hear a bit more about why the hon. Member for Bury, North and the Minister—the Government support the Bill—feel that that is a good move and is worth doing. Will it not undermine the overall structure of accountability, which has proved useful to many local councils? The Centre for Policy Studies was previously concerned that the involvement of executive councils in the scrutiny process would blur the lines between the two functions.

I want to mention scrutiny within councils and the cost to local authorities. Clause 9 requires that officers should be provided with

“such staff, accommodation and other resources”

[*Justine Greening*]

as are determined by the officer to be sufficient to discharge their functions. The Local Government Association has said that it wants to be left with the ability to make local decisions about how to ensure that scrutiny is well supported within its local authorities. The explanatory notes said that the new powers could cost local authorities £4.5 million, and I am sure that the Minister will confirm that that will come out of their existing budgets.

Given the constraints on local authority budgets at the moment, it is particularly important that local authorities be able to make their own decisions about how they want to ensure that councillors involved in scrutiny can scrutinise well. For many councils, that may well mean more of a focus on developing the councillors' skill sets rather than having support for them. To my mind, that would be no bad thing at all, although it would not necessarily mean the approach to scrutiny and its resourcing that is set out in the Bill, which is too prescriptive in many respects.

The 2008 Centre for Policy Studies survey of local government scrutiny found that there was a slight negative trend in the size of allocated discretionary budgets for scrutiny. Clearly, there is a change of approach among local authorities in respect of resourcing scrutiny. It is important that we work with them to find out how they feel it can best be delivered.

My last point is about joint committees, and I want to issue a challenge to the Minister. The Bill talks about joint overview and scrutiny committees. As I am sure the Minister is aware, those were enacted, as it were, in January this year, but the regulations to enable them to come into being with the powers given by last year's Bill have not gone through Parliament. Given that, technically, the committees do not yet exist, it seems a bit presumptuous that this Bill should extend their powers further. Will the Minister enlighten the House on when those regulations will pass through Parliament, so that joint overview and scrutiny committees can be properly established?

Broadly, we believe that the Bill could move the quality of scrutiny at the local level in the right direction, so we shall not stand in its way. We have some concerns, which I have begun to outline, about the wording and breadth of clauses and how effective they may prove. However, we look forward to working with the Government and the hon. Member for Bury, North in Committee. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

10.16 pm

**Mr. Nick Raynsford** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): At the outset, I should declare a non-remunerated interest: I am the chairman of the Centre for Public Scrutiny. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Chaytor) for his kind remarks about the centre's work and the support that it has given him in preparing the Bill.

I very much welcome the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend on his choice of subject. All of us in the House are aware of the importance of scrutiny in achieving a range of different objectives. First, it advances good government, on the simple principle that an executive is always kept more on its toes if its activities are properly scrutinised, whether in local government, here or anywhere else. Secondly, scrutiny is a way of identifying

opportunities for doing things better—finding innovative ways of tackling problems or saving money by achieving objectives in a more cost-effective way. That has been demonstrated across a range of different scrutiny activities at both central and local government levels. Thirdly, scrutiny can help to identify areas where we could ensure better co-ordination between different agencies, all of which have a role in the delivery of public services. That, of course, is very much the focus of the Bill.

As we all know, we have a long tradition of scrutiny here, but the tradition in local government is much shorter. My hon. Friend has highlighted the progress since the Local Government Act 2000 in the extension of scrutiny and scrutiny powers in local government, including the extension to cover other functions such as policing and health, which has been enacted by subsequent legislation. The Bill is an important further step along the route of extending and embedding the principle of good scrutiny at a local level. I very much welcome it.

The extension of the powers to require evidence and to require people in certain circumstances to appear in front of a scrutiny committee is important. There is anecdotal evidence that in some cases local authorities seeking to scrutinise have found it difficult to secure the attendance of partners or other local authorities with a significant role in the delivery of public services; they have been reluctant to submit themselves to local authority scrutiny. In my view, it is absolutely right that the additional powers should be provided.

At the same time, it is right that the way the legislation is drafted should not seek to impose too prescriptive an approach. One of the strengths of the way scrutiny has developed in local government has been the capacity of individual authorities to be innovative and try approaches slightly different from those of their neighbours. We should continue to encourage that; we should allow the greatest possible flexibility and freedom for authorities to develop not only their own scrutiny functions, but joint scrutiny activities with other authorities and the scrutiny of their partners in innovative ways.

We need to think much more about how to disseminate good practice. My hon. Friend was kind enough to refer to the Centre for Public Scrutiny's annual scrutiny awards and the focus that they are intended to give to spreading good practice and highlighting examples of innovative work by local authorities, on the basis that others should learn from that.

I support all that, but there is a curious gap in the process as far as we in the House are concerned. For all the talk of better scrutiny, I can see no evidence whatever of any Select Committees entering into joint scrutiny functions with local scrutiny committees or seeing the scope for using the evidence that emerges from local scrutiny to support or underpin their work. It is surprising that we operate in two separate silos—central and local government. We are not exploring the scope for better joint working to the extent that we should. Although Select Committees are not covered by the Bill, I hope that in our consideration of the principle of bringing together different public authorities responsible for delivering services and of the impact they have on a particular area, which is very much part of the Bill, we will also consider how we can bring together the scrutiny functions of our Select Committees and those of local authority scrutiny committees and learn from each other's good practice.

Both my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) mentioned resources for scrutiny, and I endorse the view that the scrutiny function has to be properly resourced. That is clearly a difficult ask at a time when public funding is under considerable pressure, but it is a false economy to believe that we can cut back on that function, which is a very small part of total local authority budgets, and not have adverse consequences. The potential loss from less efficient scrutiny will be felt over time through less efficient services, as old and perhaps outmoded practices are allowed to continue longer than they should because they are not challenged, as the scope for making savings by doing things better is not identified and as the scope for different public authorities to work better together to make savings in public expenditure is not picked up. It would be a wholly false economy to cut back on scrutiny expenditure at the present time as a way of saving money, because it represents a very small proportion of total local government spending and it is important that the scrutiny function is handled well.

The context of Total Place, an important current initiative, makes that all the more important. Through it we are beginning to understand the scale of total public investment in individual areas. If there is good scrutiny in parallel with that, it will surely help to ensure that we identify areas in which resources could be better used and those in which there is scope for savings. That seems to me a fertile area for good scrutiny in future.

I welcome the Bill, and there are only two elements of it that I have reservations about, which I shall highlight before I conclude. The first is the exclusion of district councils in two-tier areas. The Local Government Association has raised this issue. I can understand the argument about the need to avoid unnecessary duplication, but excluding district councils entirely is using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Surely it would be better to have a protocol arrangement to ensure that there was no duplication. If a district council in a two-tier area intended to set up scrutiny of a wider range of other authorities, it should first be required to consult the county council and other district councils. There should also be an obligation to set up a joint scrutiny committee or to work in collaboration to avoid the problem of duplication. That seems to me a much better approach than simply debarring district councils from being involved in the scrutiny in question in two-tier areas.

Secondly, clause 8(3) raises a difficult constitutional issue. Proposed new section 21(9A)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000 would allow executive members to be members of scrutiny committees, provided that they were not scrutinising the executive itself. The hon. Member for Putney raised that concern. I believe that when she looks at the *Hansard* reference, she will see that she referred to the Centre for Policy Studies. I guess that her brief said “CPS”—I think she meant the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

**Justine Greening:** Exactly.

**Mr. Raynsford:** I am grateful for her kind reference to it. It is concerned about the matter, as am I, because there is a slippery slope and an erosion of the principle of the separation of powers between scrutiny and executive. If that is damaged, it could have serious consequences for the integrity of the scrutiny function. It could well

also create a difficult relationship between executive members and people in outside bodies if the latter were talking to them as partners one day and subject to scrutiny by them the next. The partners themselves would not have the option of scrutinising the working of the executive. It is unfair to outside bodies that need to work in partnership with executive members of local authorities to be subject to scrutiny by them as well. For that reason, as well as that of the separation of powers, I do not believe that we should go down that route. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North, and the Minister to have a further look at that.

My final observation is that we frequently hear from local government the complaint that back-bench members of local authorities, whose role is essentially scrutiny, are not accorded the same status and standing as executive members. Frankly, anything that we can do to boost the morale and status of back-bench and scrutiny members is good, and we certainly should not erode it by stating that executive members can sit on scrutiny committees as well. I hope that that will be reconsidered.

With those few reservations, I give my strong support to the Bill. It will help to take forward the process of scrutiny in local government and the search for more effective delivery of public services when a range of bodies are involved. I wish it every success and support its principles.

10.26 am

**Matthew Taylor** (Truro and St. Austell) (LD): First, I welcome the comments of the right hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Mr. Raynsford) and endorse pretty much everything that he said. I will not repeat it, because he put it extremely effectively and has a great deal of knowledge in this area.

My broad position is that I very much welcome the Bill. It makes real some of the issues covered by Total Place, which the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Chaytor) referred to. It seems to me that a core function of local council representatives is to raise issues of concern to their community. The scrutiny process is a very effective way of doing that, and the Bill will provide them with some real authority in that process. For those reasons, I wish it well and the Liberal Democrats will support it.

I have one issue to raise, which I have touched on, and it is one of principle. We are discussing scrutiny, and the role of the House is to scrutinise the Bill. The fundamental question is which bodies are to be scrutinised, and it does not specify that. We can examine the Government's consultation, which lists the type of organisations that it believes may be subject to scrutiny, but we have no confirmation that they will. Nor do we have any real idea of whether that is the final list or whether it is to be extended much further.

Even if the current Minister were to outline his intentions in relation to which bodies will be covered, a future Minister might come to a different view. The matter would have to come back to the House and be subject to debate, but we all know that the processes of resolution here are brief, that not many Members are involved and that generally speaking, whatever the Government want goes through. That is the reality of the process. It is a real shame that we have not been given that information for today's debate, and I hope

[*Matthew Taylor*]

that it can be brought to us in Committee. When legislation is brought before the House, it helps when Ministers talk about what they believe will fall within its scope, because that gives direction on what might happen in future and arms any future colleagues—not me, but there might be others—who challenge exemptions in the regulations or elements that might be missing, by giving them a clear steer at this stage in the legislative process. The hon. Member for Bury, North has done a great job in bringing the Bill forward, but I hope that he will seek clarity from the Minister and the Department on that point, and that the Minister will give it—if not today, then in Committee.

I should also apologise, because I have a brief engagement that I have not been able to get out of, so I shall be escaping in a moment. I might not be here for the reply to this debate, but my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) will be. That is a discourtesy to the House, but I am afraid that it is not one that I can get out of.

10.31 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr. Ian Austin):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Chaytor) on his success in the ballot and on all the effort that he has put into bringing forward his proposals.

I also thank all the other Members who have taken part in this debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Mr. Raynsford) is an acknowledged expert on the issue, as he is on so many other local government matters, and not just because of his distinguished ministerial career, but because of his career before he entered the House and his work with the Centre for Public Scrutiny, for example. I thank the hon. Members for Putney (Justine Greening) and for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) for the constructive, detailed and expert analysis that they have brought to bear on the issue. I also thank the hon. Lady for her constructive and non-partisan tone in discussing the proposals.

I am pleased to confirm that the Government support the Local Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny) Bill, which my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North has introduced. His proposals are in line with some of those set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in the “Strengthening local democracy” consultation, published in July last year. The Bill provides the framework to extend the reach and influence of local authority scrutiny further. My hon. Friend set out what the Bill does in practical terms. I do not intend to repeat what he said, but I shall try to respond to some of the points made in the debate.

As my hon. Friend said, there is an increasing appetite for more localised and personalised services, greater transparency and more accountability. Consumers know more about the services that they want to be provided with. They expect greater responsiveness and higher quality, and they have every right to do so. My hon. Friend’s proposals attempt to answer the increased demand for accountability, and ensure probity over the use of public resources and equity in access and opportunity.

Local government is a major route through which the voice and interests of local people, through their elected representatives, can be brought to bear on the national and local institutions that provide local services.

People expect their council to be at the heart of decision making in the area—the one place that they ought to be able to go for information on the full range of services provided, and the place to which they can look to influence decisions on how those services are delivered. When people vote, they should be confident that they are electing someone who will take a real interest in those issues locally and act on their behalf. The council’s scrutiny function is one way of delivering that accountability locally.

The new powers will extend scrutiny to a wider range of bodies to address cross-cutting issues locally to best effect, and will provide local authorities with greater expertise and more information. In the first instance we intend to apply the new framework to existing local area agreement partner bodies. That will remove the current limitation on the scrutiny of activities related to LAA matters only, recognising that the local contribution and activities of partner bodies—such as Jobcentre Plus, and fire and rescue authorities, to name just two—cut across the full range of local issues that arise, and are not limited to the delivery of priority targets in the LAA. We also intend to extend scrutiny to two new sectors: energy and transport.

We recognise, as we did when scrutiny was first extended to cover LAA partners, that those who will become subject to scrutiny for the first time might have concerns about what that will mean for them in practice. They will want to know how much time it will take up, how much it will cost and whether they will be required to attend hundreds of scrutiny hearings across the country. We understand those concerns, and that is why we intend to use the regulation-making powers in the Bill to put in place safeguards and procedures to ensure that the exercise of the new powers by councils does not impose a disproportionate burden on bodies that are subject to scrutiny.

My experience as a councillor in Dudley in the 1990s left me with firm views on the vital role that well-informed, fully engaged councillors can play as champions of their community and the residents they serve. At their best, councillors are out and about in the communities that they represent; local, available and in touch; talking to local people; engaged with community groups and voluntary organisations; understanding in detail the services provided in their wards—truly in touch with local people. That is the sort of councillor that local communities need if greater scrutiny is to work effectively, because local scrutiny will be at its best when led by councillors who have their finger firmly on the local pulse and when driven by local people to examine the issues that matter to them. For those councillors sitting on scrutiny committees, the new powers are therefore significant.

However, with additional power comes greater responsibility, because scrutiny is not about confrontation or criticism for the sake of it, but about constructive debate and challenge where necessary. It is not about taking over all local services or being a substitute decision taker for external bodies, but about influencing the decision-making process and ensuring that decisions

are properly informed and properly taken. Scrutiny is about contributing positively to policy development across the full range of services, bringing partners from all sectors together to ensure that residents are getting the best deal. In recent years the council scrutiny function has taken on a higher profile, and is now used not just to increase openness and transparency, but to improve the services that residents receive. Councillors and scrutiny committees should engage with local people to ensure that scrutiny looks at the issues that matter and to select topics for review so as to ensure that they scrutinise the subjects that local people are concerned about.

The hon. Member for Putney raised issues of cost, as did all right hon. and hon. Members who spoke. Let me try to deal with some of those. An impact assessment has been prepared on the basis of local authorities continuing to work within their existing budgets and therefore continuing, as at present, to prioritise issues of local concern for scrutiny and review. We therefore do not consider part 1 of the Bill to have any major financial implications for local authorities. Any increased cost arising from part 1 will instead be limited to the additional compliance costs on external bodies undergoing scrutiny, in providing information to committees or attending meetings, for example. The Government estimate that the increased annual compliance costs could be up to £480,000 each year, with up to £427,000 falling on private sector bodies and up to £53,000 falling on public sector bodies.

The Bill also includes provision for scrutiny resources. Section 21ZA of the Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to designate one of their officers as scrutiny officer. That officer's functions are to promote the role of the authority's overview and scrutiny committee or committees; provide support to such committees; and provide guidance and support to members and officers of the authority, and members of the authority's executive, in relation to the functions of overview and scrutiny committees.

The Bill will require local authorities to provide their designated scrutiny officers with such staff, accommodation and other resources as they consider sufficient to discharge their functions. That mirrors the provision for monitoring officers in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The new requirement might result in additional costs for some authorities—costs that the Government estimate will amount to no more than £4.5 million each year. The Government are committed to ensuring that any new burden falling on local authorities is funded. The cost will therefore be fully and properly funded by the Government, so that no additional pressure is placed on council tax bills.

As I said earlier, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State believes that the Bill takes forward key proposals of the "Strengthening local democracy" consultation and will provide a flexible framework to enable councillors to scrutinise a wider range of bodies and improve the services that residents receive.

10.38 am

**Mr. Chaytor:** I thank all right hon. and hon. Members for their contributions to this debate. When I spoke about the all-party consensus on the need for more decentralisation and localism, and more transparency and accountability, I could not have imagined that that

would be so perfectly reflected in the various contributions that have been made. Things have moved on significantly in recent years, in terms of the main parties' attitudes towards local government and their agreement on certain key principles.

I thank the Minister for clarifying so many points of detail and for giving an honest and direct indication of the Government's thinking on how certain regulations might be implemented.

The hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) was exercised by the issue of the list of new bodies and agencies not being included in the Bill. A large number of bodies and agencies were mentioned during the debate, and there would not necessarily be consensus at this stage that all of them should be included in the list of designated bodies. That provides the best case for leaving this matter to be set out in regulations. I accept fully, however, that that would place the matter completely in the hands of this Government or a future Government. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will take on board the suggestion by the hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) that a draft list be published in advance of the regulations. That would provide time for further debate and consultation, and for the building of consensus.

**Matthew Taylor:** Let me make it clear that I was not necessarily suggesting that the list should appear on the face of the Bill. I accept that consultation needs to take place and that the timing might not work in that regard. I also accept that such a list could be over-restrictive. I hope that the Minister will listen to what the hon. Gentleman has just said on this point. A draft list put out to consultation would allow proper scrutiny and a debate on what was appropriate.

**Mr. Chaytor:** The hon. Gentleman makes his point extremely well. I am sure that the Minister will have listened carefully to it.

The hon. Member for Putney made a number of detailed points. She called for further clarification and raised questions about definition, all of which were important and many of which can be discussed further in Committee. My right hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Mr. Raynsford) drew two important points to the attention of the House. He mentioned the potential conflict of interest involved in dismantling the separation of powers, and the implications for the role of executive members. Parliament is not in a position to insist on an absolute separation of powers in local government because we ourselves do not have, and have never had, an absolute separation of powers. There is a case, however, in specific instances involving certain subjects of inquiry, for allowing executive members to be members of the scrutiny panels.

Furthermore, many local authorities are now revising the original model of scrutiny panels, which involved one executive committee and any number of scrutiny panels. They are setting up special sub-committees, special working parties and special task and finish groups. The expertise of an executive member on a specific task and finish group, which bears no relationship to his executive functions, could prove to be extremely useful. I accept completely, however, that this matter needs to be explored further. The question of district councils in two-tier areas was raised. I believe that there

[Mr. Chaytor]

is ample scope for those smaller district councils to work co-operatively with their county councils and to set up joint structures of one kind or another.

I thank all right hon. and hon. Members for their contributions to the debate, and I am grateful that the House has achieved this consensus. I look forward to the Bill's progress into Committee.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time; to stand committed to a Public Bill Committee (Standing Order No. 63).*

## Anti-Slavery Day Bill

### *Second Reading*

10.43 am

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (Totnes) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to raise a matter that I am sure will have the support of the whole House. I am grateful to see so many hon. Friends and hon. Members here today who have been enormously supportive of my campaign to draw attention to the extent of human trafficking in this country.

As I have a little time, I shall make a little speech. I hope that it will be helpful to the House to reflect that William Wilberforce headed the parliamentary campaign in this House against the British slave trade for 26 years before the Slave Trade Act was passed in 1807. His later campaign resulted in the Slavery Abolition Act 1833, which—it was thought—abolished slavery in most of the British empire. Today, however, more than twice as many people are in bondage around the world than were taken in chains during the entire 350 years of the African slave trade. Despite the abolition of slavery, modern forms of trading in human beings continue, whether for sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic slavery or organised crime.

It is impossible to gauge the numbers involved in human trafficking, because the crime takes place unseen and undetected. It is often not identified, or, in other cases, mis-identified. However, a conservative estimate puts the number of trafficked victims in the world at any one time at 800,000. That is the figure from the United Nations. We also know that human trafficking affects every region of the world, and that it generates tens of billions of dollars in profits for criminals each year. It is now apparently the second largest and second most lucrative criminal activity after drugs. It has jumped up the list, year after year.

In the United Kingdom, many thousands of individuals are bought and sold as commodities and forced into modern-day slavery. This is commonly known as human trafficking. A little later in my speech, I propose to tell the House of the devastating experience that I had yesterday, when I met a girl who had been trafficked into the UK and treated unbelievably badly. The experience is red hot in my memory, and I shall share it with the House in a moment. The Home Affairs Select Committee's report last year suggested that at least 100,000 people were trafficked into the EU each year. That figure is from the European Commission.

Today, in the UK, the majority of unidentified victims are women and girls. They come from poor, unstable countries where there are few opportunities for education or employment. Eastern Europe continues to be a fruitful source of women trafficked into this country. In fact, if we look at the map of Europe, we can see that the former communist countries of eastern Europe are the source countries of women and children coming into the more prosperous western countries. Denmark, Holland, Britain, France, Spain and Italy are the countries that receive these women from the source countries—Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and Moldova, among others.

The evidence of convicted traffickers suggests that the worst offenders in the trafficking business are Albanians, Romanians, Russians and those in the Balkans; they are in the lead in people trafficking. We might not get the numbers immediately, but they are considerable. We are talking about tens of thousands of traffickers who are part of this criminal network.

Trafficked children are highly vulnerable in their home country, as we have seen in Haiti recently, and they might already have been exploited and abused before they are targeted by traffickers. Victims can be deceived by false promises of opportunity or coerced into working in slave-like conditions. In some of the really poor eastern European countries, there is absolutely no work, no opportunity and no hope for many of the young people living there. I know this from my experience in Chernavoda in Romania, where the girls and boys leave school at 14 or 15, and there is nothing for them to do. The boys tend to become pimps, and the girls tend to be trafficked or become prostitutes. That is not a way of life that we would accept, but in towns and counties such as those—which have no opportunities, even though they are in the EU—the girls and boys have terrible lives at a very young age.

Some of the women I have met have been sold by their parents. I met a girl of 21 in Rome who had been sold by her parents to her uncle for £5,000 in Albania. She was on the streets in Rome at 16. I have met her, I know her and I know her problems. I have spoken to her through interpreters over many days. This is not an academic problem; it is very real. The street value for a 15-year-old girl, as long as she is a virgin, it is between £8,000 and £12,000—that is the money exchanged to buy somebody. The price of a woman goes down dramatically with age; when she reaches 30, she is worth only £500. These people are treated like second-hand cars; they are traded in the same way.

At a conservative estimate, at least 5,000 trafficked victims into the UK each year, and the Home Office states that approximately 360 children are trafficked into and within the UK each year. There are wild remarks about the figures really being as high as 25,000. There could be that number—we do not really know—but I suspect that the Home Office conservative estimate is probably more like it.

Women victims are forced to work—many against their will—in brothels, saunas, massage parlours and private houses; children, other than those who are sexually exploited, are, like Fagin's children, on the streets. As you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am fortunate enough to be involved in the parliamentary police scheme, which has allowed me to concentrate on seeing human trafficking first hand in London with the Met. In fact, I think that I am the oldest policeman on the street; I have been working in the off-the-street Marble Arch area and met a number of trafficked children.

Over the last two years, I have been on police raids and seen children at 6 o'clock in the morning who are just being prepared for their work during the day. Of 1,017 children, most are known to the police, many of them are under 10, so prosecutions cannot be launched. Some have been identified as shoplifters and pick-pockets—those are their tricks of the trade—but the biggest category is automated teller machine theft. I am told by the police superintendent in charge of the

Operation Roma—no, I mean Operation Golf, although it is concerned with Roma children—that a really clever child can earn traffickers up to £80,000 a year.

Forced labour on farms and the land is another category. This is just becoming a visible issue, thanks to the work of the UK Human Trafficking Centre, which the Home Office supports. It is also finding that large numbers of men involved in work similar to that of the Chinese cockle pickers are living in the most appalling dormitory-like conditions. They are paid virtually nothing, having been duped into believing that if they gave £3,000 or £5,000 to the traffickers, they would secure a very good job in Britain. Construction workers and those involved in the hospitality and care industries are other groups that are currently exempt from the Gangmaster Licensing Authority controls.

The number of women in domestic slavery continues to grow. Many hundreds are identified each year as suffering abuse. This is particularly true of those employed by foreign nationals in the consular service of their own country in the UK. The worst cases of abuse apply to those who are effectively held prisoner in their employer's home, receive no pay and are expected to be available seven days a week. What is particularly significant here is that all these domestic slaves have their passports removed. Many of them do not speak English. The idea of their escaping, which to us would be normal, is impossible for them even to contemplate. They are working in the homes of consular diplomats in Britain and are treated as slaves. As I say, their passports are removed—an issue I discussed with the Minister in connection with the all-party trafficking of women and children group; I would like to thank him for his sympathetic and understanding approach to this problem.

As an aside, anyone coming here as a domestic worker—one of the 18,500 people granted domestic visas every year—is able to move to another employer if the present employer treats them badly, but anyone working with a visa for the diplomatic or consular service cannot move. All they can do is go back home, which is difficult for people from third-world or poor countries or from some of the middle east countries because the problem is that if they go back, they then get marked as people who have fallen out with their consular service. Many girls in these circumstances are trapped in the kitchens of the consular service, living there seven days a week and having to sleep in the kitchen as well. The conditions are very bad.

Human traffickers use many physical and psychological techniques to control their victims, including the use of violence or threats of violence against the victim or the victim's family, leading to isolation from the public, isolation from the victim's family and the community. There is a language and cultural barrier; there is shame and control of the victim's possessions; and there are confiscations of passports, as I mentioned, and other identification documents. There are constant threats of arrest, deportation or imprisonment if the victim attempts to reach out for assistance or to leave.

Not all policemen are trained or are aware of the trafficking phenomenon. In this country, thanks to the rising profile of this issue, that understanding is getting better. This is one of the reasons why I believe we need a national anti-slavery day to make people more aware. In many countries of the world, particularly in eastern Europe, there is tremendous corruption among the

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

police and the border guards. Money is passing between gangs and the police and border guards, which makes it difficult for these trafficked people to get a sympathetic or responsible response from the authorities when they turn to them for help.

The POPPY project in London is a shelter project given considerable funding by the Home Office, to which I pay tribute for its foresight in this matter. It offers practical help towards that project. I have been greatly assisted by the Minister and his predecessors, as well as by non-governmental agencies that receive Government support. It is to their credit that much of the work of the all-party group has made such progress. Between March 2003 and April 2009, the POPPY project received 1,233 trafficked women—a large number—over the age of 18. The POPPY project does not take in any girl under 18; that is for the local authorities to deal with through their care home services. The POPPY project is a very professional and extremely skilled organisation. Although I have occasionally had one or two problems with it, I none the less recognise the invaluable help it gives to trafficked victims.

Not only has it dealt with 1,233 referrals of trafficked women over 18, but it has also dealt with 200 to 300 victims of trafficking for domestic slavery. The non-governmental organisation known as Kalayaan, to which I also pay tribute, is run by some dedicated younger people. Domestic slaves have been able to seek its help in coping with the terrible problems they have gained justice and recognition of how they are treated. I pay tribute again to Kalayaan and other NGOs for tackling domestic slavery and raising awareness of it.

POPPY has long-term Government funding for 54 safe accommodation beds for victims of sexual exploitation or domestic slavery. It is important to note that those beds are full. When I tried to get a girl trafficked for domestic slavery—this was a bad case—into POPPY, I was told that it was full. I would not have it; it managed to find an additional space. However, this is the only official body in London; none is officially established in other towns. If we established similar centres in other major cities, I am sure that they, too, would be full. There is a much bigger problem in this country than I would like to admit. It is going underground, so we will find it only if we provide shelters for these very unfortunate people. There is shortage of shelter in a country that has proved to become a magnet for traffickers.

ECPAT UK—End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children—co-ordinates a coalition working for the protection of children's rights, including Anti-Slavery International, Jubilee Campaign, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Save the Children UK, the Children's Society, UNICEF UK, and World Vision UK. According to ECPAT—which, incidentally, does very good work for the all-party group—about 60 per cent. of suspected child victims in local authority care go missing and are not subsequently found. Unlike POPPY, which caters for those over 18, local authority care homes cater for the under-18s. They have no security, because if bars were installed, those in charge would be accused of running a prison. Children go into the homes and then disappear. In May 2009, *The Guardian* disclosed that a report by the UK Borders Agency had revealed that

since March 2006 at least 77 trafficked children had gone missing from a home operated by the London borough of Hillingdon—presumably the Heathrow outlet.

I spent some time at Gatwick with the all-party group. I pay tribute to Lady Butler-Sloss, one of the vice-chairmen of the group, who accompanied me to Gatwick to study what was happening there. We found that the children who arrived at the airport from China, Vietnam and other countries were quite well trained. Many arrived without a passport. How had they got on to the plane at the other end? Either they had chewed the passport during the journey so that by the time they arrived at Gatwick there was no passport left, or they had put it down the loo. Alternatively, they had travelled via another country, and ended up not at Gatwick but at Bristol or Manchester.

These children then claim asylum. They cannot do much else. Once they have used the word “asylum”—if they do not speak another language—they are shunted into a children's home such as the one in Hillingdon, near Heathrow. They have a mobile phone, or they have been told where they will be going. The traffickers are very much ahead of the game, whereas we are really quite pedestrian.

Once the children have arrived at the home, they disappear within hours. Manchester's director of social work, who co-ordinates social workers, says that the pattern is well established. The social workers are in difficulties. They cannot apprehend the children, and, once they have gone missing, there is no track of them. No one knows who they are. They may come from China or Vietnam, and we know that the Vietnamese will end up managing cannabis factories, but there are many children in this country whose identity and whereabouts are unknown to us. They could have been murdered, and we would not even know.

Between 1 April and 31 December 2009, 527 potential victims of human trafficking were referred through what is known the national referral mechanism, a new mechanism established under the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings which provides a way of identifying trafficked people. That is done by the UK Border Agency and the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre. At least 145 of those referred between April and December were children. Since 1 April, accommodation and support has been provided for 68 people identified as victims of trafficking. Between 1 May 2004 and 22 October 2009, 118 people were convicted of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and seven were convicted of labour trafficking.

I do not think that those figures are good enough. What is the problem? The problem is that first the police must find victims, and then the victims must be prepared to give evidence against their traffickers, who have been brutal to them. The victims, however, fear that if they do give evidence, their families back home will be threatened. I shall describe a case history in a moment, because we have a little time—although I know we have not too much time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The traffickers do, in fact, threaten not only the mothers of the girls involved but, much more significant, their sisters and brothers.

Because the victims do not want to give evidence, the police cannot really prosecute. They certainly cannot prosecute for human trafficking. It is to the credit of the

Director of Public Prosecutions that he seems to be moving into the right gear. It has taken him some time, but I hope that he is now moving out of the first gear and into the second and third, because we need to speed things up. The traffickers need to be arrested, not just for trafficking but for all the other offences that they may be committing. We are very slow in this regard. Far more traffickers have been apprehended in Romania. Italy is particularly good, and Austria even better. If we are to make this country an unfriendly and unhelpful place for traffickers, as the Prime Minister has said repeatedly that he wishes to do, we must be much sharper about apprehending them and ensuring that judges give them really awful sentences, which they often do not do at present.

I recently visited a high-security prison in Bucharest. There were many hundreds of traffickers behind bars, both men and women. It is not only men who are traffickers. There is usually a man and his assistant, who is a woman. They are a unit—an item. The woman goes to prison so that the man can continue his work as a pimp or an organiser of trafficked people. I met a number of women in that prison who were doing time for the men with whom they were living.

Many eastern European countries, having thrown off the yoke of communism, went in quite the opposite direction. The free market and criminal gangs moved in quickly to seize new opportunities, and the police and the border agencies have become tied up with criminal mafiosa activity. Last August, an article in *The Times* reported the rise of systematic trafficking of children in the United Kingdom by foreign criminals to defraud the British benefit system. I was involved in identifying that activity when I accompanied the police on raids in east and north London. I wish they would not start so early in the morning!

During an operation in August, the police found evidence of one suspected crime involving more than £100,000, including a backdated cheque for £24,000 paid to a family by the Benefits Agency. In another case involving trafficked children, a gang is believed to have forged documents for the purpose of at least 500 claims worth £4.5 million. In all, some £300 million is thought to be involved in benefit frauds.

Let me explain how the system works. These people are European Union nationals. A couple will bring in perhaps three or four children claiming that they are theirs, sometimes with forged passports. Ultimately, eight to 11 children may be found living in the same house. A house that I visited during a police raid in east London conveyed no sense that it had been lived in other than by the nine or 10 children—in one instance, there were 12—sleeping on the floors with rugs, upstairs and downstairs. It was quite a Dickensian picture. They were ready to leave at a moment's notice, because they were aware that the police were circling.

We arrived soon after 6 am. Having lived under the communists, the people in the house were used to the arrival of authorities such as the police. They had all their documents, with them, beautifully prepared. There was not one possession that was not packed into a bag. It is likely that we had arrived the day before they were due to leave: such people move on constantly. We found letters from a fake company, probably Romanian or Bulgarian, inviting the “owner” of the children to work for him as a scrap metal dealer. Once he had been here for a year, he would be able to claim benefits for the

children. We took a number of children back to the station, along with their parents or, in some cases, their uncles and aunts.

If you go to Slough railway station first thing in the morning, you will see gangs of kids turning up and waiting for instructions. All these things are happening in this country, and they are visible to those who know where to look. Taken together, they form a picture which some of the more intelligent and interested police officers are identifying as the involvement of kids in human trafficking.

Thanks to the Minister and the Home Office, they are beginning to realise the significance of this, but their approach to it needs to be better focused.

To the escalating problem of children trafficking and benefit fraud, one must add what is happening in the cannabis trade. This problem is not peculiar to Britain, but we seem to be ahead of the game in recognising it. In Britain, we have Vietnamese children tending plants in terraced houses on the outskirts of our large towns. I do not want to mention specific areas of London, but this is happening in all the suburbs, in what look like normal houses. A couple who are part of a gang rent the house, paying cash. To anyone glancing through the front window, the interior looks like an ordinary drawing room, but upstairs there is a cannabis factory. They have ripped out the electrics and the water meters, and they have put in high wattage bulbs, so that the rooms are very hot, and in them, cannabis plants are being tended by young Vietnamese boys, who understand how to do so.

Let us talk about numbers. The first investigation into cannabis factories was undertaken in 2004, so we have known about this problem for about six years, and 850 factories were found. According to recent police intelligence, 2,200 cannabis factories have now been uncovered in Britain, and a sizeable number of Vietnamese boys have been rescued, and other people have been prosecuted. There are up to 300 cannabis factories in London alone. Every time the police raid one, another one pops up, and even the next-door neighbours do not know about it, because to them it merely appears that a nice Vietnamese couple are living quite normally in the adjacent suburban house.

Human trafficking is everywhere. It is not just in the cities. Let us consider the case of a 19-year-old Czech woman who was flown into Bristol airport believing she would work in a gym or a similar environment; she mentioned a four-star hotel in Paignton—I think we have only one of them. She came through immigration control at the airport perfectly legally, as she is from the Czech Republic. Someone collected her from the airport, and she then found herself in a small private brothel on the edge of my constituency in south Devon—as I have said, this is not just an inner-city problem. She was appalled to discover that she had been placed in this situation. That night, five men assaulted her. She tried to escape—she ran out at about 4 o'clock in the morning. It so happened that somewhere in Paignton was open at that time—a nightclub. The traffickers had chased her, but she grabbed hold of the bar and refused to move. Thanks to the responsible nature of the nightclub owner, the police were called.

We must give credit to the Devon and Cornwall constabulary. It is not used to handling trafficking cases, but it took this case on and dealt with it magnificently,

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arresting the two Czech women running the brothel. Nobody knew about its existence; it was in the constituency of the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Sanders), but he did not know about it either.

The girl agreed to give evidence against the traffickers, and she was returned to the Czech Republic. The police had to pay for that; because the Home Office will not cover such costs for an EU national, the police had to find the money out of their own funds. As she had agreed to give evidence, the two women who had been running the brothel agreed to plead guilty and were sentenced. However, although I mean no disrespect to the judge, I must say that he gave a really rather weak sentence. The judiciary, as well as the police, need to be trained to realise that trafficking is part of the scenery in this country and that it needs to be severely punished.

People trafficking is, in essence, about people being forced to do things against their will. Victims are deceived or duped into a situation that is not what it at first appeared to be. It is the criminal world misleading, using or exploiting the most vulnerable, the poorest and the most uneducated people for gain. It is all about pounds and euros. It is a wicked practice that people thought had died a death in the 1800s, when Wilberforce passed his legislation in this place. It has not died a death, however. There is now a new, more virulent, form of it in this country. That is confirmed by Home Office research, which estimates that the total social and economic cost of trafficking was £1 billion in 2003, so we are talking about a sizeable sum of money.

To combat human trafficking in the UK and globally, the British people, Parliament, local government, our other institutions and quangos, and the private as well as the public sector must be made aware of the realities of human trafficking and must be dedicated to stopping this contemporary manifestation of slavery. That is my principal purpose in proposing an anti-slavery day.

I do not want to speak for too long, but neither do I want to lose this opportunity to talk about this subject, as this may be one of my last speeches in this place. I want to give an account of a case I addressed yesterday with a firm of solicitors. It is an utterly horrific story that illustrates the points that I have been making. The name of the girl involved and her whereabouts will be kept secret, but I can say that she exists and she lives in London at a secret address. For the purposes of her story, I shall call her Gabriella. She was 20 when she was found, but she was trafficked from Moldova at 14. She was forced into prostitution at the age of 14, and did not finally escape until she was 20. She has been through so many horrific experiences in so many countries during that time that she cannot remember the exact dates and details of everything that happened.

When Gabriella was 14, she went for a picnic in the forest with her best friend and two older men in their late teens. When they were in the forest eating their picnic, Gabriella was very aware that the young men were using their mobile phones, and she overheard one saying, "We've got the girls here. When will you come and collect them?" When she tried to escape with her friend, she was hit against the side of her face; a piece of her ear is now clearly missing. They were going to rape her and her friend, but one of the men stopped that, saying they needed to remain virgins as they would

make better money. She lost consciousness when they hit her with a Sten gun, and when she woke up she was on the Romanian border. She was then driven by two men to a flat in Romania. She was too scared to speak—she was 14. She stayed overnight there. They were given dark clothes to wear. The two men were with them the whole time. They walked to another country, which she thinks was Hungary. They went across a river in an inflatable dinghy, blindfolded and with hands tied, and during the journey they were told to lie in the middle of the boat.

Gabriella was driven to an apartment; she is not sure where it was. There were five other girls there, one of whom spoke Russian, as does Gabriella. She did not understand why she was being talked to and looked at in the way that she was, but she realised this was a transit point for girls. There were 15 girls in the house, and the other people there were weighing up how much she might be worth. She spent a number of days in that flat, and then was told she would walk to Italy. She is not quite sure whether she was in Slovenia or another country, but they walked through another forest, and were picked up by a car. She was put in a lorry. She then arrived in Rimini, Italy, where she was sold to an Albanian. She was then taken to Milan, where she was sold to another Albanian, and she had to work on the streets of Milan between the ages of 14 and 16. She repeatedly tried to escape but was always apprehended.

Finally, the gang who caught her said, "To teach you a lesson, we're going to take out one of your front teeth with a pair of pliers." When I met her yesterday, I had already read about that, and the first thing I realised was that one of her front teeth was stuck back in place. They then threatened to murder her. They tied a rope up a tree and put the noose around her neck, and said, "If you try to escape again, we'll hang you." The girl that she had left the forest with—her 14-year-old friend—was murdered by the gang. Gabriella was sold to one gang and the girl was sold to another.

People may say, why do the parents not do anything? Gabriella's mother is poor—she comes from a backward agricultural community in Moldova. She went to the police, who laughed at her. We must realise that the police in many countries are corrupt. She was worried about the 10-year-old sister of Gabriella she is bringing up, and the son. There have been threats on the family, including the brother, who has now gone to Russia, and the other girl is living alone with her mother. The mother is desperately worried that that daughter will be threatened and taken away as well.

The story goes on, and it gets worse. Gabriella got pregnant, as happens in these cases. She could not look after the daughter she gave birth to—she does not know who the father is—who had to go back to the mother to be looked after. Gabriella kept trying to get back to Moldova, but whenever she went back there she was re-trafficked, which constantly happens. We talk about this issue in the House and to people in the field, and this case illustrates only too well why it is so important to bring people's attention to the appalling trafficking disease that has hit western countries.

Fortunately, Gabriella has been rescued. I pay tribute to the POPPY project and to her solicitors, who have been having problems. The Minister knows about this because I mentioned it to him earlier. The trouble is that the girl now has refugee status because of her harrowing

experiences, of which I have described only some—I have 20 pages of them. She has been rescued and is living secretly in a flat. She is so terrified that she will not come out of the flat. She is a most delightful person, on the face of it, but she is experiencing terrible psychological trauma. She is on the verge of suicide because she is desperate to see her daughter. She cannot go to Moldova to see her because she thinks she will be killed by these gangs.

The UK Border Agency, for which the Minister is responsible, has assured me that there is no problem at all with getting Gabriella's 6 or 7-year-old daughter into Britain, which is all Gabriella is living for. I got hold of the director of the UKBA last night, who assured me that it entirely agrees with my assessment: the child should be reunited with the mother as soon as possible. However, I was told that it was a matter for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This is the problem one constantly gets in this place. The FCO says it is ready to issue a one-way visa for the child to come to Britain. She needs a visa because she is a young child and cannot get a passport. The parents could not sign one, and in any case Gabriella is here.

So now, the FCO is involved, and I hope that the Minister, when he winds up on this very short debate, will say something about this case, which is one of the most horrific I have ever seen. From the age of 14, Gabriella has been bludgeoned by gangs. She has a chance of a new life here. She is an intelligent girl and I hope the Minister may feel that he can help in some way to reunite the family.

That was a little aside. I just wanted to mention this case to the House and why it is so important to have an anti-slavery day, so that it can be constantly remembered that we have modern-day slavery in this country.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Alan Haselhurst):** Order. As it is on the hon. Gentleman's own admission that what he has just said was an aside, I hope he will not encourage the Minister to go into that issue in detail, because this is hardly the proper occasion. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman very considerable scope in introducing what is in fact a specific Bill. The House has obviously been stunned, to some extent, by what he has had to say, but we ought now to be reaching the point of examining the prime purpose for which he is seeking to introduce this legislation.

**Mr. Steen:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is wonderful how both our minds were working in the same way. I can assure you that, at the very point that you stood up, I was just about to move on. I am most grateful for that guidance, which was entirely appropriate and I entirely accept what you say.

Although our Parliament has enacted good laws in the past 10 years to prosecute traffickers and to assist and protect victims of human trafficking—and, most recently, the Council of Europe convention on action against trafficking in human beings—we need to increase awareness of the issues surrounding human trafficking on the part of those most likely to come into contact with victims. This is essential for effective enforcement, because the techniques that traffickers use to keep their victims enslaved severely limits their self-respect.

Thanks to this Government—we must give them credit for what they have done—we have the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment

of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004, the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004, the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, the Policing and Crime Act 2009, and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. That is all good legislation to deter traffickers, but it has to be implemented, and the police and judiciary are now important in dealing with this problem. Collectively, these laws were passed to criminalise the trafficking of human beings in the UK, reduce the likelihood of exploitation of others and make it possible to recover profits gained as a result of criminal activity.

The UK signed the Council of Europe convention on action against trafficking in human beings on 23 March 2007, ratified it on 17 December 2008 and implemented it recently. We are one of 26 countries that have ratified and implemented the convention. It is the first legally binding regional European treaty on human trafficking. The convention recognises trafficking in human beings as a major human rights issue and seeks to strengthen the legal protection afforded to victims.

On 23 March 2007—the same day that the UK signed the convention—the Government published their first UK action plan on tackling human trafficking. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Coaker), who was then the Minister with responsibility for such issues, who for three or four years pushed, along with the all-party group on the trafficking of women and children, for new legislation and action. His work was untiring and excellent. The aim of the action plan was to highlight current work on human trafficking across all Government agencies, identify gaps in existing work and outline future plans. However, it is not enough to sit back and rest on our laurels. Just as we have a salt awareness week to alert the public to the dangers of a high-sodium diet, an annual human trafficking awareness day would alert the public to the horrors of the modern-day slave trade, which they would not normally think about.

All of us here think in terms of political expediency and what needs to be done. If one mentions this issue to a taxi driver or a builder, he may have an idea of what human trafficking is in the back of his mind. With the problems in Haiti in our minds and on the news, he will have an idea of what human trafficking is. However, we desperately need to be reminded regularly of these issues, and regularly to identify for young people and others the dangers that exist.

The Government could say that there is already an international day to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, an international day for the remembrance of the slave trade and its abolition, and an international day for the abolition of slavery, but I know they will not. All those days are very unspecific and not well established. The important thing is to let men, women and children know that modern-day slavery exists here in Britain and needs to be stamped out. We must reinforce the focus and understanding of the public. Slavery did not disappear when Wilberforce passed his legislation through this House. That is why we need an annual anti-slavery day.

A national anti-slavery day would continue to draw attention to the evils of human trafficking post-Wilberforce and how it is manifesting itself in British society. We would not be the first country to establish a day of awareness of human trafficking and modern-day slavery; the United States has already done this. In June 2007, the US Senate passed a resolution establishing a national

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day of human trafficking awareness on 11 January each year. The aim of the day is to raise awareness of and opposition to human trafficking and modern-day slavery, both domestically and across the globe. Various events are organised each year in the US on that day, including public debates, press conferences and a film screening, along with news items and media reports. It strikes me that 11 January is a good day to choose, as it is during the school term, but my Bill suggests that the Secretary of State should determine which date is used—I did not try to fix the date in concrete at this stage.

Similarly, schools in Britain could be encouraged to incorporate this topic into their curriculum to raise awareness among students. That would encourage teachers to receive special training to help their students learn about modern-day slavery in a sensitive and engaging way. Specialist training would also be a priority for social workers and the police, so they could develop expertise in the area and play an instrumental role in raising awareness among local communities. Thus, people across the board would start waking up; just as Holocaust memorial day was held earlier this week, so we would have a day to raise awareness of slavery, modern-day slavery and human trafficking. The efforts made by individuals, business, organisations, educational institutions and governing bodies to promote the observance of an anti-slavery day each year would represent one of the many examples of an ongoing commitment in the UK to raise awareness of human trafficking and to oppose such trafficking actively.

In December 2009—just two months ago—the US Senate approved a resolution to establish a national slavery and trafficking prevention month in January. The month-long observance is intended to enhance the fight against human trafficking. Given that the United States and the United Kingdom were the two main drivers behind the transatlantic slave trade, it would be fitting if they had the same anti-slavery awareness day. It would also be a fitting tribute to this Government's commitment to making Britain a hostile environment for traffickers.

We have been subject to increasing media coverage of serious aspects of human trafficking; most recently, there has been much about Haiti and the risks of children going missing there. I raised the matter at Prime Minister's questions on 27 January. There has also been widespread coverage of the risks taken by well-intentioned individuals who rented a bus to rescue Haitian children and attempted to bring them into the Dominican Republic and establish an orphanage. Films have been made about Roma children and about girls who have been brought from eastern Europe and the far east and forced into prostitution. A couple of weeks back, *The Times 2* did a feature on domestic slavery and the problems that domestic workers face when they work in this country. Incidentally, I am sponsoring an exhibition, with the all-party group, that will be held in the hall upstairs on 22 January. It will be opened by the Home Secretary and will identify the problems caused by human trafficking.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. That appears to be a form of product placement, so perhaps we should move on.

**Mr. Steen:** I am on my last paragraph, so I thought that I might just get that in.

By far the largest number of people trafficked into the UK may well be trafficked for forced labour. The UK Human Trafficking Centre is already making progress to highlight the extent of the problem in the agricultural sector. As the Gangmasters Licensing Authority is also involved in that work, there is a strong case for widening the remit of the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 to include the hospitality, construction, and care industries—those very important areas are often forgotten.

In the past three years, Britain has moved from behind the pack—the other EU countries—in tackling human trafficking to the head of the pack. Unfortunately, the problem of human trafficking is growing. It is the modern version of slavery, and it is virulent. Declaring a national awareness day would be the best way of recognising that evil for what it is. We could lead with our European partners, and I hope that we can complete the work that William Wilberforce rose in this very building to begin more than 200 years ago, as the majority mistakenly believe the illusion that slavery has all but disappeared.

I am sure that you will be interested to learn, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Inter-Parliamentary Union is holding a conference on this very issue for parliamentarians beginning on 22 February. Parliamentarians from all over Europe who are committed to and interested in this matter, many of whom I have visited in their countries, will be coming to the IPU to discuss and debate how they can work much better together. I believe that I have covered the matter and that the House will understand what I am trying to say. If I cannot say it in 50 minutes, there is not much point in my carrying on speaking for much longer, so I merely say that I commend this first-rate Bill to my colleagues.

11.34 am

**Mr. Andrew Dismore** (Hendon) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen) on introducing his Bill. As he knows, I am one of its supporters. I also congratulate him on his speech. For a moment, I thought he was going after my record for the time taken in setting out one's arguments, but I am pleased to be able to say that he did not break it—he was quite a long way short.

I also congratulate the hon. Gentleman's all-party group on the work that it is doing and has done. It works in parallel with my Joint Committee on Human Rights, which has taken a particular interest in the issue of trafficking. Only last week, we had an evidence session with the Minister to follow up on our previous reports on the issue. A number of points arose from that, but I shall not go into them today because that would involve straying from the text of the Bill. As the hon. Gentleman mentioned William Wilberforce, I should say that he lived in what is now my constituency and founded my local church, so I have a particular constituency interest in seeing how this all progresses.

I have a problem with part of the text of the Bill, specifically the references to “modern-day slavery” and “taking the place of the trans-Atlantic slave trade”.

The hon. Gentleman will know that, like him, I have attended IPU events to discuss trafficking. The phrase “modern-day slavery” is not really accepted by a number of the countries in Africa, which find it an offensive comparison with the old slave trade. Assuming that the

Bill goes into Committee—I hope that it will—I urge him to consider whether he could remove that phrase because it is not needed to make the point about trafficking. If he were to do so, we would be left with a much more consensual Bill, particularly given how many people from Africa live in our country and who might otherwise feel offended.

On the other reference, the hon. Gentleman has explained at length that his Bill deals with the modern problem of trafficking, which, as he said, is a worldwide one. He has mentioned the trafficking of children from Vietnam in order to grow cannabis in factories and the problem of young women who are trafficked from eastern Europe to work in the sex trade. None of those things relates in any way, shape or form to the transatlantic slave trade. Equally, he knows as well as I do that people are trafficked not only into the UK, the US or even Europe, but throughout the world. As he said, trafficking is the second biggest criminal activity after the drugs trade. Thus, not only might people with an African heritage find the comparison in the simple reference to the transatlantic slave trade a little insulting, because they are very sensitive about that issue, but the reference does not get across what the Bill is actually about, which is to highlight the worldwide nature of the problem. The comparison between what happened in the 18th and 19th centuries with what is happening now is not really one we should have in this Bill.

**Mr. Steen:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that comment, so may I ask his advice? He is one of the sponsors of the Bill, so he supports it. Given that we wish to expedite its progress, does he agree that the reference could be removed in the other place or on Report? That would avoid our delaying the Bill's progress in this place.

**Mr. Dismore:** That is a difficult issue, because it is important to ensure that Bills leave this House in as good a shape as possible. I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but I hope we will have time to put that right here because he is quite well up the batting order. I leave the Minister to discuss further the possibilities in that regard. I think the hon. Gentleman accepts that the Bill is not perfect on those two points.

**Mr. Steen:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be unfortunate if that particular point, important though it is, were to impede the Bill's becoming law? This opportunity may not be repeated.

**Mr. Dismore:** To that extent, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. That brings me to my second point, because I support the principles behind the Bill and the Bill itself.

I wish to remind the hon. Gentleman of my experience when I introduced my Holocaust Remembrance Day Bill some 11 years ago, on which, in many ways, I suppose his Bill is modelled. I produced the Bill after a visit to Auschwitz. I came back wondering what I could do to sort this out. Given what he has been saying, it would appear that he has had a similar experience in respect of trafficking: he is very exercised about the issue, as I hope we all are, and he thus wants to do something about it and his Bill is a way of achieving that. I moved Second Reading and I raised the matter with the Prime Minister of the day, Tony Blair. In response to a parliamentary question, he said he thought

it was a good idea and all the doors unlocked. The Home Office, which had previously been a little reticent, suddenly became extremely enthusiastic—I cannot understand why. In the end, we did not need the Bill to establish Holocaust memorial day. I think that everybody in the House accepts, or, at least, I hope they do, that that national commemoration has been a great success—we had the 10th only the other week—not only as a commemoration but in the way it has spread awareness of the issues of the holocaust throughout the country.

I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that he might not need a Bill or an Act to achieve what he wants to achieve. The naming of the day is not important; what is important is the Government's commitment to making the things happen that need to happen to make it a success. The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the three other similar day-type commemorations, and I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister for Borders and Immigration replies to the debate we can consider bringing those together in one form of commemoration and education under the Government's auspices with their commitment to making it a success. The hon. Gentleman does not need legislation for that; he needs commitment. Even if the Bill is passed in its present form or in a slightly amended form, it does not necessarily mean that anything will happen other than a little name will appear in everybody's diaries. We have to have commitment to make that happen—commitment from the Government, local government, voluntary bodies, schools and everybody else, and that needs a strong lead from the Government.

**Mr. Steen:** There is nothing between us; we are agreed on this. But there is a difference. We have a Holocaust memorial day that has focused public attention—let us remember that we sign the book downstairs. This is an opportunity to say, “We don't like the title,” “We don't like this,” or “We don't like that.” We have an advantage—and it is a very small window of advantage—and an opportunity today, I believe, to push for the identification of a day a year to focus on this issue, although of course the Secretary of State would decide the day. If we lose this opportunity, another will not come along for a very long time, if at all. It is a question of which is better on balance: to have something that is not perfect or to have nothing. I suggest to the hon. Gentleman, in view of his sponsorship of this Bill, that he would not wish it to founder.

**Mr. Dismore:** Yes, I am a sponsor of the hon. Gentleman's Bill and I do not particularly want it to founder. However, I have explained that I think the Bill is a tool to make something happen, just as the Holocaust Remembrance Day Bill was a tool to make something happen. In the end, we did not need the legislation, because the Government took it on, with all-party support, and now Holocaust memorial day is well established. I hope that the hon. Gentleman sees this Bill as a tool that can be used to make something happen.

We were a lot more advanced in the debate on Holocaust memorial day: we had signed up all the constituent parts of the argument, identified the day—which was somewhat controversial at the time—and, using the Bill as a tool, we were able to make it happen. I hope the hon. Gentleman will see that his Bill does not necessarily have to become an Act, but can be used as a tool to ensure that things happen in the same way.

**Mr. Steen:** I have nothing against that, except I will not be here to see it happen. Bearing in mind the time and the fact that his Bill follows mine, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give the Bill a chance to be pushed through, even if it founders somewhere else, and used as a vehicle in the way that he has been thinking. However, if it does not move on today to the other place, it will not be a vehicle, because it will not have any leverage.

**Mr. Dismore:** I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman has in mind, but I think I have made my point. In fact, I was about to sit down, but I thought that he would like to get his intervention in.

I approve of the concept of an anti-slavery day, but there are problems with the text. If the Bill does not become law or if the Government are not prepared to support it, I hope that the Government will give the concept, at least, their blessing and, at the same time, see what they can do to show the Government's commitment to tackling these issues.

11.43 am

**Matthew Taylor** (Truro and St. Austell) (LD): I greatly welcome the work of the hon. Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen). He has a long-established reputation and is held in high regard in this House, and in his speech he was able to talk at length about the issues and the work that he has done in this connection. It is worth saying that it commands enormous cross-party support and respect and the hon. Gentleman has done us a real service.

Whether through the Bill or simply because the issue has been raised, I hope that the Government will act. There are two big points to make. First, although the hon. Gentleman did not dwell on it, this country has every reason to be proud of its history on this issue. This House, in particular, has every reason to be proud of its history. All of us who count ourselves as progressives—I think the hon. Gentleman would be one of them—can claim some credit for progressives in this place in the past, who challenged established views and succeeded in the anti-slavery legislation.

**Mr. Steen:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the generous things he has said; I am most grateful to him. The fact is that Britain led the world on the anti-slavery legislation. On human trafficking, we were quite slow, compared with other European countries, to realise what was happening. We have caught up. The Government have consistently had good Ministers in the Home Office who were committed to doing something and they have done as much as they can. This is what is needed now and it is an opportunity for Britain to take the lead again in the EU. That is why I am concerned that we should not lose that opportunity.

**Matthew Taylor:** The hon. Gentleman intervened just as I was about to turn to the present. He made his point very clearly, and he is right. There is a desperate need to awaken people's consciences to what is going on. The Government have made huge strides in this regard, but, as the hon. Gentleman made clear, there is more to be done. Tackling the issue will be done best if people are aware of it, because the problem is often in the house next door or the flat across the road. Making people aware of the issue, and getting them to report it and no

longer turn a blind eye to it, is how we will effectively overcome it. That is all I want to say and that is why I believe that the hon. Gentleman's proposal is a good one.

11.46 am

**Damian Green** (Ashford) (Con): It is, indeed, a pleasure to rise in support of the Bill proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen). I congratulate him not only on his powerful and compelling speech, but on his exemplary use of an all-party group to pursue an important campaign. I wish the Bill well.

I found it unique and slightly surreal that the only objection to the Bill so far has come from one of its sponsors. That is made more surreal by the fact that I might have thought that the hon. Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) was doing what he often does on a Friday morning, and extending the debate in a creative way, but I looked at the Order Paper and discovered that the next Bill for consideration is from the hon. Gentleman. I am not entirely sure what his contribution was designed to achieve.

I want to make it clear that the Opposition support my hon. Friend's Bill. It is an important initiative that is aimed at raising public awareness. As has been said by several hon. Members so far, this is not a problem of inner cities and of big cities. It is now a problem that unexpectedly affects every community—or many communities—in this country. I know that it is a problem in my constituency, which is not the sort of area where one would expect to find this sort of problem. I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing the Bill, which takes a significant step with no apparent public spending commitment, which is not only admirable but extremely sensible.

**Mr. Steen:** I assure the House that no public expenditure whatever is intended. It will be up to organisations and institutions in this country to decide how they wish to recognise modern-day slavery. That is what the Bill seeks to do, along the lines of what has been done in the United States, where the whole month of January is dedicated to the issue. I am suggesting only one day, and I suggest that the Secretary of State would name that day. It would give a focus to the issue, and I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for acknowledging that it is needed.

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend makes his point. It is important to have a day devoted to increasing public knowledge and awareness that slavery and human trafficking are a contemporary problem, not simply something that people read about in history books.

I hope that the House can pass the Bill because, this week of all weeks, it is important for the House to be seen to be doing something useful, relevant, creative and constructive. Conservative Members are wholeheartedly committed to the cessation of the modern slave trade and, along with many of the things that my hon. Friend has already said, we have proposed an integrated and coherent strategy to achieve that. The hon. Member for Hendon made a few remarks about whether modern-day slavery is the appropriate phrase to use, but clearly human trafficking is the modern form of slavery, and it is deeply depressing that it is becoming so prevalent 200 years after William Wilberforce famously succeeded in beginning the abolition of the slave trade in this country.

Human trafficking is a particularly serious problem for this country. The Minister and I spend much of our time arguing about our lax border controls, but clearly Britain is not just a target country for human traffickers; it is also a transit country. My hon. Friend the Member for Totnes made the point that the international trafficking trade, which the UN estimates affects about 800,000 people a year, is now the second-biggest international crime, after the drugs trade. One fact that my hon. Friend did not mention, which I find equally depressing, is that it is the fastest growing of the big international crimes. Drugs, guns and people are trafficked around the world by some of the world's most unpleasant and organised criminals, and of those three horrors human trafficking is growing the fastest and will, if things carry on as they are, become the biggest international crime.

**Mr. Steen:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the other items, arms trading and drug trafficking, do not involve human life? This is the one crime that human beings are subject to. They are treated in the most appalling and despicable way—not much different from how they were treated under the old slave trade. This is modern slavery; I am afraid that it has not yet been abolished.

**Damian Green:** I do not want to try to establish moral distinctions between three particularly unpleasant crimes, but my hon. Friend is right. This is the nearest thing that we have to the old slave trade. Anyone who has grown up during the past 50 years will read the history books with horror, wondering how people could have treated other human beings like that as recently as 200 years ago, but sadly and depressingly we come to the conclusion that they are still doing that now. That is a horrific fact on which we need to reflect.

I am glad that my hon. Friend made the point that human trafficking is not simply to do with sexual exploitation—it is wider than that and includes labour exploitation—because it is important that we do not get sidetracked into a debate about prostitution. Clearly there are hugely important debates to be had about that, and a significant amount of human trafficking is for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but the trade is more than that. Labour exploitation should be regarded as equally important, particularly as it affects children. I do not want to repeat many of the things that have already been said in the debate, but many of us will find it particularly appalling that a large and apparently growing number of children are trafficked. The physical mistreatment that is often part of the trafficking process seems particularly disgusting. Many of the victims are lured under the false pretence of more favourable work or pay and made financially dependent on arrival.

My hon. Friend mentioned the terrible case of Gabriella, whom he met yesterday. I am sure that Members will have heard similar examples. There is one of a woman in her early 20s, who we shall call Suzanne, from Lithuania, who after the death of her husband was offered a job in London by two Lithuanian men. They said that it would enable her to better provide for her two children. Escorted by one of the men, she flew to London, where she was met by two other Lithuanians who were already living here. They took her to a flat where she was locked up and forced to have sex with up to 10 men a day. Her pimps kept all the money, claiming £10,000 was owed to their boss for bringing her to the UK and for her living

costs. After four months, she became pregnant. I regret to say that that is the routine sort of story that one hears in this field.

As I say, young women are affected, but so too are children. In introducing his Bill, my hon. Friend talked about the problems of children's homes. I draw to the attention of the Minister and the House the problems of the homes in the London borough of Hillingdon. No blame at all attaches to the local authority, because we cannot make those children's homes secure unless we make them prisons, and none of us wants to do that. It has been identified that since 2006, more than 70 Chinese children have gone missing from a home there; obviously, it is close to Heathrow. Only four have been found—two girls returned after a year of exploitation in brothels in the midlands. One was pregnant, while the other had been surgically fitted with a contraceptive device in her arm. We seem to know that the absconding is straightforwardly at the facilitation of organised crime groups.

**The Minister for Borders and Immigration (Mr. Phil Woolas):** On the problems of Hillingdon, I have met the leadership of the council and its senior officers, and we believe there is more that we can do together. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the cross-party approach that his party is taking on the issue. We clearly need to help Hillingdon, and we intend to do so.

**Damian Green:** I am grateful to the Minister for those remarks. Of course, the approach is not just cross-party, as he will be well aware. Hillingdon and Kent are the two local authorities most exposed to the problem of unaccompanied children. Indeed, one of the new centres for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is in my constituency—I visited it recently—so wearing almost every hat that I have, I am deeply concerned about the issue. Those local authorities that have to grapple with the matter have serious problems funding and organising all the arrangements for unaccompanied children, and having international criminal gangs trying to exploit and take away those children is clearly an enormous difficulty.

In this country, exploitation of labour is common in agriculture, construction, domestic cleaning, contract cleaning and the care sector. We all know the more tragic examples of what happens as a result of that kind of labour exploitation: there were the Chinese cockle pickers who died in Morecambe bay and the lorryful of Chinese workers who suffocated in Folkestone. We also know that something like 60 per cent. of illegal immigrants arrive in the UK by illegal means, the majority in the backs of lorries. Many of them will have paid huge sums of money to agents—up to £22,000—and many of them are forced into debt bondage, are kept in appalling conditions and are victims of organised criminal gangs.

Terribly, even in those conditions, many of those people prefer to be here than in their home country, because their life in their country was even worse than the life that they are forced to live here. We have to accept that as an issue. Incredibly perversely, many of them prefer to be illegal workers. In an evidence session for a previous immigration Bill, Jack Dromey said that his union had found evidence of Portuguese workers—who could, of course, have come here perfectly legally—pretending to be Brazilians and operating under false

[Damian Green]

Brazilian passports, because that way, they could work illegally, take jobs at below the minimum wage and allow themselves to be exploited. They thought that it was easier to get work that way. One can see the depths of the perverse effects.

Many of these victims are unwittingly involved in organised crime. We know that there are many crimes associated with human trafficking, including the employment of illegal immigrants, drug crimes and money laundering, as well as prostitution and child abuse. I expect the Minister would agree that we need to ensure that campaigns such as the cross-borders Blue Blindfold campaign continue to help raise awareness of this despicable trade, as the Bill would do.

We on the Conservative Benches have previously urged the Government to focus on the countries of origin. We were pleased to see a mention of that in the millennium goals. In introducing the Bill, my hon. Friend mentioned what happens in the countries of origin. It is clear that prevention work in such countries will be hugely valuable as part of the long-term package of measures that we need to take to combat human trafficking.

We were pleased when the Government responded to pressure from us and others and signed up to the European convention on trafficking in human beings. We know that that is not just a UK problem. It is one for the whole of Europe, and we can learn a great deal from studying the work done in other countries, particularly Austria and Italy, which have shown some creative thought in this area.

An important development that has not been mentioned was the formation of the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre. The existence of one central point of information on trafficking has clearly been valuable to police forces, the Crown Prosecution Service and other agencies. The existence of the UKHTC demonstrates the importance of specialisation when tackling new and growing types of crime. I hope that expertise does not disappear in the future.

**Mr. Steen:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Damian Green:** I know that I am slightly more enthusiastic about the UK Human Trafficking Centre than is my hon. Friend. I wondered how long it would take him to respond.

**Mr. Steen:** I visited the UK Human Trafficking Centre with the Joint Committee on Human Rights. If the centre co-ordinates statutory organisations, gets statistics and provides information, we should support it, but we should not forget the non-governmental agencies, which receive little or no help from the Government, other than the POPPY project. Bearing in mind that £1.8 million goes to the Human Trafficking Centre, does my hon. Friend agree that a similar sum should go to the non-governmental organisations who do such amazing work in victim protection?

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend has just broken the covenant whereby he was not going to ask for more public spending—[*Interruption.*] He says from a sedentary position, “Get rid of the UK Human Trafficking Centre.”

I do not agree. The UKHTC does good work and it would be short-sighted to shut it. I take his point that some of the NGOs are clearly doing valuable work as well.

I have some concerns about the current action plan because there appear to be problems with the national referral mechanism at a local level. I hope the Minister would agree that better information needs to be provided to local authorities and police forces so that they are aware of the problem, better able to identify victims and confident in using the mechanism.

The figures show the scale of the problem. In October 2008 the Government published an assessment stating that 360 children were trafficked into and within the UK each year, but only 57 under-18s were referred to the national referral mechanism as suspected victims of human trafficking last year, out of a total of 527 referrals. In the five years to 2009, 452 people were arrested for human trafficking offences, but fewer than a quarter, only 110, were convicted. Those figures are worrying.

One important area that is often neglected is trafficking for forced labour. In 2008 there were only four convictions for trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, despite the problems that we know about in relation to organised immigration crime. As a country, we could do much better at cracking down on rogue employers. That is why we differ from the Government on a series of proposals about better border policing.

We have made a number of suggestions: instructing immigration officials to check the date of the return ticket of the adult accompanying minors and look for discrepancies; better work with countries of origin to help reintegrate victims, prevent the re-trafficking that my hon. Friend mentioned and educate potential victims; more robust law enforcement to bring to justice more traffickers and employers of forced labour; and better co-operation with the national authorities of other countries within Europol and Eurojust.

All those measures would be useful, but our most important defence against human trafficking is our own borders, and we suggest replacing ad hoc police operations by mainstreaming trafficking as a police priority through a national border police force. The Government’s failure to tackle the problems at our borders has resulted in a disastrous rise in organised immigration crime, and the Conservative party believes that we cannot tackle crime in the UK effectively without addressing the problems at our borders. They could be better policed, and we could prevent significant illegal immigration while cracking down on the trafficking of people and, indeed, weapons and drugs.

We believe that the specialisation of police services is most effective in fighting those new crimes, and that is why we commissioned Lord Stevens to conduct a review of our border security. We conclude, with him, that only a unified force can best protect our borders, so an incoming Conservative Government would make setting up a national border police force one of their priorities. We want to replace the current system, which, as we have seen over the past few years, lacks a comprehensive, joined-up strategy. That significant practical measure would improve the protection of our borders generally, and give us a better weapon in the fight against human trafficking, specifically.

Many measures can be taken, however, and my hon. Friend's Bill, which would significantly improve public awareness of the problem, would be another significant and welcome step forward. I am therefore very happy to support it, because we need to ensure that Britain once again leads the way in fighting slavery. We need to continue Wilberforce's work, so that this new slavery is eradicated as soon as possible.

12.7 pm

**Mr. John Randall (Uxbridge) (Con):** I shall be brief, because I am anxious for this and the following business to be discussed. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen) for his work on these issues. He has talked to me about many of them for some considerable time, and he has opened my eyes to a very serious issue; occasionally he has caused them to close after a very lengthy discussion, but mostly he has opened them.

We all think that my hon. Friend's proposed day will raise awareness of this incredibly important and serious issue, which many people are not as aware of as they should be: we had the 200th anniversary celebrations of Wilberforce's Act, and most people think that slavery is long gone. I pay tribute once more to my hon. Friend for his work. The House will lose a doughty crusader on this issue, and I hope that he will—indeed, I urge him to—continue that work wherever he finds himself.

12.8 pm

**The Minister for Borders and Immigration (Mr. Phil Woolas):** I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen) on bringing this Bill to the House as the latest stage of his important campaign to focus attention on awareness of, and action against, human trafficking. He said that his speech today might be one of his last in this place, but I hope that it is not, because we benefit from his knowledge. Today he has brought to the House the benefit of what a comprehensive, campaigning Member of Parliament can do, and I am thinking not only of the hon. Gentleman's time in the House.

In preparation for this debate, I have been reading the current edition of *The House Magazine*, No. 1330 volume 35. There is a profile of the hon. Gentleman that is very relevant to the Bill. It is headed "Pioneering spirit not extinguished", and that sums things up rather well. He informs the House, through the magazine, of his intention to continue in this place working on this campaign, albeit in a different capacity. I congratulate him on that and wish him well; with a long career behind him, he has, I hope, many years ahead of him to campaign on this issue.

The hon. Gentleman did not explain his Bill in the legalistic jargon that we sometimes hear; I am probably as guilty of that as others. He expressed himself in very human terms, which my constituents would understand, as he related the human stories behind the issue. I suspect that he shares my burning frustration at the fact that the Press Gallery is vacant this morning. There are some stories that the public need to know about, and it is sad that it is left to just a few journalists to bring attention to them. People say that this place is not relevant, but they ought to listen to or report our debates on these issues. Unless I say something sensational, I doubt whether this debate will be reported; I think the hon. Gentleman knows what I am referring to.

The House is extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing this subject to our attention and for the work of the all-party group on the trafficking of women and children, many of whose members are sponsoring the Bill. I know that there was a recent meeting about consular domestic workers, an issue that the hon. Gentleman has raised today.

Obviously, the Government have been giving consideration to the hon. Gentleman's proposal that the United Kingdom should introduce a national day of awareness about human trafficking and slavery. The Bill lays out its purpose clearly, and that purpose can be supported. The provisions in clause 1(2)(a) to (c) lay the purpose out. My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) made reference to how they might be interpreted.

I should say at the start that the Government will not oppose the Bill; we think that it is for the House to decide whether it is appropriate that there should be a statutory anti-slavery day. Should the House move the Bill on to the next stages, we will offer the services of parliamentary counsel to address some of the concerns identified as we considered the Bill in Whitehall.

I know that I am not meant to read out the brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I will on this occasion, as it will be helpful. It raises some of the concerns about wording, the usual advice on meaning—particularly about words such as "proactive"—and concerns about presentational issues, to which the hon. Gentleman himself referred, in relation to the existing European Union anti-trafficking day and the UNESCO day on slavery. The brief also refers to how and why this day, as opposed to other days, needs statutory backing. Armistice day has no statutory backing, but I guess that the House would say that it does not need it; no Government would want not to focus resources on it.

That, however, is a matter for the House. Should the Bill get to the next stages, we will offer the services of parliamentary counsel. I hope that that is taken in the spirit of helpfulness in which it is intended. It is always a good idea to read out the brief when it is intended to be helpful.

We therefore support the principle behind the Bill. Its stated purpose is to point out that

"modern-day slavery is taking the place of the trans-Atlantic slave trade".

I understand that point, although my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon made us aware of a concern that some communities may have. The fact is that, as the Bill states,

"millions of men, women and children continue to be victims of modern-day slavery, depriving them of basic human dignity and freedom",

That is taking place within the European Union, which is of particular concern.

**Mr. Steen:** The issue is simple. If we stopped people in the street today and talked about human trafficking, a great number of them would not know what we were talking about and a great number more would say, "Oh, it all finished years ago." In other European countries, ideas are even vaguer. The whole approach in Europe, starting here today, should be that we are not going to have modern-day slavery. What Wilberforce did in the 19th century is what we need to do in the 21st, and we

[Mr. Steen]

must apply it to a new kind of slavery involving human beings who are victimised, treated cruelly and abused for the sake of money for the traffickers. We have to do that today. Parliamentary draftsmen, for all they are worth, will find a reason to make the Bill meaningless, so we must not necessarily take all their advice.

**Mr. Woolas:** I take the hon. Gentleman's point about parliamentary draftsmen. They are very helpful to Ministers and we could not do without them, but his point is strong. I should explain that the lead responsibility for the matter in the Home Office rests with the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Campbell), but of course we work extremely closely together, particularly because the UK Border Agency works with police forces. I shall return to the debate between the hon. Member for Ashford (Damian Green) and myself about the desirability or otherwise of a specific police force within UKBA, but the work that we are doing benefits from a partnership approach.

The Bill mentions the particular desirability of raising awareness among young people, which is very important. I share the views of the hon. Member for Totnes about the lack of awareness. The views that he described were my own misunderstanding before I took the job, and before I undertook research into the matter as a private citizen after the exhibition that the POPPY project held last year. As a father, let alone as a member of the public, I was horrified by the depth and breadth of trafficking. Of course, one could say that even if only one person was trafficked, they would deserve the action that we are trying to take.

Helpfully and in a non-partisan way, the Bill attempts to put into statute the desirability of drawing attention to

“the progress made by government and those working to combat all forms of modern-day slavery”,

and it is good for Parliament to make that point. Perhaps it would be helpful if I briefly outlined the work that we are doing in that regard. Central to our approach has been the desirability of reconciling the various objectives of enforcing the laws against traffickers, preventing illegal immigration, which is often associated with trafficking, and protecting victims. That approach was commended by the House through the Joint Committee on Human Rights in its 26th report of the 2005-06 Session. It is worth quoting that report, which stated:

“We are encouraged by our further belief that the Government is also committed to achieving the best possible balance in its overall policy to combat trafficking, grounding that policy in human rights standards, and has an open mind about how this can best be achieved.”

In 2007, the year of the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, we published the first UK action plan, which was updated most recently in October 2009, as the hon. Member for Totnes knows. That coincided with the European Union's anti-trafficking day, which is held on 18 October each year, as hon. Members have said. In addition to the action plan, we also issued a publicity leaflet for victims of trafficking and advice for practitioners, to ensure as far as possible that the voluntary and statutory agencies are singing from the same hymn sheet. On the same day the Under-Secretary of State,

my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth, who has responsibility for crime reduction, spoke on the issue in Brussels, outlining the work undertaken by the UK in contributing to the European effort.

The plan looks at the issue from end to end—from the source of the pipeline, if I can use that phrase, to the experience of the victim at the end of it. The hon. Gentleman has explained the circular nature of the problem, given the pressure put on victims through threats to their families in their home countries. The plan takes an end-to-end approach and focuses on four key areas: prevention; investigation, enforcement and prosecution; providing protection to adult victims; and providing protection to child victims. Let me look briefly at each.

The prevention of trafficking is essential. Our attention has focused on three areas: increasing our understanding of the problem; addressing issues that impact on the supply side of human trafficking; and deterring the demand for human trafficking. Those are not simple tasks. The covert and deceptive nature of the crime makes it difficult to assess the scale of the problem. One estimate of the scale of trafficking for sexual exploitation is that there were up to 4,000 victims in the UK at any one time in 2003. That is not 4,000 victims throughout the year; it is 4,000 at any one time, which is where the recent press reports, to which reference has been made, got confused.

In April the Government will publish a revised estimate of the nature and scale of trafficking for sexual exploitation in this country. That work will be taken forward in 2010. Alongside that we will do scoping studies of trafficking for forced labour and domestic servitude. I mention those things because the hon. Gentleman's Bill says that it is desirable to draw attention to the problem. I hope that he does not regard those initiatives as a substitute for action; rather, they are part of it.

**Mr. Steen:** Is the Minister aware—I was not aware of this until last week, when I met some police officers concerned with sexual exploitation—that the police have now identified more than 2,200 brothels in this country? For instance, there were thought to be half a dozen brothels in Croydon, but they have now found that the figure is 60. All brothels apparently have so many trafficked women in them—indeed, the police believe that as many as half or two thirds of the women in many British brothels have been trafficked and forced to work there—that we might find that the figure of 4,000, which I accept, will double when we start to get more information.

**Mr. Woolas:** I am not familiar with the specific figure, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House has drawn our attention to that. I simply make the point, which I know the hon. Gentleman agrees with, that the figures are sometimes misunderstood because it is assumed that the problem is static, and of course it is not.

Our understanding of the scale of the problem is improving steadily. Particularly helpful in that context has been the introduction of the national referral mechanism, to which the hon. Member for Ashford referred, which was established as part of the ratification of the Council of Europe convention on 1 April 2009. The national referral mechanism is a multi-agency

framework that assists in identifying victims of trafficking and then providing support. It is supported by significant investment to provide front-line officers and responders with the skills to assess whether an individual should be referred into the framework. That work includes training staff to respond to individuals in an appropriate manner. The hon. Member for Totnes mentioned the desirability of improving awareness and training in this area across the various agencies.

A serious point about the policy proposal put forward by the hon. Member for Ashford is that, although we would not want to rule out a police force within an agency on ideological or dogmatic grounds, we must acknowledge the practical question of what is the best framework for getting all the agencies to work in partnership on this issue. Is there a danger that a Border Agency police force would lead to other police forces and agencies de-prioritising this issue because they were working on the assumption that the agency police force was responsible?

My response to this proposal is that, whatever arguments we have about the border, it is not the border itself that needs the extra policing; it is the investigation and enforcement. That is why our preferred approach is through the local immigration and crime teams. They could adopt what I describe as the Eliot Ness approach. Members will recall that Al Capone was captured by a tax investigator, not by a man with a machine gun. Similarly, immigration and police powers working together are mutually beneficial because, more often than not, human trafficking involves illegal immigration activity and other crimes. I am sure that this debate will be heightened in the next few weeks. There is a serious, almost tactical, decision to be taken on this, as well as a strategic one.

Training is now mandatory for all UK Border Agency staff below assistant director level, and training modules for the police service have been inserted into mandatory mainstream training courses throughout the police. However, it is not enough simply to focus on human trafficking in the UK. Many victims are foreign nationals from the EU and beyond. The second strand therefore involves addressing the problem at source.

The Home Office works closely with our colleagues in the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as well as with the Serious Organised Crime Agency, which is an international organisation. I have recently met officers in Nigeria, for example, and it is possible to see the end-to-end approach working as intelligence comes through from such countries. Those organisations have a number of initiatives to tackle trafficking at source, and the work has four components, of which awareness raising is one. We hear horrendous stories about young people who are understandably naive. Perhaps naive is not the right word, but they lack awareness of what is going on. The hon. Member for Totnes has recounted stories of youngsters believing that they are going to get a decent job and ending up in enslavement. The second component involves capacity building in the source and transit countries to deal with organised immigration crime. The third involves working with Governments and other organisations within the EU and beyond. The fourth involves taking action to address the factors that make poor people vulnerable to trafficking in the first place. The strategy in the Czech Republic is an example of that.

DFID works in 150 countries, and plays a critical role in preventing trafficking at source, through work on combating poverty and social injustice and implementing long-term development programmes. For example, we are currently supporting a project run by the Salvation Army to combat child trafficking in Malawi. There are numerous projects like that in Africa. Similarly, the Crown Prosecution Service has undertaken programmes in a number of jurisdictions to improve the investigation and prosecution of offences. This has focused on the Caribbean, west Africa, China and Afghanistan, while we have also seconded Crown Prosecution Service staff to work in Sierra Leone and Ghana.

Within the European Union, in order to strengthen the international response, we take a joint approach, and we are negotiating a revised framework decision on human trafficking. The UK has played a key role in preparing for the Schengen evaluation of trafficking and supporting the development of ideas proposed by the then Swedish presidency to improve the EU's external work to combat human trafficking. If one wants an example of why we were right not to join Schengen, this is a good one, in my opinion. Growing awareness and implementation of policy relating to the protection of the border and better sharing of data within EU countries is critical to this approach. The Swedish presidency recognised that, and a number of EU countries shifted their attitude, which is testament to the campaigning work going on in this country and elsewhere.

**Mr. Steen:** I assume from what the Minister is saying that he acknowledges that modern-day slavery crosses frontiers, but believes that there is no point in this country having a ring of steel around our borders if other countries are porous to human trafficking. Does he agree, therefore, that a major task for the European Commission is to stop funding conferences, seminars and research and to start giving money to NGOs and other organisations involved in the real fight against trafficking? For a very long time, the European Commission has spent money on things that are perfectly agreeable, so that there is a circus of attending seminars going on around Europe. People stop off at each country; they see each other; then they move on. Very few organisations, however, are doing the work that needs to be done and those that are trying to do it cannot get funding from the Commission because it favours conferences, seminars and a research approach rather than doing something to tackle the problem.

**Mr. Woolas:** Let me answer that point very carefully. The answer is yes. I believe that we have seen a pendulum swing in the direction that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, and I believe that the evidence to show it is there. The recent appointment of the new British head of Europol provides such evidence. We are now seeing a shift in attitude, particularly from the French and organisations involved in Frontex, towards a much more pragmatic approach.

My personal view is that there has been a failure to recognise the reality of the problem and that too much emphasis has been placed on the assumption that all accession states are at the level of the original member states, which is simply not the case. Secondly, there has been a growing realisation of the economic damage. I

[*Mr. Woolas*]

realise that it should not require economic damage to make agencies respond more effectively to this human issue, but the reality of today's world is that it does.

There have been some significant developments in countries in south and eastern Europe. Let me provide a small, but not trivial example—the banning of speed boats in Albania, which took place last year because those boats were being used literally to fast-speed young kidnapped girls across to Italy. The banning of speed boats caused a tremendous hoo-hah in Albania, but the public realised that it was necessary, although people in Italy and Albania had previously not been aware of the extent of the problem. This is a cat-and-mouse game and the criminals involved in it are extremely sophisticated—they could even be heads of organisations. As I have said, there has been a pendulum swing, and I commend that approach.

Let me move swiftly on. All this work is complemented by the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre in developing the Blue Blindfold brand, which the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. Blue Blindfold is the international campaign of the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre, which it uses to endorse specific projects to counter human trafficking and to ensure that those projects are sustainable and not just one-offs. The aim of the campaign is to encourage law enforcement agencies, other professional bodies and the public to develop greater awareness of the issue. The Blue Blindfold brand is increasingly being adopted by international partners, including Crime Stoppers International.

Our campaign, which is linked with the Blue Heart campaign run by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, encourages all sections of society to be aware of the dangers. The US State Department's 2009 "Trafficking in Persons" report described the campaign as one of the "Commendable Initiatives Around the World", and we were grateful for that recognition. We will, of course, continue to use the brand to raise awareness, collaborating not just internationally but, crucially, with local authorities in this country. As we have heard today, the problem is widespread. Many people assume that it is a particularly urban problem, but that is not the case. I am sure that the constituents of the hon. Member for Ashford have been horrified to learn of what goes on. We have seen many examples of exploitation of this kind, the Morecambe bay example being perhaps the most high-profile.

Our commitment to instituting a strong enforcement response against those who seek to trade in humans is clearly critical. That is why we included anti-trafficking legislation in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004. The hon. Member for Totnes was kind enough to pay tribute to the Government for introducing legislation in an attempt to end trafficking. The House is often criticised for producing too many Bills, but an evolving problem such as this requires legislation.

Through the efforts of the UKHTC, enforcement bodies such as the police and UKBA, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, we have continued not just to strengthen legislation but to improve enforcement capacity, ensuring that human trafficking becomes core police business. Whatever the outcome of the debate about the border

force, we must not lose sight of the importance of the mainstream police force's prioritisation of the issue. That was the main topic of conversation at the recent West Midlands police federation Christmas event, an informal gathering of police officers from constable to superintendent level which was hosted by the House. I am sure that all Opposition spokesmen and Ministers hear similar views when they talk to forces around the country.

Let me list some of our key achievements. We have increased the number of convictions, including convictions for forced labour. The statistics given by the hon. Member for Ashford are, on the face of it, not as good as we would all like them to be, but our partnership approach means that prosecutions may employ other routes—for example, we can secure convictions through the taxman or through unrelated legislation. Criminal activity does not always take place in a single area. I do not criticise the hon. Gentleman for using those figures. Indeed, I want to see a conviction rate of 100 per cent., but that will take time, and we should not do down the officers who are using more sophisticated approaches. I wish that some tabloid journalists would understand that, rather than merely going for the quick headline.

As I said earlier, we have strengthened the legislation on labour trafficking to make it an offence to use a child or a vulnerable adult for gain. That is important, because of the fear that victims' families will be threatened. I am not saying that it has entirely got rid of the problem, but it allows a villain to be prosecuted without the need to rely entirely on witnesses. I have already mentioned that we are ensuring that combating trafficking is part of core police business, and that is boosted by the introduction of the mandatory training on human trafficking for all new police officers.

A number of significant anti-trafficking operations have been, and are being, carried out. I was in Manchester on Wednesday, looking at the new headquarters of the local immigration crime team. About a dozen operations are taking place this week, as we increase our capacity to tackle not only trafficking itself, but connected activities such as the crime of sham marriage.

I have also already mentioned that we are working with international organisations. We are working to improve the situation in respect of prosecutions, too, through raising awareness in the judiciary. A key argument in the speech of the hon. Member for Totnes was that the judiciary are sometimes not as aware as they might be of the scale of the problem and the extent of the damage that can be done.

The Serious Organised Crime Agency is a key asset in countering the threat from organised criminals involved in trafficking. SOCA participates in the disruption and dislocation of the market for trafficked women for the UK vice trade and trafficking for labour. That disruption is a SOCA priority. We co-ordinate the work of the different agencies through two programme boards, both of which are chaired by senior SOCA officers. The boards focus on organised immigration crime within and outwith the UK, and their activities are aligned with the objectives set out in the UK action plan on human trafficking. To put this in layperson's terms, a job does not get done unless it is somebody's job to do it, and we have made this somebody's job. I am sure Members support that common-sense principle.

**Mr. Steen:** The Minister's comments are music to the ears of many of us. What the Government are doing is very good news, as is the progress that has been made over the past three or four years. The Minister must be aware, however, that there is a much bigger issue. The police are the key to detecting both the traffickers and the victims. Other police forces in Europe are not as up to date as ours is now, and many of them are riddled with links to the mafia and there is a tremendous amount of corruption. What can we do to establish a sufficient level of sophistication among the police forces of other EU countries and to make them aware of what we are doing here and of our successes?

**Mr. Woolas:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman, as do the Government. I have mentioned the economic damage trafficking does, and it is, perhaps, a sad world if it is the economic damage that causes people to prioritise this issue, but there is a discernible shift in attitude in Europe. There is also, of course, a debate to do with the client countries who wish to join the EU, and the Government's approach to that is to say that we require not just intent, but evidence that those problems are being addressed. Indeed, I recently met the relevant Moldovan Minister. We discussed a range of issues, including this one. All the time, such meetings are taking place and work is being done.

As I have just said, one of the advantages now is that it is somebody's job to address this issue. I think it was Chairman Mao who said that the goat that belongs to everyone starves to death. That is probably the most principled argument against communism—and damn right as well. If a task is nobody's job and everybody's job, it does not get done. The board we have created has the job of leading this work. Attention must be paid to getting across to the enforcement agencies and security services that there are huge advantages in respect of making progress in their work and achieving their goals in addressing trafficking, because, as we all know, crime is linked in with it.

Bringing together and focusing the work of SOCA with the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre, to which we second staff, and with domestic law enforcement agencies to deliver this concerted response is the right way forward. The relationship will grow closer and stronger after 1 April, when the UKHTC falls under SOCA's remit. That initiative is to be welcomed.

As I have said, a focus of SOCA is combating the threat abroad. In the last year, this has involved increased engagement on the part of our global network of liaison officers—I love that phrase, Mr. Deputy Speaker; you can imagine what the lads call themselves, and very decent, professional officers they are—in 40 countries around the world. They work closely with our own international directorate in the UKBA.

Let us consider one of the advantages of bringing together into a single organisation—the UKBA—immigration officials, customs officials and visa officers overseas. I can tell the hon. Member for Totnes, by the way, that it is now the Home Office that oversees issuing visas, not the Foreign Office, and I shall come on to the case of Gabriella in a moment. The staff who process the visa applications are employees of UK Visas, which is part of the UKBA. This is a tremendous weapon that we can use, through the greater sharing of intelligence and joined-up working from start to finish.

Let me give one example that has been in the public domain. Our officers have been working in rural areas of Nigeria, following fraudulent attempts to gain visas and connecting that with sponsors of visas in London and elsewhere in the country. Giving intelligence to, in this case, the Metropolitan police at a divisional commander level is disrupting this type of activity. So the international directorate of the UKBA is part of the jigsaw puzzle, as well.

I have mentioned raising awareness within the judiciary. The CPS published updated legal guidance on human trafficking in 2009 to reflect the changes arising from the implementation of the Council of Europe convention, which the hon. Member for Totnes campaigned for. To be fair, the hon. Member for Ashford has raised that issue as well. This guidance emphasises the role of the CPS in identifying potential victims who may have committed criminal offences under duress or coercion. The hon. Member for Totnes gave an example of this problem occurring in central London, whereby people are forced to commit crime through threat of violence against themselves and their families back home. An awareness of this issue on the part of CPS authorities is critical in order to provide help.

Of course, there is the question whether the 2012 Olympic games will be used by organised criminals to traffick people. We are very much aware of that, and I am grateful to the Minister for the Olympics for the work that she is doing. I want to reassure hon. Members that there is no indication so far of an increase in human trafficking to the UK linked to the 2012 games. The key agency that is on top of this issue is of course the Met, which has dedicated resources and officers to it.

The Met had an internal review of how it tackles organised immigration crime, including trafficking. It has decided that from 1 April this year—the new financial year—responsibility for tackling this crime will transfer to the clubs and vice unit from the Met trafficking team. In turn, the unit will be supported by the assets of the Specialist Crime Directorate. Again, that reorganisation is focusing exactly on what the hon. Gentleman is rightly campaigning for—implementation. The idea of his anti-slavery day is of course to draw attention to this type of activity. There is, therefore, a sensible strategy in place.

We agree with the following statement made in Assistant Commissioner Cressida Dick's assessment:

"investigating this key area into one single command will mean better co-ordination, less duplication and more accountability in the service we provide to victims."

I am grateful to her for that, and I think the hon. Member for Totnes would welcome it too.

**Mr. Steen:** I think the Minister would like to know that the jury is out on the disbanding of the human trafficking team in the Met, which occurred when the Home Office withdrew its special funding. The jury is out on whether putting this work under one command—this particularly applies in respect of the clubs and vice unit, which is not known for its work on tackling human trafficking—will be a good idea. The all-party group has had a meeting with Assistant Commissioner Cressida Dick and we were very impressed by her grasp of the problem, but, as I say, the jury is out. We are working closely with her and we hope that an improvement will take place.

**Mr. Woolas:** I understand that, and the hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should always have an open mind on this. I know he will agree with this next point, because he is an experienced businessman and chief executive. The structure is not what is important; what is important is what is going on. Part of the solution lies in increased awareness, because the more the authorities see that this place, the public and the newspapers are interested in this issue and are demanding action, the more their activity will be focused. Thus, it does not matter, ultimately, in which bit the work is done. However, I take his point and I take his advice.

The hon. Member for Ashford said that the all-party group on trafficking of women and children is an “exemplar” of what an all-party group should be. I have found that it knows what it is talking about—my goodness me it does—and that surely is the benefit of it. Given what has been going on this week, I wish we could reflect on that recognition of that knowledge, dedication and skill; it is why I do not think the hon. Member for Totnes should be standing down from the House, but he has made up his mind.

In the past six years, the Government have worked increasingly well with a network of partners to improve the support and protection of the victims, and I come to the most important point. Our work has included the provision of safe accommodation to get people, often traumatised women, out of harm’s way and protecting them. The hon. Gentleman gave us one example of this, and anyone who looks at the POPPY project’s work, particularly the photographic exhibition, will be sickened to find that these things are happening in the modern world.

The Government have also worked on developing specialist emotional and practical support for these people, who have been traumatised, often over a number of years, by their experiences; assisting with voluntary returns to home countries in a safe way—the development of that strategy is crucial; ensuring minimum levels of service from the criminal justice agencies under the victims code of practice; providing access to compensation in certain circumstances; and providing training for agencies that may encounter possible victims. Those are a number of the approaches that we are taking to try to provide support. I hate the word “holistic”, but it is obviously desirable to provide holistic support, because it means that the state should look after the individual, rather than just the bit of the individual for which it is responsible—that approach can sometimes do more harm than good if we get things wrong.

Such protection is vital, not just for the individual that we have been able to help but for the message that it sends out. It gives victims confidence that there is a safe place to go and that the authorities in this country are aware of this problem. That is very helpful in breaking the code of omerta that sometimes exists in organised criminal activity and in giving encouragement to victims, be they children, young women or men.

The hon. Gentleman will want to know the answer to the question, “How much money?” We have invested in an expansion of supported accommodation with refuge places for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude in London, Sheffield and Cardiff. That investment has also funded an increase in advocacy workers to help to provide tailored support to the victims and includes access to independent legal advice

for immigration purposes. The most difficult decisions that one has to take in UKBA are often in this area—they are difficult in the sense that it is sometimes an awful experience to comprehend the background to them.

We are also committed to ensuring that front-line staff who come into contact with victims of trafficking have clear guidelines on their responsibilities when trafficking is suspected, as well as ensuring that victims are provided with safe advice.

**Mr. Steen:** I recognise that the Government have done a very good job with the police in making this police core business. In fact, part of the campaign of the all-party group was to make it core police business. The Minister will remember the questions that came from all parts of the House on that. However, the Government are weak on funding non-governmental agencies. They are the ones that are pushing forward the agenda, identifying the victims and explaining where the weaknesses are. Other than the POPPY project, which we both accept does invaluable work, the non-governmental agencies are not getting help at all. That is what concerns me—not the police, as I think they have it under control, not the statutory bodies, such as UKBA or the UK Human Trafficking Centre, but all those dedicated non-governmental agencies that are working on a pittance without a penny piece of public support.

**Mr. Woolas:** That raises difficult areas of public policy that we all recognise in the debate between the desirability of the devolution of powers and the desirability of ring-fencing. The Supporting People housing support budget, which is about £2.1 billion, helps to address this problem.

There is an assumption that this is an inner-city problem. Support groups often find themselves unable to get finances and advice, because there is an assumption that this problem does not take place in Totnes and Ashford, to name just two areas. If I were the hon. Gentleman, I would make that an argument for the Bill—it focuses attention. It has been difficult to find out the extent of the support that exists. Some of it is done through our network of refuge support centres—of course, there is an immigration tie-in there—and some through the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Local Government Association should be thanked, too. The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point and it is an argument for his Bill that I would certainly use if I were him.

May I remind hon. Members of the key elements of the Council of Europe convention, which we ratified, as the hon. Gentleman said, in December 2008? This represents a major milestone in the fight against human trafficking, and has strengthened the protection arrangements for victims by granting identified victims an extendable 45-day recovery period and one-year temporary residency permits in certain circumstances. These measures go further than the minimum standards outlined in the convention. The United Kingdom should be proud of that.

**Mr. Steen:** Let me explain to the Minister why he is wrong. It is good that the Government have gone for the option of 45 days, but two months for a girl who has been traumatised and subjected to violence is not nearly enough to get her oriented and to help her to give evidence against the very people who have been involved

in that violence against her. The Austrians give a year and a work permit or identity card, as do the Italians. The Austrians have an outstanding record of convicting traffickers because the victims feel safe in that country. Here, they fear they might be deported because after two months the period of reflection ends and they are hassled to leave the country. Although it is an improvement on the Council of Europe convention's 28 days—it might be 45 days; I might have it wrong—the Austrians and the Italians give a year and I would like to think that the British Government might consider so extending the period of reflection.

**Mr. Woolas:** I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the conjunction that I used: I referred to the granting of an extendable 45-day recovery period and a one-year temporary residency permit in certain circumstances. He may argue that the latter should be automatic. I shall provide a little of the background to decisions on these matters.

There is protection in immigration rules for victims of domestic violence, to whom we provide refuge and can provide indefinite leave to remain. That is desirable, and the House supported the idea. However, it has resulted, in a number of instances—I would say a significant number—of abuse of that route for organised immigration crime purposes, through the use of what I believe those in police enforcement call sleepers. We have had cases of women who have asked to be beaten up so that they can get indefinite leave to remain. It is a sad world, but one has to be aware of that.

I am not suggesting that there is any evidence of such activity in this area; I am saying that we have an obligation to look at the individual when granting the 45-day recovery period and the one-year temporary residency permit. However, it would be foolish of me to say that 45 days is the be-all and end-all; we shall have to see. The policy is welcome and it is above the minimum required under the convention.

In addition, the establishment of a national referral mechanism has provided for the systematic identification of victims within a framework designed to make it easier for organisations to co-operate and share information about potential victims. That brings us to the hoary old chestnut of data sharing. I think that civil libertarians sometimes need to get real about the obstacles that can be put in the way of well-meaning organisations. We have moved forward on that with support from all the parties and local authorities.

We have not been reliant on the ratification of the convention to provide support to victims. We have invested £5.8 million in the POPPY project since 2003 to provide specialist support for victims trafficked into sexual exploitation. That includes as a minimum safe accommodation, advocacy, access to counselling, access to legal advice and interpretation services. The POPPY project has provided support to more than 500 victims of human trafficking since 2003.

A further £3.9 million is being spent over the current and next financial years on specialist services for victims of all forms of human trafficking. That figure includes a grant agreement between the Home Office and Migrant Helpline to provide support and accommodation to identified victims of forced labour. That grant agreement represents a further development in the support mechanism for victims of forced labour. Migrant Helpline, our

non-governmental organisation partner, supported 169 people between June 2008 and September 2009 and supported three police operations last year.

That area of work has been enhanced by the creation of the pay and work rights helpline, through which the Greater London authority, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate, HMRC, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—because of the link to agricultural labour—and the Health and Safety Executive work together to deal with multi-complaint issues.

Victims of trafficking can also access the wider provision available to all victims of crime, including the Victim Support service, the service for victims of sexual crimes in England and Wales, on which we have spent £4.65 million, and increased funding for sexual assault referral centres, rape crisis centres and the Survivors Trust.

Child trafficking is a particularly emotive issue for us all. Measures to care for children who are victims of trafficking need to be attuned to the vulnerability of children. The hon. Member for Totnes gave the example of Hillingdon. We have done a great deal of work on biometric fingerprint reading and biometric photographs, which are required on all visas, which means that we are now able to identify a person even if their passport has been destroyed. Identity fraud or misuse is a key weapon of the criminal, and through biometrics we now know who people are, which is a huge advantage in prosecutions and enforcement activities. Again, I wish that Liberty would pay attention to that point. Sometimes, the taking of data can help to protect someone's civil liberties. What if a victim of child trafficking were told, "We can't identify you, and we can't prosecute the criminal exploiting you, because we're not allowed to take data"? That is not a civil liberties argument by any stretch of the imagination.

On the needs of children, we have established, by giving somebody the job of doing it, joint work with children's services, the police and other law enforcement agencies, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre and, of course, the Human Trafficking Centre. The missing persons taskforce, which was launched by the Prime Minister recently, is looking at how that joint work can be improved.

Recently, child trafficking training for immigration officers and other UKBA staff has been improved, and that ensures the continued awareness of our officers at the border. Let us remember that that now includes customs officials and immigration officials, and involves partnerships with police, including special branch—a special branch from outside London; I cannot remember the name—other specialist agencies and other parts of the security forces, including the intelligence agencies.

We have published revised arrangements and guidance for Crown prosecutors, including on the consideration of cases concerning juveniles found on cannabis farms and involved in other criminal activities. We have stepped up our efforts to tackle the problem of potentially trafficked children going missing from care, the Hillingdon example being prominent in that regard. We have introduced further measures to raise awareness among practitioners and improve their ability to identify children who may have been trafficked into the UK through the application of the national referral mechanism. We also published "Safeguarding Children and Young

[Mr. Woolas]

People from Sexual Exploitation". A significant amount of work has therefore been done, but we are far from complacent on the issue.

I have talked at some length to try to get across the desirability of that work, which is backed up by the Bill. Let me finish by repeating the offer that I made at the beginning of my remarks. We believe that drafting improvements could be made, but we do not want to stop the Bill, because that would not be right. However, there are some arguments that need to be had.

**Mr. Steen:** I thank the Minister for his marathon speech, which was riveting. I think the whole House was engrossed. He was going to talk about the Gabriella case, which he mentioned a short while ago. Before he sits down, will he just say exactly what is happening in that case?

**Mr. Woolas:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I spoke at length not because I was instructed to do so by the Whips—although as a former Whip, I hasten to add that I would have done, had I been so instructed. Do they not say in this place, "Once a Whip, always a Whip"? I spoke at great length because the subject is hugely important. The core of the hon. Gentleman's argument is absolutely right. I confess that up to 18 months ago, before I did this job, I did not have a clue about the depth and extent of the problem. I have been appalled as a human being, let alone as a politician, by what goes on.

The case of the lady referred to as Gabriella is one example. UKvisas is an operation of UKBA, and I have been in communication with the chief executive this morning. I have met our ambassador in Moldova in the past few weeks, and I will do what I can to reunite that family as soon as possible. I do not know what the objections of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are, although I can imagine. They are dedicated professional people, but they will have to help. We will do what we can.

Perhaps the good side of this job is that sometimes we can intervene and help someone. We brought a girl back from Iraq in similar circumstances a few weeks ago, after a campaign led by the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Susan Kramer), so it can be done. I give the hon. Member for Totnes a commitment that I will do what I can to ensure that that is the case.

The hon. Gentleman has reminded me to check that I have answered all the questions. I think I have done so. The hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) spoke for the Liberal Democrats in support of the Bill and it is good to see him in his place. We have our differences with the Conservative Opposition on some areas of policy, particularly on their futile idea of a cap on tier 1 and tier 2, and their misunderstanding of the partnership that exists between border force officers and Her Majesty's constabulary, but overall we can say that police forces work very closely together.

The hon. Member for Totnes has built a powerful all-party consensus which does not take as its starting point the obvious statement that something should be done, but puts in place strategies that bring about enforcement. He argued for his Bill in that context, not as a token name or day. Some people will say, "Another

day off, another week of action, another token gesture." That is not the intention of the Bill, and it is not how the Government see it.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time.*

*Ordered,* That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord):** Occupants of the Chair have deprecated proceeding at once from Second Reading into Committee without notice, since it makes it difficult for Members to table amendments.

*Considered in Committee.*

**The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Michael Lord):** There are some amendments to the Bill. Amendment papers are available in the Vote Office and, for the convenience of Members, they are also available in the Chamber.

1.13 pm

### Clause 1

#### ANTI-SLAVERY DAY

**Mr. Andrew Dismore (Hendon) (Lab):** I beg to move amendment 1, page 5, leave out from 'that' to 'millions' in line 6.

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** With this we may take the following: amendment 2, page 1, line 7, leave out 'modern-day'.

Amendment 3, page 1, line 10, leave out 'modern-day'.

Amendment 4, page 1, line 14, leave out 'modern-day'.

Amendment 5, page 1, line 17, leave out 'modern-day'.

**Mr. Dismore:** I shall not detain the Committee long, and I hope the hon. Member for Totnes (Mr. Steen) will accept the amendments. As he knows from the Second Reading debate and private discussions, one of my concerns about the Bill is about the references to "modern-day" in the context of slavery and to the transatlantic slave trade.

People from the African continent find references to "modern-day" slavery and the transatlantic slave trade in this context somewhat offensive. I know this, as does the hon. Gentleman, I hope, from work that I have done in the Inter-Parliamentary Union. At the IPU Assembly several years ago, I spoke on trafficking and proposed a draft resolution.

The representatives of African countries were insistent that such references be removed because they do not consider it appropriate to compare what is happening now to what happened to people from Africa who were enslaved and taken to the American continent in the 18th and 19th centuries. They do not feel it is appropriate to compare the suffering of their ancestors with the modern position. It would therefore be more inclusive if the amendments were made to tidy up the wording.

1.15 pm

**Mr. Anthony Steen (Totnes) (Con):** I accept that amendment in its entirety.

*Amendment 1 agreed to.*

*Amendments made:* 2, in Clause 1, page 1, line 7, leave out "modern day".

Amendment 3, page 1, line 10, leave out “modern day”.

Amendment 4, page 1, line 14, leave out “modern day”.

Amendment 5, page 1, line 17, leave out “modern day”.—(*Mr. Dismore.*)

*Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

## Clause 2

### SHORT TITLE AND EXTENT

*Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.*

**The Minister for Borders and Immigration (Mr. Phil Woolas):** I shall try to be helpful—very briefly. At the beginning of my remarks today, I said that there was an offer of parliamentary counsel help on some of the wording in this clause, so I shall not object to it at this stage, but I give notice, out of fairness, that we may wish to introduce amendments in the other place—should the Bill proceed.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2 accordingly ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.*

*Bill, as amended, reported.*

*Third Reading*

1.17 pm

**Mr. Steen:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I spoke for just 50 minutes on Second Reading, but I was trumped by the Minister, who spoke for just on an hour.

**Mr. John Randall (Uxbridge) (Con):** It was very good, though.

**Mr. Steen:** It was very good. However, I do not think that a Third Reading speech would endear me to the House, so that will be the end of my Third Reading speech.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.*

## Damages (Asbestos-Related Conditions) (No.2) Bill

### *Second Reading*

1.17 pm

**Mr. Andrew Dismore (Hendon) (Lab):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Today is Groundhog day for this Bill, because its terms are exactly the same as those of a Bill that passed through the House last year. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time for that Bill to go through the other place before Prorogation last November. It received full Committee and Report stages, however, with amendments moved, discussed and, ultimately, withdrawn, so later today I hope to be able to put the Bill before us through all its stages, not out of disrespect to the House, but to point out the fact that this legislation has already been meaningfully debated.

Most Members know that for 20 years before I entered Parliament I was a personal injury lawyer, and I suppose that I still am: once a lawyer, always a lawyer. As the Minister for Borders and Immigration, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, East and Saddleworth (Mr. Woolas), said earlier, “Once a Whip, always a Whip.” I have never been a Whip, but I have certainly been a lawyer, and I still have my practising certificate, although I do not currently practice.

This Bill is about pleural plaques, a thickening of the lining of the lung. They are usually visible on an X-ray or a CT scan, and they are caused by exposure to asbestos. It is hard to imagine someone’s fear if they are at risk of developing an evil, disabling illness such as mesothelioma, and there is a statistical connection between the two, although a medical causal connection is debatable. The fact remains, however, that the statistical connection indicates to people that they are at a much higher risk than the population at large of developing mesothelioma. It is a painful and always fatal illness, and during the course of my practice and, indeed, my time in the House, I have met many pleural plaques sufferers who have expressed their strong feelings about the issue and the problems that have recently arisen because of court decisions.

Until recently, pleural plaques were compensated under common law. Since 1984, there have been three cases against the Ministry of Defence, the leading one being *Church v. MOD*, involving a diagnosis of asbestos-related pleural plaques—or asymptomatic fibrosis on the pleural lining of the lungs, as it is described in the cases. In the *Church* case, it was decided that the condition constituted an injury, enabling damages to be claimed. The amount of compensation varied, but before the cases that stopped the claims being brought, it was in the region of £7,000 on a provisional damages basis.

In the 2006 case of *Rothwell*, the Court of Appeal found that pleural plaques were not compensatable, mainly on public policy grounds. The Court refused to aggregate the condition of pleural plaques with the anxiety and distress that they cause, deciding that each individual condition was not compensatable and that the courts could not look at the aggregate of both pleural plaques and the psychological conditions that they cause because the two were separate.

[*Mr. Andrew Dismore*]

If the psychological condition involved was a recognised psychiatric illness, that would be different. However, the psychological conditions of pleural plaques sufferers do not get so severe as to be considered diagnosable psychiatric illnesses. In this day and age, unfortunately, the legal system still treats injuries to the mind rather more severely than injuries to the body. Compensation is not awarded on a fair basis, comparing one with the other.

I return to the relevant cases. In autumn 2007, the Rothwell case was upheld by the House of Lords in the case of Johnston. In fact, it was the same case; several cases were heard together. The House of Lords upheld the Court of Appeal decision that pleural plaques were not compensatable, and that has been a cause of concern in the wider community and the House ever since. That concern has been the subject of numerous parliamentary questions, early-day motions, amendments to Government Bills and attempts at private Members' legislation, including my own Bill last year. It has also been raised in I do not know how many Adjournment debates. There is no perfect option for dealing with the issue; various proposals have been debated and suggested but unfortunately the Government have not announced a formal position. That is why this Bill is a good way forward.

Pleural plaques represent a serious condition that affects many people, and doing nothing is simply not an option. My Bill tries to build on what has happened in Scotland, which is ahead of the game. The Scottish Parliament passed its own legislation to restore the position in law to where it was before the cases in the Court of Appeal and House of Lords. That Bill has now achieved Royal Assent in Scotland. There were attempts to challenge its legality through judicial review, but they failed in the Scottish courts; the outer house made a strong judgment that made it clear that certain points, particularly those arising from aspects of the European convention on human rights, were not sustainable.

My Bill is modest; all it seeks to do is turn back the law to where we all thought it was prior to the decisions of the courts. Doing that, however, would mean that the insurers, who were on risk at the time, would meet the liability rather than getting the windfall of having collected the premiums without having to pay out on the risk. The Bill is tightly drawn; it is not the thin end of the wedge and it will not open the floodgates to any form of parallel litigation for other illnesses or injuries. It relates purely and simply to pleural plaques.

The Bill maintains the basic principles of negligence or breach of statutory duty as the test for liability. The burden of proof that the claim exists and should be upheld is still on the claimant. The Bill provides for a suspension of the limitation period from the date of the House of Lords decision until the coming into force of the Bill. That is only fair, but it would not affect any cases that were already settled or decided in the courts. There would be no question of trying to reopen cases that were finished. The Bill also leaves out Scotland, which, as I have said, has made its own arrangements already.

The Bill is an important measure. If pleural plaques were outside the body, there would be no argument about their being compensatable, yet because we cannot see them they do not count, according to the House of Lords. The psychological injury in such circumstances

can be looked at by the courts only if there is a physical injury that they consider compensatable. The House of Lords has ruled that the internal scarring of pleural plaques is not compensatable as it would be if it were on the outside, so the psychological consequences cannot be compensated.

**Matthew Taylor** (Truro and St. Austell) (LD): I commend the hon. Gentleman for his pursuit of this issue. There is a particularly extraordinary position in relation to psychological damage and it appears to contradict established practice in other areas. I hope that, at the very least, his return to the scene will address that issue.

**Mr. Dismore:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Basically, the problem is that the test for a physical injury is subjective. It is sometimes referred to as the "thin skull test"—the victim is taken as found, and if they have a thin skull and have had a brick dropped on their head, that is hard luck for the tortfeasor and the victim is compensated according to the injuries sustained. When there is psychiatric injury, that is not the case; it is assessed on an objective basis, with the victim assessed not as found but according to a "reasonable man" test, as it were. That is unfair. Our legal system discriminates against psychiatric injury compared with physical injury.

My concern is that if my Bill does not go through, the campaign for reform of the rules on psychiatric injury in general will gather strength. The system is ripe for reform anyway, but the failure to compensate for pleural plaques, and for associated psychological injury that is less than a diagnosed psychiatric injury, needs to be dealt with now. If it is not, the momentum behind the campaign for widespread reform of psychiatric and psychological injury law will gather much greater momentum and ultimately become irresistible. The Bill is a good halfway house that will alleviate some of the pressure, so that we do not end up in that position.

**Mrs. Eleanor Laing** (Epping Forest) (Con): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the legislation in the Scottish Parliament. I recall that when we last debated the issue last April, we noted that the Scottish Parliament had asked for the costs of the implementation of its legislation to be monitored. Does he have any information about the monitoring of costs in Scotland?

**Mr. Dismore:** I think that legislation has only just come into force, so it would be difficult to monitor the costs so far, but they arise in two situations. One is when the Government are the de facto defendant, often standing in the shoes of a former nationalised industry, and the other is when the defendant is a private company. As I understand it, the Scottish Bill has either only just come into force or is about to, consequent upon the judicial review challenge having failed, so it is too early to discuss whether there are any costs, and if so, what they amount to. I understand the UK Government's position to be that any costs should fall on the Scottish Government, as I think they now call themselves, rather than on the UK taxpayer. That remains to be seen, and it is a matter for them to negotiate between themselves.

The hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) made the point about the different treatment of psychiatric injury. I believe that the Bill will resolve that issue, because it provides for the illness and injury of pleural plaques to be designated actionable damage,

which is the key to unlock compensation for psychological consequences that may be less than a diagnosable psychiatric illness. There could then be compensation both for the pleural plaques themselves and for the lesser psychological consequences, which was what everybody thought the law was before the House of Lords intervened.

I hope that my Bill will find favour with the House, as it did last time. It was extensively debated in the previous Session, so I hope that the House will not only give the Bill a Second Reading today but put it through all its stages, bearing in mind that it has passed them before.

1.28 pm

**Mr. John Randall** (Uxbridge) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) on bringing the Bill back to the House and on his tenacity on this important subject. I mean this with no disrespect to him, but it is very much a lawyer's Bill. As a layman, I listened to his explanation hoping to find out exactly how the Bill would work. I think I got the general drift, but some of the more intricate parts of it eluded me.

I have a constituency interest, because for many years we had an asbestos factory in the area in which I have always lived. It seems that many people in my constituency suffer from various asbestos-related problems, including mesothelioma. I know the problems that that causes them, both physically and mentally, so anything that we can do to try to alleviate them—not only through compensation, but by recognising that we now understand what can happen—is to be welcomed.

I have listened to the various arguments and looked into terms of the hon. Gentleman's Bill, and there are some concerns. However, as he said, it has been scrutinised in this House already, so, if possible, we should allow it to go down to the other place. If the Lords have any further worries or questions, it is appropriate that they should raise them there. Saying that, I wish the hon. Gentleman good luck with his Bill.

1.30 pm

**Mrs. Eleanor Laing** (Epping Forest) (Con): I apologise to you and to the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for not being as audible as I usually am. I shall therefore be brief, in order to spare the House the horror of listening to my strained voice.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) on his persistence in bringing forward this important Bill again. We had a long debate on the matter on 24 April last year. I understand that the Bill has been in Committee since then, and he is right to bring it back here. When we discussed the Bill last year, everyone who spoke, from all parts of the House, expressed their compassion—I certainly did—for those who have worked, sometimes for a lifetime, in conditions that they did not know, and which their then employers were not aware, were dangerous because of the presence of asbestos.

There are now generations of people suffering from asbestos-related illnesses—people who gave a lifetime's service, not only in private companies, but in the service of our country, doing important jobs in the armed forces and nationalised industries. They are suffering now, but there are generations to come who do not yet know the extent to which they will suffer. I appreciate that that is the point of the hon. Gentleman's Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Randall) said that this was a lawyer's Bill. I am with the hon. Member for Hendon on that: perhaps it is a lawyer's Bill, but I confess to also having been a lawyer once. As I think I mentioned last year, when I was a young articled clerk, a long time ago, I dealt with difficult asbestosis cases.

**Mr. Dismore:** I did not take the suggestion that the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Randall) made in a pejorative way. My Bill is a lawyer's Bill in the sense that lawyers can understand it, because it deals with our concepts, but it is also a Bill meant for ordinary, common, working people and their families who have suffered from a debilitating problem.

**Mrs. Laing:** Of course it is, and in no way was I being pejorative about lawyers. Indeed, I was about to say to the hon. Gentleman that because I have dealt with the matter in a previous professional life—not quite to the same extent as him, but to some extent—I understand only too well why he has brought his Bill forward. It would allow a causal link to be established between certain actions by employers and future illnesses that might arise. I also appreciate that that is where the difficulty lies. As he said, if pleural plaques were on the outside of the body, they would be a recognisable disease and the difficulty would not arise. I fully understand the difficulty of recognising pleural plaques for the unusual condition that it is, and I give him credit for bringing that difficulty before the House for consideration. Pleural plaques do not cause illness or pain—although some argue that they do—but the psychological effects of having them diagnosed affect people and their families, as he has previously explained. The last time we debated this, the hon. Member for Hendon said:

"The problem is that psychological injury in these circumstances can be looked at by the courts only if there is also a physical injury that they consider compensatable. My Bill simply tries to establish that pleural plaques are compensatable, so that a link could therefore be made to the psychological injury."—[*Official Report*, 24 April 2009; Vol. 491, c. 534.]

I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point; I recall him giving that clarification of the causal link theory for the benefit of those normal people who are not steeped in personal injury law.

I also appreciate, however, that there are various views in the medical profession on the way in which pleural plaques can be interpreted as affecting a person's health. I will reiterate the evidence of Dr. Robin Rudd, a recognised expert on this matter. He has said:

"Pleural plaques are not thought to lead directly to any of the other benign varieties of asbestosis-induced pleural disease".

Dr. John Moore-Gillon of the British Lung Foundation has also said:

"Pleural plaques do not themselves 'turn malignant' and become a malignant mesothelioma. They do not in themselves cause asbestosis to develop, nor do pleural plaques increase the risk of lung cancer, and they are a different condition from diffuse pleural thickening."

I know that the hon. Gentleman will accept that those are correct medical diagnoses.

**Mr. Dismore:** Pleural plaques are evidence of exposure to asbestos. The question of a medical link between the one and the other may be arguable, but the statistical link is not. We know the number of people who suffer

[*Mr. Dismore*]

from pleural plaques, and the number of people who get mesothelioma, and the one is evidence of risk of the other. That is what causes the psychological symptoms. A person who has pleural plaques will know that they have been exposed to the risks posed by asbestos, and it therefore preys on their mind that they are at greater risk of contracting mesothelioma.

**Mrs. Laing:** I entirely accept the hon. Gentleman's explanation. He makes his case very well.

We are speaking today about the psychological effect on a person of knowing that they have been diagnosed with pleural plaques. The difficulty is with the principle of compensation. It is unfortunate that the Government have not introduced a similar Bill. They have shown some enthusiasm for this one, and for this issue over the years, but not enough to introduce a Government Bill with the full backing that such a Bill would have. I do not mean political backing; I mean the access to the full medical evidence and all the other kinds of backing that a Government Bill would have behind it. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his persistence in bringing his Bill forward again.

I am worried that the hon. Gentleman has suggested that all stages of the Bill should be dealt with today. It is a short, precise, well-constructed Bill, but none of us has had the time or the opportunity to look in any detail at the matters that will be considered in its Committee stage.

**Mr. Dismore** *rose*—

**Mrs. Laing:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is going to say that his other Bill was considered in Committee, but I will allow him to say it.

**Mr. Dismore:** I know that the hon. Lady was present at the previous Bill's Committee stage last time, but because of a slight hiccup, which we need not go into, she was unable to participate in the Committee. This Bill is identical to the one that went through its Committee stage at that time. It was subject to amendments tabled and debated in Committee, as well as to amendments tabled and debated on Report, so it had had full consideration by the House before it received its Third Reading last October.

**Mrs. Laing:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that explanation; he said exactly what I expected him to say. He is right that a technical error prevented me from taking part in Committee, but I witnessed those proceedings and I cannot disagree that the Bill was scrutinised to some extent. I nevertheless hope that if the Bill passes through the House today, it will be properly scrutinised in the other place. Although I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of the matters in the Bill—indeed, I welcome the clarification of the law that it entails—it is also important that we observe the proper procedures of Parliament when passing legislation, not least because this legislation is important and has far-reaching consequences, affecting many people. It may cost a lot of money and it is Parliament's duty to balance the needs and rights of the individual with those of the taxpayer and the public purse. I put it no more strongly than that, but I express my concern.

Ultimately, we are talking about being fair to people who, through no fault of their own, have contracted what might turn into a terrible disease. I approach the issue with compassion and understanding for the individuals concerned and their families. That said, it is important to leave sufficient time to hear what the Minister has to say, so I shall conclude to allow him to address us.

1.42 pm

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) on securing a Second Reading for this Bill, which deals with an extremely important issue. Issues of principle are raised, as well as practical issues; above all, this subject involves great human suffering.

I pay tribute to all who have followed the debate over many years, particularly to Members who have pursued the campaign. As we have just heard, my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon has been extremely diligent; this is his second attempt to get this Bill through the House. He deserves all our thanks for his persistence and diligence in this matter. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Blaydon (Mr. Anderson), for Jarrow (Mr. Hepburn) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), who have been equally diligent and persistent on behalf of their constituents. Many other Members have been involved, as we have received representations from them, from trade unions and from others who are deeply concerned about this issue.

Those who have followed the debate over the years will know that this is my first time speaking from the Dispatch Box on this particular subject. It is not, however, the first time that I have had occasion to deal with the issues raised in today's debate. As the Member of Parliament for North Swindon, I am acutely aware of these problems. As the House will know, Swindon is a great industrial town: it always has been; it was created by Brunel as a great railway town. It had great railway works, which sustained the town and helped it to grow over many decades.

Very large numbers of my constituents worked in the railway works, so they were exposed to asbestos. Mesothelioma, a particularly horrible disease, is, because of its prevalence, well known locally as "the Swindon cancer". Many constituents have had to live with it for many years, so I am deeply familiar with the problem. I have had to deal with some heartbreaking cases. I will always remember the pensioner who came to see me. Our meeting took a long time because he could not speak for tears, as he tried to describe how his wife had died from mesothelioma. He had not been diagnosed with it, but his wife had. She had contracted the cancer because every day when he came home from work, he had taken off his work clothes, which she washed for him before making his tea. As a result of that act of spousal duty, she had contracted this awful illness. He was consumed with grief at the loss of his wife, but also with guilt because his work had resulted in her contracting such a terrible illness.

As I have said, this subject involves complex issues of legal principle, difficult practical issues and weighty financial issues, but above all it is about human suffering of an especially acute nature. I know that all the Members who have raised it, including my hon.

Friend the Member for Hendon, are deeply conscious that none of us should ever forget that human suffering is at the root of it.

Mesothelioma is a particularly unpleasant cancer. We have seen great progress in treatment of a range of cancers, but unfortunately we have not yet found a way of dealing with diffuse mesothelioma. It is always fatal and involves a very poor life expectancy of, on average, between 12 and 18 months following diagnosis, which makes the diagnosis particularly hard to accept. That bears directly on the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon about the psychological damage that can be caused by pleural plaques, which, as he has said, indicate exposure to asbestos. Those who are diagnosed with them will inevitably start to wonder whether they will develop mesothelioma, which is a particularly horrible illness because, I understand, very little palliative care is available. It is painful, and, as I have said, the diagnosis is invariably fatal.

The Government take mesothelioma extremely seriously, but it is difficult to deal with because, as with pleural plaques, the legal background is very complex. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mrs. Laing) was mildly critical of the Government—although not up to her usual coruscating standards—for not acting more swiftly, and I appreciate the urgency of the matter, but, as I have said, the issues involved are complex.

For many years, the defining mesothelioma case was that of Fairchild in 2002. In that case, the House of Lords held that a person who contracted mesothelioma after wrongful exposure to asbestos at different times by more than one employer could sue any of those employers, even if the employee could not prove which exposure had caused the disease. That is particularly important, because exposure to just one strand of asbestos can be clinically responsible for the development of mesothelioma. It is not a question of sustained exposure over many years. All of us Members who have encountered mesothelioma in our constituencies know that our constituents have often been employed in several workplaces, and that the same workplace may have had different owners. It has been very hard to prove legally which exposure led to the disease, and the Fairchild case was therefore extremely important.

When another case was brought, that of *Barker v. Corus*, the House of Lords decided that in a case within the boundaries of the Fairchild exception in which someone had contracted mesothelioma after wrongful exposure to asbestos at different times by more than one responsible person, the damages were to be apportioned among those responsible for the wrongful exposure according to their relative degree of contribution to the chance of a person contracting the disease. That means, in practice, that a claimant must trace all relevant defendants as far as possible before liability can be apportioned and compensation paid, and that the risk of any of those defendants' being insolvent and unable to pay the appropriate share falls on the claimant.

That decision was taken in May 2006, and I am sure that Members will understand the huge burden it placed on any potential claimants, as well as the deep distress it must have caused them. I make no criticism of the House of Lords in this case; it was applying legal principles in a way that it has complete discretion to do, and it is not for this House to criticise its decisions. However, the emotional and human consequences of

that decision were profound, not least because when someone is diagnosed with mesothelioma, their life expectancy is typically 12 to 18 months. As I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon will understand from his previous life as a lawyer, the prospect of someone in such a situation having to go through such a tortuous legal process, and of having to try to identify all the possible employers in whose employ they might have been exposed to asbestos, would be enormously difficult and time consuming, and in practice would make it more or less impossible actually to get any compensation.

When this became clear, the Government moved with great speed. The House of Lords made its judgment in May 2006, and by July 2006 the Compensation Act 2006 had received Royal Assent. Through that Act, the Government took measures to rectify the *Barker v. Corus* judgment by enabling claimants to sue any of the negligent persons and then to recover 100 per cent. of the compensation on a joint and several basis. It would then be a matter for the defendants to apportion the damages they had paid between themselves.

That was clearly the right thing to do. It threw the burden of proof, and the responsibility for seeing through all the complex legal processes, on to the employer, not the mesothelioma sufferer at such a difficult and painful time for them and their families, when they and their loved ones are having to come to terms with this dread diagnosis. When we could see a way clear to take action, we took it, and we did so with great speed. In my time in the House, I cannot think of another occasion when any Government have moved with such speed to rectify a situation.

We will, therefore, move as quickly as we possibly can, but these are very complex and difficult issues, and I want to say a little about them. This Bill passed through a number of stages in the previous parliamentary Session and there have been several Adjournment debates on the subject it addresses. The issues have been raised with great force and cogency by a number of Members, therefore, and I am extremely grateful to them for everything that they have done to highlight the issue and to keep it in the public mind. The Government are sympathetic. I am going to respond very sympathetically to the Bill today, and I should also point out that an identical Bill is today receiving its Second Reading in another place.

The Bill provides for asymptomatic pleural plaques and the separate condition of asymptomatic asbestosis to constitute actionable damage under the law of tort for which damages may be awarded. The overwhelming balance of expert professional opinion is that about 99 per cent. of pleural plaques cases are asymptomatic and therefore difficult to diagnose, and only 1 per cent. are symptomatic. It is important to stress that in that relatively small number of cases where symptoms are exhibited so the condition is readily identifiable, it remains possible to bring a claim under civil law. This Bill therefore addresses asymptomatic pleural plaques. It also contains provisions on limitation and retrospectivity.

**Mrs. Laing:** For the sake of clarity, do the Government intend that asymptomatic pleural plaques, as a disease, will not give rise to compensation but will merely be noted in order to establish the causal link between the employment and the possible future development of

[*Mrs. Laing*]

asbestosis or other serious diseases such as mesothelioma? Is the Minister talking about that causal link, rather than having actual compensation for pleural plaques?

**Mr. Wills:** If the hon. Lady will forgive me, I will go through the argument first before I reach the conclusion regarding our attitude to the Bill. On her point about causality—if I understand her correctly—my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon has already set out the position clearly. The existence of pleural plaques shows exposure to asbestos, but, as I think is acknowledged widely, it does not mean that anyone who has pleural plaques will inevitably get, or is likely to get, mesothelioma. There is no causal link in that way, but it does indicate exposure to asbestos, and for that reason it is completely understandable that people who have pleural plaques will begin to worry, often very intensely—to the extent that, as my hon. Friend has said, it becomes very disruptive of their lives. To that extent, pleural plaques fall into the category of illness, so it is understandable that the existence of pleural plaques should often cause intense and disruptive worry about the possibility of getting mesothelioma.

In passing, I point out that I agree with my hon. Friend about the distinction that we in this House, as well as the courts, have drawn in the past between mental and physical incapacity. I have already made it clear regarding another Bill—I will not dwell on this, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that in relation to representation in this House, we should not draw any distinction between mental and physical incapacity. It is not tenable, and I am optimistic that this House will make progress on that area. The point that my hon. Friend raised about that distinction was very well made.

The Bill also contains provisions on limitation and retrospectivity to enable claims to be brought in cases that were stayed pending the House of Lords decision on pleural plaques, and in those which have not been concluded subsequently. Again, my hon. Friend spoke about that. The issue of pleural plaques, not because of causality but because of the linkage with the dread disease mesothelioma, has excited considerable interest and attention in this House, the other place and outside. I therefore hope that it will help if I explain the current position before turning to my hon. Friend's Bill in detail.

As hon. Members know, the Government carried out a consultation exercise on the question of whether pleural plaques should be made compensatable under the civil law. The consultation paper proposed action to improve understanding of pleural plaques, to try to deal with the intense mental anguish that can often be caused, and to make sure that people understand that if they are diagnosed with pleural plaques, it does not inevitably mean they will develop mesothelioma. In the consultation paper, we proposed action to improve understanding in this way, and to provide support and reassurance to those diagnosed with pleural plaques to help allay their concerns. This is an important step forward, and it shows the Government's recognition of the importance of this issue. It is also a tribute to the work of my hon. Friend.

The consultation paper also considered the issues arising in relation to changing the law of negligence, and invited views on whether this would or would not be appropriate.

Clearly those issues stretch far wider than this issue, important though it is. The law of negligence permeates almost every area of public life in one way or another, so it is important that the consequences of any change we might make on this particular issue are thought through and discussed as fully as possible. That was a subject addressed by the consultation paper, which also sought views on the merits of offering no-fault financial support to people diagnosed with pleural plaques, and on two possible ways of doing that.

Although the consultation paper was an important step forward, I do understand all the concerns expressed by hon. Members about the time it has taken to reach conclusions in the light of the consultation. As I have said, where we have felt that we could act speedily to resolve the situation, we have done so. We have done so specifically in respect of the legal situation that developed in 2006 in relation to mesothelioma.

The House of Lords decision has raised extremely complex and difficult issues, which, inevitably, have required very careful consideration within government and more widely. It has also been very important to look beyond the issue of pleural plaques to consider how people who have been exposed to asbestos—irrespective of whether or not they have developed pleural plaques or mesothelioma—can be supported much more widely. I am sure the House will understand that anyone who knows they have been exposed to asbestos will worry, so we must consider what we can do to support them. We have made it clear throughout that in our view it is important to ensure that any decisions are reached on the basis of the best available medical and other professional evidence on the nature of pleural plaques. For that reason, we have commissioned and published reviews of the medical evidence carried out on behalf of the chief medical officer and by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council to help to inform consideration of the issue. Very helpful further discussions have also taken place with key medical experts on the medical evidence.

As I have said, it has been important to explore how we can support everybody who has been exposed to asbestos. I hope that the House will agree that the Government have been consistent in their commitment to give people suffering from mesothelioma and other serious asbestos-related diseases the help and support that they deserve, and we want to build on the positive steps that we have taken.

With that in mind, my right hon. Friend the Justice Secretary has confirmed that the Government are actively considering measures to make the UK a global leader in research for the alleviation, prevention and cure of asbestos-related diseases, and to help to speed up compensation claims for those who develop serious asbestos-related diseases such as mesothelioma. That is a huge undertaking and the Government are making a serious commitment. The work will include examining the process for tracking and tracing employment and insurance records—the House will understand how important that is in this context—as well as looking into the psychological and other support given to individuals who are unable to trace such records. The Government will shortly be announcing further details of our plans on these extremely important issues. I hope that the House will recognise—I think it will—just how important this is in taking this debate forward.

It might help if I were to tell the House a little about the consultation and the responses to it. We will be publishing this shortly, but I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon will want to know what has happened as a result of the consultation. Some 224 responses were received, of which 163 expressed the view that pleural plaques should be compensatable in some form. Slightly more than two thirds of those who responded directly to the question regarding overturning the House of Lords decision supported changing the law. Views were equally divided on whether the proposal to increase awareness of the nature of pleural plaques would be helpful. I must say that there was only limited support for a no-fault scheme and a number of those who did express support for such a scheme made it clear that it was very much a second preference for them if the Government decided that they would not overturn the House of Lords decision.

**Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con):** I have been listening with great interest to the Minister and the hon. Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore). Have any of the responses that have been made to the Minister come from medical sources? Can he confirm—this is my main point—that the cause of pleural plaques is always exposure to asbestos or can there, in some cases, be other causes?

**Mr. Wills:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that question and for the interest he is taking in this case. I cannot give him an exact breakdown of those responding, but we will be publishing the results. On the origins of pleural plaques, I am afraid that I cannot give him a definitive medical answer. I am very happy to write to him on that point. I hope he will correct me if I am wrong, but I think he is driving at the question of responsibility, liability and causality. I am happy to give way to him so that he can make that clear.

**Michael Fabricant:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving way a second time. I have no doubt that there is a strong argument for compensation per se for pleural plaques. He has already pointed out, quite rightly, that the source of the exposure to the asbestos has to be identified. I wanted to have it explained to the House that there can also be no doubt that the symptoms and the existence of pleural plaques would always be owing to exposure to asbestos and not to some other toxic substance.

**Mr. Wills:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying that point.

**Mr. Dismore:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Wills:** I am happy to be helped out by my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Dismore:** I want to make two points. First, the Bill makes it clear that the only pleural plaques that would be compensatable under it would be those that are asbestos-related. Secondly, I am not aware of any other source of potential pleural plaques but, come what may, it is still for the claimant to prove that their pleural plaques are asbestos-related.

**Mr. Wills:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was going to go on to make exactly that point, but I am very grateful to him for clarifying it.

The hon. Member for Lichfield (Michael Fabricant) made a very specific point. I do not want to mislead the House. I am not aware of any other possible source of pleural plaques other than exposure to asbestos, but I would not like to give the hon. Gentleman a definitive opinion. As he will know, medical opinion on these matters varies. Some doctors can always be found to take a contrary view. I would not like to mislead him by giving him a definitive answer, and all I can tell him at the moment is that I am not aware of other causes and, in any event, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon has pointed out, that has no bearing on this Bill.

Before I conclude, I want to make a point about another complexity of this issue that we have to deal with in making progress. The House will be aware that claims management companies have been involved in this field. This is a particularly difficult issue. As 99 per cent. of pleural plaques are asymptomatic, there has been quite a vigorous campaign by claims management companies and some solicitors to try to persuade people who might have been exposed to asbestos to undertake scans. This has given rise to considerable disquiet.

I know that concerns have been expressed about the possible exploitation of vulnerable people. People have asked whether claims management companies can be prevented from acting in this area. Suggestions have been made that only those who were diagnosed by a registered doctor should be able to bring claims. This is a difficult and complex point and it was not directly raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, but I want to address it because I know that it comes up a lot and that people can get very angry about the exploitation of vulnerable people.

Claims management companies are already regulated under the Compensation Act 2006: regulations control any business offering claims management services and should prevent any malpractice developing. The introduction of an absolute bar on claims management companies providing services related to pleural plaques would require primary legislation. If we tried to prohibit claims being made when they were the result of a commercial CT scan or when medical evidence did not originate from a registered medical source, that would cause significant concern about compatibility with article 6 of the European convention on human rights, as it would bar access to a court for a claimant who may, in the end, have a genuine cause for action.

**Mr. Dismore:** My right hon. Friend can square the circle in a relatively straightforward way. He does not have to use primary legislation. This is a question of what evidence is sufficient to satisfy the court, rather than one of debarring anyone from bringing their claim to court. The court may not be satisfied if the evidence is not strong enough—a matter that can be dealt with through the rules of court.

**Mr. Wills:** I understand my hon. Friend's point, but it does not address the issue of vulnerable people being exploited for commercial gain. However, those considerable problems should not stand in the way of our trying to make progress on the substantive issue that he has raised.

I want to put it on the record again that the Government are firmly opposed to the use of scan vans, as they are called. The provision of X-rays and CT scans is governed

[Mr. Wills]

by two sets of regulations, which make it clear that initiating an X-ray or a CT scan purely for the purpose of obtaining compensation is not justified, and in those circumstances the Healthcare Commission could be asked to investigate. We would try to deal with the problem on that basis.

I want to say a little about the views that medical experts have expressed about the anxiety that people experience when they are diagnosed with pleural plaques. There is, it is fair to say, general agreement that a diagnosis of pleural plaques is likely to cause anxiety. That is a common-sense view. However, there are different views—as is inevitable, as I said, where professional opinion is involved—about how that should be addressed clinically and how far the level of anxiety can be controlled. One perspective was that a rational, honest explanation of the risks from exposure to asbestos could help patients, but that it would be impossible to alleviate the anxiety, that concerns were understandable and that those involved should be compensated.

The other perspective was that if the condition and the risks were properly and clearly explained, most people would be reassured, and offering compensation would send a mixed message to patients and could increase anxiety. In addition, because there is no direct link between the existence of pleural plaques and the development of mesothelioma, sending people to have scans might be a riskier process for many because it would lead to them being exposed to radiation, which holds some risk, albeit not a huge one. However, given that many people with pleural plaques never develop mesothelioma, it would be an unnecessary risk.

**Mrs. Laing:** The Minister may in his last few remarks have answered my question. Does he agree that where those scans are not necessary, it is vital that they do not take place? He and the hon. Member for Hendon have both argued very strongly—I do not disagree—that it is the psychological effect of knowing that one has pleural plaques that causes the injury, rather than the pleural plaques themselves, in cases where they do not develop into a more serious disease. Therefore, not knowing that one has pleural plaques is a better position to be in than knowing that one has them.

**Mr. Wills:** The hon. Lady puts the point pretty well, and she raises an important psychological, and, indeed, philosophical, question. I think that the whole House deplores the use of scan vans. We are talking about people who seek to exploit the potentially highly vulnerable, and who prey on their anxiety and worry for commercial gain. That is not acceptable and we deplore the practice. I have outlined some of the measures available to prevent it, and I hope that our message is going out loud and clear.

I want to talk briefly about some of the new evidence that may be coming forward from the United States and France, and about the meeting of medical experts to which I referred earlier. At that meeting, a UK case study was discussed and it was suggested that, in that individual case, pain could have been associated with pleural plaques rubbing against a person's ribcage. If that were to be the case, it would change the nature of the issue. However, the experts noted that no direct causative link to the plaques had been established. In

any event, it is already accepted that pleural plaques can involve symptoms in a small minority of cases. Recent French research focused on the relationship between cumulative exposure to asbestos and the development of pleural plaques, rather than the medical nature of the plaques themselves.

The Bill has to be considered in the context of all those developments. It represents one possible approach to the issue of pleural plaques. I have set out some of the other dimensions of the issue on which the Government want to make progress, but there are a number of other approaches, and there are wider issues surrounding asbestos-related diseases. We want to ensure that all of them are considered fully and that the best response is identified, and we are doing that as quickly as we can. As we are still assessing what the Government response should be on pleural plaques and the wider issues affecting those suffering from asbestos-related diseases, it is not possible today to give a firm indication of what the Government's ultimate position on the Bill will be. However, on that basis I can confirm that I am content for the Bill to proceed today.

2.17 pm

**Mr. Dismore:** With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for comments from Members from across the House. We have aired the issue yet again; I have lost count of the number of times that we have debated pleural plaques in the House. I am not sure that I have added greatly to the knowledge of the House or the general public, but we emphasised some of the arguments, and I hope that the House will give the Bill a fair wind.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time.*

*Ordered,* That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Michael Lord):** Occupants of the Chair have deprecated proceeding at once from Second Reading into Committee without notice, since it makes it difficult for Members to table amendments.

2.19 pm

*Considered in Committee.*

*Clauses 1 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.*

*Bill reported, without amendment.*

*Third Reading*

2.20 pm

**Mr. Andrew Dismore (Hendon) (Lab):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have had a full debate. I do not think there is anything more to say, so I hope the House will now give the Bill a Third Reading.

2.20 pm

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills):** I shall not detain the House long, but I want to say a few words about the Government's position. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Mr. Dismore) is pleased that we have made so much progress on the Bill—I know that he has been here before. The Government want to resolve the issue, and

again I pay tribute to him, to my hon. Friends the Members for Blaydon (Mr. Anderson), for Jarrow (Mr. Hepburn) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) who are not here today, and to all the hon. Members who participated in the debate today and who have made representations to the Government over the past few months.

As we have heard, the issue is extremely important for many, many of our constituents, affecting every aspect of their lives. Because of that, there should be no doubt about the Government's determination to resolve the issue. The fact that we have not yet been able to do so is not an indication of any lack of will on our part. There has been huge activity. Many Members of the House will be aware how much work has been continuing on the part of officials throughout Whitehall to try and resolve the issue once and for all.

It is a feature of our system of government that from time to time the courts produce judgments that throw public policy into disarray, and the Government then have to react. We must react in a way that is sustainable and which sends the courts a clear framework and a clear message about the will of the House. We have to make sure that we have covered every dimension. I hope I have shown today just how complex this area is.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon has performed an invaluable public service, for which all my constituents will be extremely grateful to him. In saying that, I am sure I speak for most Members of the House. However, he is dealing with only one aspect. It is important that we try to achieve a comprehensive solution, and I think we are not far off that. Today has been another step forward. It is not the final resolution, but we are not far off that stage. It will almost certainly not be me who stands at the Dispatch Box to announce further progress, but I am sure that before too long, a Minister—

**Mr. John Randall** (Uxbridge) (Con): I am disturbed to hear the Minister say that that will not be him. Can he explain why?

**Mr. Wills:** I hope I can take that as a compliment from the hon. Gentleman. It will not be me because, in

practical terms, the matter does not fall to my ministerial responsibility. I was pleased to be able to be present today because, as I explained to the House earlier, I have a distinct constituency interest in the matter, which has been of great concern to me as the Member of Parliament for North Swindon, but normally another Minister would be at the Dispatch Box. The hon. Gentleman should read nothing untoward into that, other than an allocation of responsibilities within the Ministry of Justice. As I said, I was pleased to be here today for a debate on a matter of intense importance to my constituents in Swindon.

I hope my hon. Friend will feel that I have been positive and constructive in my comments in moving the Bill forward. At some point in the near future a Minister—it may be me, but probably not—will stand at the Dispatch Box with an indication of how we intend to resolve the issue.

**Matthew Taylor** (Truro and St. Austell) (LD): That is a huge concern, so I hope that the Minister will provide a time scale, because it has taken a great deal of time to resolve the issue. He may not make the announcement, but I hope that it will be made soon.

**Mr. Wills:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who was perhaps being tactful. The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Randall) may have been trying to tease from me the date of the general election, because as the House will know, I am not standing for re-election. He may have been trying delicately to discern whether the announcement would take place before the general election, and the hon. Member for Truro and St. Austell (Matthew Taylor) may have been after the same thing. I certainly hope that it takes place while I am still a Member, so that I can report to my constituents in North Swindon that this Government have taken decisive action on pleural plaques, just as we have done on that dread disease of mesothelioma, which has caused such anguish for so many people.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.*

## Employers' Liability Insurance Bureau Bill

*Second Reading*

2.26 pm

**Mr. Andrew Dismore** (Hendon) (Lab): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill relates to another aspect of an issue that we just explored. I took some comfort from what the Justice Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Swindon (Mr. Wills) said in response to the previous debate, because legislation is starting to go in the same direction as the Government. The Bill is about resolving a real problem that arises particularly but not exclusively in asbestos cases.

Since 1969, employers have been compulsorily required to take out insurance against injury and disease for their employees—the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969. I have not checked but I vaguely recall from my days in practice that that legislation began as a private Member's Bill, too. One problem is that a small number of employers, despite that legal requirement, do not take out insurance. A bigger problem is when employers have insurance, go out of business and, decades later, an employee finds that they have contracted an industrial disease, such as mesothelioma, and needs to claim compensation. The real problem is trying to track back to find out who the employer was and, more importantly, who the employer's insurers were at the time. That is a difficult, time-consuming and, ultimately in many cases, fruitless task. My Bill tries to provide an answer: an insurer of last resort.

If people are injured in a road accident involving a hit-and-run or uninsured driver, the insurer of last resort is the Motor Insurers' Bureau. It has been around since the 1940s and was introduced when the then Government said to the motor insurance industry, "Unless you get your house in order and produce your own insurer of last resort arrangements, we will legislate to do so." It is now a requirement under European Union law to introduce a system to compensate victims of uninsured motorists. However, there is no similar provision for victims of uninsured employers or employers whose insurance company has disappeared, if it ever existed in the first place. My Bill therefore tries to plug that gap.

I proposed the Bill last year in exactly the same terms; I am a persistent chap, as everybody knows. It took eight attempts to get the Crown Employment (Nationality) Bill through, and now it is part of the

Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill. We have just seen a second attempt at the pleural plaques Bill, and this is my second attempt with this Bill, although I do not suspect that we will get very far with it today.

Last year the Government indicated that they were not sympathetic to the Bill, but I understand from my right hon. Friend's earlier comments in response to the pleural plaques debate that they now look more sympathetically on the issue. Indeed, I have discussed it with my hon. Friend Lord McKenzie, a Minister in the Department for Work and Pensions, who suggested that the Government were now looking more favourably at it; and I hope that before long we will see Government consultation on how such a scheme might be established.

The proposal is relatively straightforward; it is based on the Motor Insurers' Bureau arrangement; and it will provide a compensation regime when an employer has become insolvent and has no employers' liability insurance, when the insurer cannot be traced, or for any employer—

2.30 pm

*The Deputy Speaker interrupted the business (Standing Order No. 11(2)).*

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 26 February.*

## Business without Debate

### CONTAMINATED BLOOD (SUPPORT FOR INFECTED AND BEREAVED PERSONS) BILL [LORDS]

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 26 February.*

### MARRIAGE (WALES) BILL [LORDS]

*Bill read a Second time; to stand committed to a Public Bill Committee (Standing Order No. 63).*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That, in respect of the Terrorist Asset-Freezing (Temporary Provisions) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—(*Kerry McCarthy.*)

## Rail Services (Sydenham Corridor)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(*Kerry McCarthy.*)

2.31 pm

**Jim Dowd** (Lewisham, West) (Lab): I am most grateful to Mr. Speaker for allowing me this opportunity to raise an issue that is of considerable concern to my constituents in the Forest Hill-Sydenham area. I have raised the matter on two other occasions during the 18 years in which I have been a Member. This is the third time, although the specific issue is not the same. The Table Office has rules about putting down questions; it says that they can be refused if they are part of a campaign. I would not like to think that anybody believed that I did not have a campaign on behalf of my constituents and their rail transport requirements in our corner of south-east London.

No London borough has as high a proportion of its residents working outside it as Lewisham does. Transport links of all kinds—not just rail, but bus; we do not have an underground service yet, although we will in a few short months—are crucial to the social and economic well-being of the area. They have a double benefit: they make the place easier for people to live in and travel to work from, and they attract people into the area for work, social and recreational purposes.

In recent years, there have been many improvements in services, not only in my constituency but in Lewisham more broadly. Perhaps the most notable was the docklands light railway extension to Lewisham via Greenwich, from the rather obscure terminus of Mudchute gardens on the Isle of Dogs. That has undoubtedly improved connections to Lewisham. Furthermore, bus services have been considerably improved since the advent of Transport for London and the directly elected Mayor of London.

More recently, Eurostar services have been transferred from Waterloo to St. Pancras International. That has released further slots on the surrounding railway infrastructure, which has allowed more services—not into my constituency, but into nearby stations such as Penge West and Sydenham Hill, which are used by many people from my constituency. Great improvements have been made in the recent past. Without doubt, however, the greatest improvement will come with the advent of the East London line, which is due to commence services in May, just a few months' time.

I speak with feeling about the extension of the East London line because I have been campaigning for it since I was first elected to Lewisham council in 1974. That is some 36 years. There is a Chinese proverb—an old Chinese proverb, as they say, but when was the last time we heard of a new one?—that states that success has a thousand parents but failure is an orphan. I claim to be one of the 1,000 parents who are the progenitors of the East London line extension through my constituency into Crystal Palace and on to West Croydon. It forms just part of the London Overground project, which will go north of the river, utilising the current East London line, to Dalston and then eventually on to various other points on the northern part of the London Overground system, to provide real alternatives to people in my constituency and surrounding areas as regards their transport options.

**Mr. Andrew Pelling** (Croydon, Central) (Ind): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. I would claim to be one of the other parents, and we are all very pleased about the regenerative effect that public transport investment has. The Government have done very well in their investment in London's transport, which was particularly good under the previous Mayor. Is it not the case that given the Government's strong emphasis on investing in east-west routes, as Members representing constituencies with strong north-south trends we must remember the importance of continued investment in those routes, such as Thameslink?

**Jim Dowd:** Yes, I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. If he is claiming partial parentage of the East London line extension, I have to say that our relationship was very distant, if not non-existent, but in our part of south London we are all delighted to see it come to pass. The tendency that he mentions has traditionally been a problem for large parts of the capital that are not served by the underground system. Radial transport links are very strong, but lateral ones have not been, and the impetus of recent years has been to address that issue. Rather than ship everybody into the centre of town and then out again for work, social or recreational purposes, it is better to have lateral links. That is a great advantage to us, as he appreciates, because there will be an opportunity for us to travel to large parts of the capital without the need to go through London Bridge or to Cannon Street or Charing Cross.

I shall make some comments about Thameslink in a moment. The Thameslink programme will cause a lot of disruption and inconvenience in the short term, particularly to those of us closer to the centre of London, but over time it will prove to be a worthwhile investment and a considerable benefit to south London and London more broadly. As a key international centre and our national capital, London relies on its transport links more than anything. It needs to sustain the ability to move people around in large numbers very rapidly, and we can all recognise that without that, it would not be the centre that it is.

The hon. Gentleman encroached upon the next part of my comments.

**Mr. Pelling:** I apologise.

**Jim Dowd:** Not at all, I accept the inevitability of these things on occasion. Over the years there has been support for the plan for the East London line extension, particularly from the former Mayor and the Greater London authority. I thank them, as I have before in the Chamber, for their determination to turn the current East London line, which is little more than a cross-river shuttle to the east of Tower bridge, into a genuinely beneficial, sustainable and crucial link in London's transport network by increasing services from Croydon and Crystal Palace right through to Dalston, and beyond that to Highbury and Islington and elsewhere. The next stage, which will not run through my constituency, is the continuation of the service through Peckham and on to Clapham Junction, which will be a major adjunct to the services in that part of the world.

Let me make it as clear as I can to my hon. Friend the Minister that my constituents welcome unreservedly the extension of the East London line into our part of the world, and our appearance on the London tube map, particularly as we have some of the most congested

[Jim Dowd]

commuter lines in the whole country. However, various aspects of that introduction might not be as beneficial to my constituents as they might otherwise appear. Transport for London has taken over the running of all the stations between East Croydon and London Bridge, including Crystal Palace, which means that all local stations are now staffed throughout the day, from the first train to the last, meaning a far safer and more secure environment for passengers. TfL plans a complete refurbishment of those stations over time, which will include new indicator boards, increased CCTV and new public address systems. My experience in recent years is that railway public address systems are far more comprehensible than they were in my youth. That is to everybody's benefit, but it also increases the security that people feel when using public transport systems, and therefore increases the likelihood that they will use them. That is to be welcomed unconditionally.

On 2 January—this was slightly delayed, because of decisions by the Mayor, but it was none the less welcome—the Oyster card system and pay-as-you-go were introduced on all suburban services right across the capital. That is a huge advance. One needs to use an Oyster card only once to realise the benefits of the system, and that is without mentioning its interoperability between different modes of transport. Before the end of this year, all platforms on the line will be lengthened to accommodate 10-carriage trains to and from London Bridge, rather than the current eight-carriage trains. The East London line will start in May, giving us eight trains an hour in each direction between Dalston in the north, and West Croydon and Crystal Palace in the south. Finally, a few years on, in 2015, the line will become part of the Thameslink network, so that the four trains an hour that currently terminate at London Bridge will instead continue north, thus allowing direct services to Blackfriars, Farringdon and, in particular, St. Pancras International for the Eurostar.

I am also delighted to see the reappearance of something that I believed to be little more than a pipedream when I was growing up in my constituency in south-east London, namely the extension of the Bakerloo line. In those days it was just a piece of imaginering, as they call it these days: someone drew a line on a map and said, "Wouldn't it be a good idea if, instead of terminating at the Elephant and Castle, the Bakerloo line went on, down through south-east London to Bromley and places south?" There was never any real backing for such a project, but now it is back on the agenda. However, I suspect that its prospects might be somewhat less encouraging under the current Mayor than they would have been under his predecessor or, let us hope, they will be under a successor with a more enlightened attitude towards public transport.

The Southern services into London Bridge are the mainstay of the commuter services from my constituency. It is the threat to those services posed by the introduction of the East London line that I wish to draw to the House's attention today. On all surveys, the route to and from London Bridge will still be the principal route used by more than 70 per cent. of my constituents. They have just lost the Charing Cross service, even though it was only an off-peak service, because during the development of the Southeastern timetable, which started on 13 December, it was identified that in order to make the incorporation of the high-speed service to and from

Kent workable, significant limitations would need to be imposed on the through-London Bridge pathways for other operators. The long and short of that was that Southern lost its pathways into Charing Cross and now terminates all services at London Bridge.

Some would say, "Well, how much more difficult is it to get a train from Charing Cross and change at London Bridge? Those services still exist." That is true, but for my constituencies attending social, entertainment and recreational events in the west end in the evening—those going to the theatre, to the cinema, to restaurants, and so on—the direct service from Charing Cross to Honor Oak Park, Forest Hill and Sydenham was immensely important. That service has now been lost and, sadly, there is little or no hope for its reintroduction, because those pathways have gone. Some of my more suspicious constituents—it may come as a shock that, along with most other Members of Parliament, I have such constituents—think that, because Southeastern and Southern are owned by the same holding company, Govia, this was just a carve-up of the services between the two companies. I do not believe that to be the case. I think that genuine consideration for improving the service across the south-east as a whole was at the heart of this decision. As in most equations, however, some win and some lose.

The crux of the problem involves the off-peak services. During the route utilisation strategy investigation, fears were expressed that morning and evening services into London Bridge would be cut from their present level by at least two trains an hour. Fortunately, the morning peak service has now been secured. That is probably the most crucial element of the transport patterns in my area. However, the off-peak and evening service has now been cut by two trains an hour. My constituents—particularly the members of the Sydenham Society and the Forest Hill Society who have done a lot of campaigning on these issues—would like to know why the East London line should not suffer a reduction, instead of cutting the service on the London Bridge line by two trains an hour. If it proves more beneficial over time for the East London line to provide extra services, the number of trains could be increased, but why should my constituents have to suffer the possible inconvenience of having an established and well-used service reduced?

I understand that complicated calculations have had to be made in relation to the introduction of what is undeniably the great advantage of extending the East London line, but why should the existing services be put at risk when introducing the new ones? And, if those calculations prove inaccurate or non-viable in the longer term, what is the earliest opportunity at which such a shortfall could be redressed?

We do not for a moment dispute the benefit of the extended East London line. If it is introduced and incorporated properly, it will provide considerable benefit to people across south London and more broadly. However, the need to ensure that the present services are sustained until it has been demonstrated that they are no longer necessary is a higher priority.

2.48 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Mole):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Jim Dowd) on securing the debate and providing the House with this opportunity to discuss

rail services in his area of south London. At the risk of making him feel a little old, may I tell him that, when he started campaigning as a Lewisham councillor in 1974, I was a schoolboy using Sydenham Hill station on a daily basis? I know that that station is not on the route that we are discussing, but he did mention it earlier. I am aware that this issue is of interest to a number of other hon. Members, given the correspondence that I have received from him and other Members in recent months, and also to other stakeholders and to the public.

I am also aware that any timetable change, however small, is likely to inconvenience some people and will therefore often be unpopular. In the case of train services on the Sydenham corridor, two sets of changes occurring at the same time are altering the nature of services on the route. I believe that, when these changes are looked at together—and once demand patterns have settled, later this year—the overall accessibility and attractiveness of train services in that area of south London will be vastly improved. However, I sympathise with users of the route if they are unhappy with the planned changes at this time.

I am conscious that, while many people are aware of those services that have been or will be changed or diverted as a result of the new timetable, little has been said about the additional services and journey opportunities that will emerge this spring. Transport for London will soon be starting a publicity campaign with regard to the East London line services and, as trial services begin to operate, I expect the benefits of those services to become more obvious to passengers. I have already asked officials to ensure that TfL is issuing appropriate publicity about the changes.

**Mr. Pelling:** It hardly behoves us to criticise investment in public transport, which is most welcome and quite transformative—in my constituency, the tram transformed the place in respect of employment prospects—but if a new service is being launched, there is a great danger of inflicting reputational damage if other services are being reduced. Are the Government sensitive to that concern, as it would be such a shame if such an excellent investment were compromised?

**Chris Mole:** The hon. Gentleman raises a legitimate question; there is a balance to be drawn as providing information too soon risks people having to ask where the new services are. I hope to address the issues further as I progress.

**Mr. Pelling:** I can never make myself clear from the back of the Chamber. The concern is that people might speak adversely about the new services if they are compromising other fast routes. I represent constituents who use Norwood Junction, which is just down the line from Sydenham, and they have already expressed their concerns to me in e-mails.

**Chris Mole:** If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make a little progress, I might be able to answer him more fully. As I have said, I have already asked officials to carry out appropriate publicity for the changes. Given the concerns expressed, it would probably be best to deal with each of those changes in turn. I shall start by providing some background to them.

The Sydenham corridor is currently served by Southern Trains, but from May, East London line services operated by London Overground will be extended to operate on the route alongside Southern services. London Overground's core service will operate four trains an hour between Crystal Palace and Dalston and West Croydon and Dalston. A separate service will operate from New Cross to Dalston. This compares with the former East London line, which operated only between New Cross Gate and Shoreditch. It is expected that eight of these trains will be extended to Highbury and Islington from 2011, once a new line is constructed at Dalston to connect the East London line with the North London line.

Further extensions to Clapham Junction are planned for 2012, which will mean that the route from Sydenham to New Cross Gate, which I know will be a prime concern to my hon. Friend, will see eight East London line trains an hour, plus Southern services. These East London line services will be operated by new class 378 trains in four-car formation similar to the new trains introduced on the North London line.

Importantly, the extended East London line will provide valuable interchanges with the rest of London's transport network. The interchange with the Jubilee line at Canada Water will be especially valuable, given the links from there to Canary Wharf and the west end, but the interchange with the Hammersmith and City and District lines at Whitechapel will also be important, while we must also not forget the link with the docklands light railway at Shadwell. The later link to Highbury and Islington will provide a further direct interchange with the Victoria line.

We expect a considerable number of people to alter their journey patterns to interchange at Canada Water rather than London Bridge. As my hon. Friend will be aware, the interchange from national rail to London underground at London Bridge is rather tortuous and probably takes a minimum of five minutes when measured platform to platform. Canada Water will compare favourably in that the interchange is a simple escalator journey to the underground. The latest information that I have from TfL is that the main works are complete and that non-passenger trial operations on the core route are about to commence. If these trial operations and associated staff training are successful, TfL hopes to commence a service on the core route north of New Cross Gate later this spring. We are as confident as we can be that the route will open on time later this spring. That is my answer to the question about when we should press on with the publicity.

My hon. Friend mentioned that 10 stations between New Cross Gate and West Croydon have already transferred to London Overground in readiness for the extension—additional investment has already commenced. He also mentioned that London Overground is going to upgrade many of those stations. He referred specifically to CCTV and public address, but there will also be a deep clean of the stations, along with new floors and platform surfaces, new entrance canopies, new signage, information systems and lighting improvements. It is also worth noting that "Access for All" works, funded by my Department, are already well advanced at Forest Hill station. I should add that the £900 million extension of the East London line has been made possible only by the considerable increase in grant given to Transport for London over recent years.

[Chris Mole]

I am sure that my hon. Friend is supportive of all those investments in train services in his constituency. I firmly believe that these changes, along with other improvements, such as extension of Oyster pay-as-you-go, will transform the attractiveness of this area of south London—to reduce crowding, to support regeneration activities and to improve the overall service offered to the public.

However, the new services cannot be introduced without some changes to existing services and service patterns. Apart from some minor track works at South Croydon and Crystal Palace there is no building of new lines south of New Cross Gate, which means that the extended East London line timetable needs to mesh with Southern services. The issue is not as simple as might be imagined, especially given the complications of the crowded network in and about London Bridge and the interactions with other parts of the rail network including Southeastern services, Southern services to London Victoria, First Capital Connect services north and south of London, and the additional East London line services.

**Mr. Pelling:** Does this not underline the need for further investment at the Windmill Bridge junction north of East Croydon station? It is great to get the service going, but not enough money was provided for the East London line. If capacity is not increased, there will unfortunately be some passenger resistance.

**Chris Mole:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that, along with Network Rail, we are examining capacity issues throughout the United Kingdom network, because we consider those issues to be a priority.

I shall try to explain the background to each of the main changes, but I suggest that Members consider those changes as a whole and compare the final overall service from May this year with the service provided previously. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, since last December, later evening Southern services from the Sydenham corridor, amounting to a total of nine trains, have not progressed through London Bridge to Charing Cross. All services will now end at London Bridge, as they do throughout the rest of the day.

The reason for the change is that as part of its new timetable Southeastern—which, of course, has seen the introduction of high-speed services from Kent, and about 5 per cent. more capacity on metro services in Greater London—is stopping more trains at London Bridge during the off-peak period and in the evenings, and has also improved frequencies on the Bexleyheath corridor. Because of the provision of the additional trains, no spare capacity exists to allow Southern services to operate into Charing Cross. Southeastern and Southern have worked hard to identify a solution to the problem that would allow those trains to be accommodated through London Bridge. It has been unable to find a timetable solution, but it remains an aspiration of Southern to operate services through to Charing Cross. The Government have said that if in future Southern and Southeastern can find a way to extend services, which we agree is desirable, we will not stand in the way of the operators. I have asked officials to ensure that that option continues to be considered.

A number of timetable changes are planned for May 2010 on the commencement of the extended East London line. My hon. Friend has raised with me the apparent misalignment between opening dates for the East London line and changes to Southern services, and I understand that the Sydenham Society has raised the issue with him. I should make it clear that the new Southern timetable is planned to commence on Sunday 23 May, the day on which TfL plans to start operations south of New Cross Gate. There is thus no misalignment; TfL may be being a little cautious in its public statements.

As part of the new timetable, stations on the route will see a significant increase in the service provided overall. During the peak period, there will be six trains an hour from stations such as Sydenham to London Bridge, and a further eight trains an hour to the East London line. Sydenham currently has seven trains to London Bridge between 8 am and 9 am. In future, it will have a total of 14 trains to London, which will double the service and increase capacity by around 45 per cent.

I realise that it could be argued that Sydenham is seeing a reduction of one London Bridge train during the peak period, but given the parallel increase in services to the East London line, the overall benefits are large. In the off-peak period the service will broadly double from six to 12 trains per hour, which means a train every five minutes. Four of those trains will operate to London Bridge and eight to the East London line. I appreciate that that could be seen as a reduction of two trains an hour to London Bridge, but it has been made necessary by the operation of the East London line trains and the use of “turn back” facilities at West Croydon by East London line services.

I am particularly aware of the significant concern expressed about the evening peak changes on the corridor. Let me explain that in more detail. Southern currently operates six trains in the peak hour from London Bridge via the Sydenham “slow lines”, with two of them operating to destinations outside London. Because of the introduction of the East London line services and the congested nature of the infrastructure from London Bridge to New Cross Gate, it has not been possible to timetable the longer-distance services to fit with the regular-interval East London line services. As a result, from May the Dorking and Guildford services will now operate via the fast lines running non-stop between London Bridge and Norwood Junction.

The only way these services could continue to operate on the slow lines via Forest Hill would be by reducing the peak service operated by the East London line. While I recognise that this is of little comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West, the change will reduce journey times to places such as Norwood Junction, Sutton and Dorking. The remaining London Bridge services will operate a regular-interval service from London Bridge at approximately 14 and 16 minutes apart, and should carry significantly fewer passengers as a result of the diversion of some passengers to destinations further afield. Most passengers to locations such as Sydenham and Forest Hill should need to alter their journey times by only two or three minutes. I will be happy to provide the House with details of the exact timetable, if required.

This change should be placed in the context of the eight East London line trains operating southbound from Canada Water, and, over time, we expect passengers

who currently interchange from the Jubilee line at London Bridge to shift to interchange at Canada Water. It should also be remembered that passengers who previously changed on to Southern services at New Cross Gate will now be able to use both Southern and East London line services, further reducing demand pressures on evening peak services south of New Cross Gate. The same number of trains will be operating from London Bridge in peak times as today, and I can thus reassure Members that the changes are not being carried out for financial reasons; they are being introduced purely in order to

timetable both Southern and East London line services on the same section of track.

Southern is committed to keep the situation under review after the introduction of the East London line next May.

3.1 pm

*House adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 9(7)).*



# Written Ministerial Statements

Friday 5 February 2010

## TREASURY

### Asset Purchase Facility (Contingent Liabilities)

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry):** A departmental minute from the Treasury on the contingent liabilities arising from the asset purchase facility is being published today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

### Terrorist Asset-freezing

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry):** The Government are today introducing in Parliament the Terrorist Asset-freezing (Temporary Provisions) Bill. As set out in my written ministerial statement of 4 February 2009, *Official Report*, column 21WS, this Bill is being introduced as an urgent temporary measure to prevent assets being unfrozen and returned to terror suspects as a result of the Supreme Court's decision to quash the Terrorism Order 2006 without a stay.

The Government are also publishing today a draft Terrorist Asset-freezing Bill. This Bill, modelled closely on our existing powers under the Terrorism Order 2009, is intended to provide a durable legal basis for the UK to freeze the assets of suspected terrorists in fulfilment of our United Nations obligations.

The Government have had urgent discussions with the relevant banks following the Supreme Court's decision not to grant a stay. The banks have confirmed that in the light of the Government's decision to bring forward immediate legislation providing retrospective legal authority for them to continue existing freezes, no funds will be unfrozen as a result of the Supreme Court's judgment.

#### *Asset freezing licensing policy*

In order to assist consideration of the Bills, the remainder of this statement sets out the Government's approach to licensing exemptions to asset freezes in order to meet human rights and humanitarian needs.

UN Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999) requires all member states to implement asset-freezes against persons associated with al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Targets are to be agreed by a Committee of the UN Security Council and the list is maintained by the United Nations.

UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) requires all member states to freeze the assets of persons who commit, attempt to commit or facilitate terrorist acts. There is no central UN list and targeting is left to individual states, in accordance with their domestic legislation.

The relevant UN Security Council Resolutions concerning asset-freezing require that financial sanctions against designated terror suspects be broad-based in nature, not merely freezing existing assets but preventing designated persons accessing funds or economic resources from other persons. The purpose is to ensure that

designated persons cannot use or access the means of terrorist finance, principally funds or things that can be used to generate funds.

In order to ensure that the overall effect of the asset-freezing regime is proportionate and fair, UN Security Council Resolution 1452 (2002) allows member states to put in place a licensing regime to authorise, where appropriate, access to frozen funds or other financial assets or economic resources to meet "basic expenses" (that is, basic humanitarian needs which include payments for foodstuffs, rent or mortgage, medicines and medical treatment, taxes, insurance premiums, public utility charges and legal fees and expenses) and "extraordinary" expenses. The overall objective of the licensing system is to strike an appropriate balance between minimising the risk of diversion of funds to terrorism and meeting the human rights and humanitarian needs of designated persons and other third parties.

Licence requests for persons listed by the UN under the 1267 regime need to be submitted to the relevant UN sanctions committee under differing procedures for basic and extraordinary expenses.

Licence requests for persons listed domestically under the UN 1373 regime are not submitted to the UN Sanctions Committee and are purely a matter for the relevant member state to determine.

#### *The UK's implementation of its licensing obligations*

The Government recognise the importance of having an effective licensing system to ensure the overall proportionality and fairness of the asset-freezing regime. Our licensing regime has been developed and improved in recent years, in the light of the experience of operating it, to ensure that it remains as effective as possible in achieving its objective of ensuring proportionality and fairness.

Key features of the licensing regime that help ensure proportionality and fairness are as follows:

Our policy to issue at the point of designation a legal expenses licence, a licence to the benefits departments to pay any state benefits due and a licence allowing the designated person to access his funds to meet living expenses. By granting these licences at the point of designation, our intention is to ensure that the designation results in the minimum of interruption to the everyday lives of designated persons and their families in terms of being able to meet their everyday living expenses and to obtain legal representation.

Our policy to ensure that state benefits due to the designated person and his household are paid in full unless there are strong national security reasons why this would not be appropriate. Currently, all designated persons and their households are receiving their full entitlement of benefits.

In order to allow for the immediate granting of licences for persons listed by the United Nations under the UN 1267 regime, the Government have informed the UN Sanctions Committee that it will not submit requests for basic expenses licences to the UN for consideration on an individual basis.

While for procedural reasons, the UN Sanctions Committee does distinguish between basic and extraordinary expenses requests, the Government do not seek to limit designated persons or their families to basic expenses only. Our policy—consistent with taking a proportionate approach—is that designated persons should have access to their income and other property insofar as this can be arranged without giving rise to risk of terrorist finance.

The Treasury takes an active approach to granting licences. There are currently around 50 individuals resident in the UK whose assets are frozen under either the Terrorism Orders or the al-Qaeda Orders. In 2009, the Treasury granted around 121 licences in respect of those persons.

### *Licence conditions*

Licence conditions are a key feature of the licensing regime, as they apply safeguards to ensure that funds or economic resources can be made available to designated persons in a way that protects against terrorist finance risks. In this way, appropriate conditions facilitate the granting of licences that it might otherwise not be possible to grant.

The conditions we apply to licences reflect two broad objectives:

- to ensure that designated persons do not have access to large amounts of cash, which can be more easily diverted to terrorist activity; and

- to ensure that there is a reasonable audit trail to address terrorist finance risks and that the Treasury can monitor compliance with the terms of the licence and identify if any breaches have occurred that could give rise to national security concerns.

The exact licence conditions are set on a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstances of the designated person and the terrorist finance risks involved. In order that controls are set in a way that is proportionate and risk-based, the Treasury takes advice from the police and Security Service about the terrorist finance risks involved in each case and the appropriate licence conditions to address them. Consistent with the objective of proportionality, the Treasury's intention is to impose only those controls that are necessary to protect against terrorist finance risks.

### *Household benefits policy*

EC Regulation 881/2002 states that it is an offence to "make funds available directly or indirectly for the benefit of the designated person"

without a licence from a competent authority.

The Treasury's interpretation of this provision, as set out in a written statement to Parliament by the then Economic Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Ed Balls) in 15 July 2006, *Official Report*, column 18WS, is that it includes the provision of state benefits to the spouses or partners of designated persons where they are living together in the same household as the designated person. It is on this basis that the Treasury licenses the payment of state benefits to the households of designated persons. It is usually a condition of these licences that all the household benefits are paid to the unfrozen account of a designated person's spouse or partner. While a spouse or partner may spend these benefits on the household's needs, he or she is required to report to the Treasury on the expenditure of those funds.

The Treasury's interpretation of the relevant provision of the EC Regulation is the subject of litigation. The Treasury's position was upheld in the UK by the High Court and then the Court of Appeal. The House of Lords has referred the case to the European Court of Justice, but made it clear that it would prefer to interpret the provision more narrowly than the Treasury's position. The ECJ Advocate-General issued an opinion on 14 January 2010 indicating that in his view, the provision should be interpreted narrowly and should not include the payment of state benefits to the households of designated persons. A final ECJ decision is expected within the next few months.

Until the ECJ decides on the case, the interpretation of the relevant provision of the EC Regulation is unclear. Given this, and the fact that the most recent legal judgment on this matter, that of the Court of Appeal,

upheld the Treasury's position, it would be premature at this stage to remove licensing provisions relating to the payments of benefits to the households of designated persons. When the ECJ clarifies the interpretation of EC Regulation 881/2002 on this matter, the Treasury will review its policy and make any changes that are needed to give effect to the Supreme Court's judgment.

In the meantime, the Treasury will continue to license the payment of state benefits to the spouses or partners of designated persons. However, the Treasury is mindful of the need for all licence conditions to be proportionate and of the need to limit as far as is possible the impact that the asset-freezing regime has on spouses or other family members of designated persons.

I have therefore looked again at how we implement the licensing of household benefits, taking particular account of comments expressed in the Supreme Court judgment. I have decided to make the following changes to ensure that our approach remains fair and proportionate.

While the Treasury will continue to apply appropriate safeguards in licences, which will be issued on a case-by-case basis and contain provisions appropriate to the level of risk posed by the individual concerned, the Treasury will no longer require all household benefits to be paid to the spouse or partner of the designated person. Families will be able to choose whether it is the designated person or their spouse or partner who receives the family benefits in order to manage their finances in a way that suits their individual circumstances.

There will now no longer be a general requirement on spouses or partners of designated persons to report to the Treasury on the expenditure of their household benefits. This will reduce any adverse impact the regime has on them by ameliorating the effect of licensing their household benefits.

We will continue to require the designated person to report on expenditure of any benefits paid directly to him or of any licensed funds given to him.

I believe that this approach will ensure that we continue to have appropriate controls in place to prevent the diversion of funds to terrorism, while limiting as far as possible the impact of the asset-freezing regime on the families of designated persons.

## HEALTH

### Quality Accounts

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. Mike O'Brien):** I have today placed in the Library the Government's response to the recent consultation on detailed proposals for Quality Accounts. Copies are available to hon. Members from the Vote Office and the response can also be seen at: [www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Highqualitycareforall/Qualityaccounts/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Highqualitycareforall/Qualityaccounts/index.htm)

"High Quality Care for All", published in June 2008, was the final report of the national health service next stage review, a year-long process led by the Department and the NHS which involved over 60,000 NHS staff, patients, stakeholders and members of the public.

"High Quality Care for All" committed the Department and the NHS to developing a quality framework to support local clinical teams and NHS organisations to improve the quality of care locally, a key part of which was publishing quality information—in Quality Accounts.

Quality Accounts are annual reports to the public from providers of NHS healthcare services about the quality of services they provide. The public, patients and others with an interest would look to a Quality Account to understand what an organisation is doing well; where improvements in service quality are required; what priorities for improvement are for the coming year; and how involved users of services, staff, and others with an interest in the organisation are in determining these priorities for improvement.

Quality Accounts will improve public accountability and engage the leaders of an organisation in their quality improvement agenda. Public accountability comes from the presentation of honest, rounded and meaningful information regarding quality of services into the public domain. The leaders of an organisation will be engaged in the quality improvement agenda both in order to achieve public accountability but also as a result of it.

Quality Accounts are therefore a key component of the overall framework. The purpose and proposed content of a Quality Account, and the processes that should be in place to produce one, have been shaped by a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process and the successful introduction of quality reporting for 2008-09 by NHS foundation trusts and by NHS trusts in the east of England. Work on this has been led by the Department, in partnership with Monitor, the Care Quality Commission and NHS East of England.

The primary legislation for Quality Accounts in the Health Act 2009 set out the broad principle that all NHS providers should produce an annual account of the quality of their healthcare services. Because we are committed to developing our approach to Quality Accounts in partnership with the NHS, and also with patients, their carers, the wider public as well as professional and academic stakeholders, the Health Act left detailed implementation to be achieved by way of secondary legislation.

Following the collaborative design work, we set out our proposals for Quality Accounts in a consultation document, "The Framework for Quality Accounts: a consultation on the proposals", the public consultation on which ran from 17 September 2009 to 10 December 2009.

Around 170 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation, and proposals attracted wide support. In response to detailed representations, we modified and clarified our original proposals. In summary:

we made the regulations less prescriptive about the number of priorities for quality improvement that a provider should set by removing the maximum and leaving that to local discretion;

we simplified the statement on participation in clinical audit;

we made clear in our guidance that providers should explain how participation in clinical audit and research improves patient care;

the information on data quality (inclusion of valid NHS number) will be supplied separately by admitted patient care, outpatient and accident and emergency;

ensuring that both Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) and Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) will be given the opportunity to comment on a provider's Quality Account;

the regulations are now less prescriptive about the number of priorities for quality improvement that a provider should set. A minimum has been set but no maximum requirement—this allows larger organisation to set a higher number of priorities;

the statement on participation in clinical audit has been simplified. The Department's response to the consultation acknowledges

that there is limited benefit in asking providers to calculate what percentage of patients were covered by the audits undertaken; departmental guidance will make it clear that providers when reporting on the number and type of clinical audits undertaken and the number of patients recruited to clinical research should explain how participation in both processes has improved patient care in their organisation;

the information on data quality (inclusion of valid NHS number) will be supplied separately by admitted patient care, outpatient and accident and emergency;

both LINKs and OSCs will be given the opportunity to comment on a provider's Quality Account as both organisations have roles to play in providing assurance over the content of a Quality Account; and

although some responses indicated that all providers, irrespective of their size, should produce a Quality Account, the majority view was that providers that do not have a significant NHS workload should be exempt. The definition of a small provider is based on the definition used in the Standard NHS Contract (those whose annual contract value is less than £130,000 and who employ 50 or fewer full-time employees) and will be used as the cut off for exemption from the requirement to produce a Quality Account.

These proposals will now be used to draft regulations that will shortly be laid before Parliament. These regulations will also set out the initial assurance mechanism for Quality Accounts—we will be consulting on proposals for a more formal mechanism later this year, the proposed content and manner of publication, and any exemptions that will apply in the first year.

For the first year of Quality Accounts all providers or sub-contractors of NHS services will have to produce a quality account unless they are exempted by the regulations. Their first Quality Accounts, covering activity in 2009-10, will be published this summer. We will also be publishing shortly a comprehensive toolkit to enable providers to produce Quality Accounts that their patients, the population they serve, and their own staff will recognise as a fair and balanced view of services.

The regulations exempt primary care and community health services from the quality account obligations. It is intended these services will be exempt only for the first year. We plan to introduce Quality Accounts for primary and community care sectors from 2011. An engagement and testing process, similar to that run within NHS foundation trusts and NHS East of England providers but focused on the particular needs of these two sectors, started in autumn 2009. The providers participating in the testing work are in NHS North East and NHS East Midlands, and a framework for test reporting will be published over the next few weeks, with a view to starting the pilots this spring and evaluating them in the summer. This exercise will help shape the development of Quality Accounts further as they begin to apply to all providers, and a further consultation on proposed regulations will therefore start later this year.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Policy Ministers

**The Minister for Pensions and the Ageing Society (Angela Eagle):** The Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Policy Ministers took place on 28 to 29 January 2010 in Barcelona, Spain. I represented the United Kingdom.

The priority for this informal meeting was to develop and deepen reflections on the employment strategy and social security issues under the post-2010 Lisbon strategy (EU 2020). This was accomplished through three plenary sessions.

The first session concentrated on the “crisis exit, and the maintenance of employment and inclusive labour markets”. The presidency emphasised the need to ensure that employment and social issues were properly addressed in EU 2020, although it was vital that these were considered in the wider economic context. During the discussion, member states stressed: the need for flexible labour markets alongside security for workers including active intervention to help those furthest from labour markets, especially women and the young; the importance of mainstreaming gender equality especially in the light of the demographic challenges of an ageing society affecting the whole European Union; and the focus on green jobs. I explained that the recent UK proposal for an EU Compact on Jobs and Growth supported the objective of more inclusive labour markets and investment in training, skills and education. I stressed that more collaboration on making work pay and pension reform will be important factors, and highlighted the need to work across all sectors of the European Council.

The second session focused on “new skills and changes in employment”. The presidency stressed the importance of investing in “human capital”; encouraging lifelong learning which would enhance the employability of workers. The delegations were in agreement that access

to training was vital throughout working life, and that vocational training could often be more appropriate than academic. While the importance of developing skills in new sectors was emphasised, there was awareness that it could be difficult to predict the final impact of the recession, and that it would be important to ensure workers had transferable skills, making them more flexible and adaptable.

In the final session, “Social Security and social cohesion”, the presidency had asked how the European Union should approach social security strategy in the future.

Delegations argued for better use of the Open Method of Co-ordination and wanted advice from the International Labour Organisation, such as the Decent Work Agenda, to be considered wherever relevant.

On pensions, many thought that this would continue to be a key issue throughout the European Union and that work was needed to assess the sustainability of pensions systems and how these had been affected by the crisis. Delegations were looking forward to the Council conclusions on this topic to be presented at the Employment and Social Policy Council in June, although some emphasised that future work must take account of the different systems in the member states rather than being a standard, generalised model.

In conclusion, the presidency agreed that a summary of the debate would be presented to Employment and Social Policy Council in March and then sent on to the European Council.

# Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5 February 2010

## TRANSPORT

### M1: Road Traffic

**Andrew Selous:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport if he will instruct the Highways Agency to make improvements to junction 10a of the M1 to reduce congestion; what assessment he has made of the effect of such congestion on the flow of traffic on the M1; and if he will make a statement. [316066]

**Mr. Khan:** Junction 10a is the responsibility of Luton borough council as the Local Highway Authority. Improvement of the junction was not included as a priority in the East of England's February 2009 Regional Funding Allocation advice to Government.

The Highways Agency are working closely with Luton borough council to find an appropriate proposal for improvements.

### Roads

**Mr. Goodwill:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many miles of road have been detrunked in each of the last 10 years. [316003]

**Chris Mole:** The lengths of road detrunked in the last 10 years under the New Deal Detrunking Programme are given in the following table:

Calendar year	Route length detrunked	
	km	miles
2000	0	0
2001	444.6	276.3
2002	1,123.4	698.0
2003	568.2	353.0
2004	392.5	243.9
2005	111.6	69.3
2006	109.4	68.0
2007	80.1	49.8
2008	126.3	78.5
2009	126.8	78.8
2010	0	0
Total	3,082.9	1,915.6

R&D funding on farming and food per financial year

	£ million						
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
DEFRA agricultural R and D funding	81	75	78	78	75	68	65
Total BBSRC funding on farming and food research	132	129	138	150	171	185	189
DFID	n/a	30	38	36	35	38	41
Total	n/a	234	254	264	281	291	295

The road lengths given above are for the New Deal Detrunking Programme and do not include the more routine detrunking that will occur after construction of a bypass or new road.

### Travel: Costs

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what estimate he has made of the percentage change in real terms of the cost of travelling by (a) private car, (b) bus, (c) train and (d) domestic aeroplane since (i) 1980 and (ii) 1997. [315796]

**Mr. Khan:** Between 1980 and 2009 the real cost of motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle, declined by 17 per cent., bus and coach fares increased by 54 per cent. and rail fares increased by 50 per cent. in real terms. These figures are based on the transport components of the Retail Prices Index.

Between 1997 and 2009 the real cost of motoring, including the purchase of a vehicle, declined by 14 per cent., bus and coach fares increased by 24 per cent. and rail fares increased by 13 per cent. in real terms.

The costs of travelling by air are not available from the Retail Prices Index. However, the cost of the average UK one-way air fare, including taxes and charges, covering domestic flights fell by 35 per cent. between 1997 and 2008, the latest date for which figures are available.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Agriculture: Research

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) how much (a) his Department, (b) the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and (c) other public bodies spent on each category of agricultural research in each of the last 10 years; [315151]

(2) what estimate he has made of public expenditure on research and development on agriculture as a proportion of total spending on research and development in each of the last 10 years; [315153]

(3) what proportion of publicly-funded research and development related to agriculture is (a) basic and (b) applied research. [315162]

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** Over the last 10 years research programmes and public funders of agricultural R and D (including DEFRA) have been restructured and comparable data across this period are not available by categories. The following table presents the food and farming R and D funding by the main sponsors (DEFRA, BBSRC and DFID) since 2003-04.

## R&amp;D funding on farming and food per financial year

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Total Government (inc NERC, ESRC, FSA, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	368	365

£ million

## Note:

DEFRA's research is primarily applied strategic, BBSRC's is primarily fundamental and DFID funds research in and for developing countries.

National statistics on R and D spend are presented per calendar year, and the latest year available is 2007. The following table compares the combined DEFRA, BBSRC and DFID funding on farming and food R and

D with total spend on R and D between 2003 and 2008, indicating that Government expenditure in food and farming research has represented on average 1.2 per cent. of total R and D investment.

Year <sup>1</sup>	Total Government expenditure on R and D in the UK (£ million) <sup>2</sup>	Year <sup>3</sup>	Defra, BBSRC and DFID funding on agricultural R and D (£ million)	Ratio (percentage)
2008	n/a	2008-09	295	n/a
2007	25423	2007-08	291	1.14
2006	23410	2006-07	281	1.20
2005	22106	2005-06	264	1.19
2004	20242	2004-05	254	1.25
2003	19727	2003-04	234	1.19

<sup>1</sup> Expenditure shown by calendar year.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Office for National Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Expenditure shown for financial year.

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/tsdataset.asp?vlnk=532&More=N&All=Y>

In 2007-08, over 68 per cent. of public investment on food and farming research and development supported applied (strategic and specific) research (based on the international Frascati coding definitions), with the remainder for basic research.

Source:

<http://www.dius.gov.uk/~media/publications/GO-Science/UK-Cross-Government-Food-Research-Strategy>

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate his Department has made of the return on investment in agricultural research and development. [315152]

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** DEFRA has not carried out a full assessment of return on its investment on agricultural R and D. DEFRA R and D has been commissioned to develop evidence to inform policy development or develop solutions which underpin policy objectives.

In 2006 DEFRA assessed the rationale for investment in animal and plant genetics to underpin breeding. A review of returns on R and D investment<sup>1</sup> was commissioned to inform this assessment, which considered relevant UK studies and their estimates of the rates of return on agricultural R and D. These studies showed a great deal of variance in rates of return, which reflects both the length of time period studied and improvements in the estimation method employed, but the three most recent reported internal rates of return between 22-44 per cent.

Part of the economic benefit of investment in R and D arises from the support of research facilities which maintain strategic capabilities, and this is equally difficult to quantify. An independent report by DTZ consultants in 2008 estimated that the Institute for Animal Health work on bluetongue virus potentially saved the UK economy £485 million and 10,000 jobs in that year<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> DEFRA (2006). The rationale for DEFRA investment in R and D underpinning the genetic improvement of crops and animals—Project IF0101:

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=14403>

<sup>2</sup> The economic and social impact of the Institute for Animal Health's work on Foot and Mouth Disease:

<http://www.iah.bbsrc.ac.uk/ecosoc/docs/Foot-and-Mouth-Case-Study.pdf>

### Departmental Billing

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the average length of time taken by (a) his Department and (b) its agencies to pay invoices from (i) small and medium-sized enterprises and (ii) all creditors in the last 12 months. [315131]

**Dan Norris:** The Department produces statistics each month on the time taken to pay invoices and specifically within the 10 day target. This is reported to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills which collects 10 day payment performance data for 22 Departments and shares collated data with key external stakeholders (such as the CBI and IoD).

In December 2009 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs paid 99.92 per cent. of invoices within 10 days. From data held centrally, the performance of Natural England was 100 per cent., Animal Health Agency was 100 per cent. and Marine and Fisheries Agency was 99.62 per cent.

### SCOTLAND

#### Departmental Billing

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the average length of time taken by his Department to pay invoices from (a) small and medium-sized enterprises and (b) all creditors in the last 12 months. [315127]

**Ann McKechin:** The Prime Minister announced in October 2008 that all central Government Departments will aim to pay invoices within 10 days. The Scotland Office does not differentiate between creditors and endeavours to pay all valid invoices within 10 days of receipt. The Scotland Office have managed to meet this target so far in 99.1 per cent. of cases in 2009-10.

#### Departmental Manpower

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many performance reviews were undertaken in respect of staff of (a) his Department in each of the last five years; in how many cases performance was rated as unsatisfactory or below; how many staff left as a direct result of such a rating; and what percentage of full-time equivalent staff this represented. [313825]

**Ann McKechin:** All the staff in the Scotland Office are on secondment from the Scottish Executive or the Ministry of Justice. The Office follows the relevant performance appraisal schemes for each of those parent bodies, and as such, all staff are subject to annual performance review. Details of the exact number of performance reviews undertaken would be a matter for the parent bodies. No staff are currently subject to poor performance procedures nor have there been any instances in the last five years.

### HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

#### Reprography: Paper

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission what the average purchase price, excluding value added tax was of a 500 sheet ream of white A4 photocopier paper for use in the House of Commons; and how much the House of Commons Commission spent on photocopier paper in the latest year for which figures are available. [314938]

**Nick Harvey:** The House Administration spent a total of £129,506 excluding VAT on A4 80 gsm paper for use in photocopiers at an average cost of £2.15 per 500 sheet ream during the period 1 January to 31 December 2009.

### CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### Departmental Accountancy

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport whether any written instructions have been provided to his Department's Accounting Officer in accordance with paragraph 5.5 of the Ministerial Code since 1997. [315322]

**Mr. Simon:** There have been no instances since 1997 when the Minister in charge of the Department has provided the Department's Accounting Officer with written instructions in accordance with paragraph 5.5 of the Ministerial Code.

#### Departmental Recruitment

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) how many job vacancies in his Department and its agencies were filled through using external recruitment in the last year for which figures are available; [315213]

(2) how many job vacancies in his Department and its agencies were filled through external recruitment in the last year for which figures are available. [315217]

**Mr. Simon:** Six vacancies were filled by DCMS through external recruitment during 2009. Our agency the Royal Parks have filled 14 jobs through external recruitment.

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much his Department and its agencies spent on external recruitment consultants in the last 12 months. [315214]

**Mr. Simon:** In the last 12 months neither DCMS nor the Royal Parks have used recruitment consultants for external recruitments.

#### Digital Broadcasting: Scotland

**Danny Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport pursuant to the answer of 26 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 777W, on digital broadcasting: Scotland, how many meetings with small local radio stations in Scotland have been held to date; and with which stations meetings have been held. [315682]

**Mr. Simon:** My Department has held two local radio summits with the commercial radio representative body RadioCentre, to discuss the effects of the Digital Radio Switchover with small station owners. This included representatives of radio stations in Scotland.

#### Gambling: Licensing

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport whether he plans to review the power of local authorities to monitor the activities of licensed social clubs in respect of gambling and gaming. [315427]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** There are no specific plans to review the power of local authorities to monitor the activities of licensed social clubs in respect of gambling and gaming. However, together with the Gambling Commission and local authority representatives, we will continue to monitor the operation and effectiveness of the regulatory regime established by the Gambling Act 2005.

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport whether a club premises certificate enables social clubs to facilitate the playing of poker games with cash prizes. [315428]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** A Club Premises Certificate is issued under the Licensing Act 2003 (the 2003 Act) and does not authorise social clubs to facilitate the playing of poker games with cash prizes. A certificate relates solely to licensable activities under the 2003 Act and does not confer any entitlements provided for by the Gambling Act 2005, such as offering facilities for gambling.

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many prosecutions of unlicensed poker rooms by the Gambling Commission resulted in a conviction in each of the last three years.

[315429]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** To date, there have been no prosecutions by the Gambling Commission against unlicensed poker rooms that have resulted in convictions. However, the Commission continues to work closely with local authorities to tackle illegal poker including, where appropriate, making objections to club gaming permit applications and taking enforcement action against poker played without the necessary authorisation. The Commission has also been working with the licensed trade to provide guidance on the regulations governing the playing of poker in pubs.

#### Newspaper Press

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport with reference to the contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport of 13 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 290WH, on local authority newspapers, what the timetable is for asking (a) the Office of Fair Trading and (b) Ofcom to consider the potential impact of local authority newspapers on the paid-for newspaper market.

[314941]

**Mr. Simon:** The Government are still considering their response to the Audit Commission's report on this subject and will respond in due course.

#### Playing Fields: Coventry

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps his Department is taking to retain playing fields in Coventry.

[315943]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** Playing fields now enjoy the best protection ever through Government planning regulations and arrangements overseen by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Schools in England need permission from the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families before they can sell any school playing fields or any part of a school playing field.

Under planning guidance, local authorities are required to protect all open space which communities need. Sport England is a statutory consultee on all planning applications affecting local authority owned playing fields. The latest published statistics for 2007-08 show that out of 1,287 planning applications proposing development on playing fields referred to Sport England in 2007-08, 96.3 per cent. led to improved or protected sports provision.

From 6 April 2009, the protection the Government provide for larger playing fields was also extended to cover smaller fields.

As a result of this change a local authority now has to consult Sport England on any planning application in relation to playing fields where the playing field includes a playing pitch of 0.2 ha where the proposal is likely to prejudice the use or lead to the loss of use of land being used as a playing field.

## JUSTICE

### Corruption: Public Service

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the written ministerial statement of 19 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 13WS, on the UK Foreign Bribery Strategy, which Departments and agencies will be regular members of the Foreign Bribery Strategy Board.

[313743]

**Mr. Straw:** The following Departments and agencies are regular members of the Foreign Bribery Strategy Board:

Attorney-General's Office, Association of Chief Police Officers, Cabinet Office, City of London Police, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Office, Crown Prosecution Service, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for International Development, Export Credit Guarantee Department, Financial Services Authority, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence Police and Guarding Agency, Office of Government Commerce, Serious Fraud Office and UK Trade and Investment.

Other Departments and agencies are invited as required by the agenda.

### David Kelly Death Inquiry

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Lewes of 1 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 113W, on the David Kelly death inquiry, whether Lord Hutton made that recommendation after consultation with Dr Kelly's family; and whether Dr Kelly's family has been given access to the post mortem examination report.

[316102]

**Mr. Wills:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Lewes (Norman Baker) on 1 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 113W. No determination has been made that the medical reports and photographs connected to the death of Dr. David Kelly should be closed for 70 years. Rather, Lord Hutton requested that the post mortem examination report relating to Dr. Kelly not be disclosed for 70 years because he was aware of the distress that could be caused to Dr. Kelly's wife and daughters. Disclosure of information during the course of the inquiry to any party to the proceedings was a matter for the inquiry and is not a matter on which the Government are able to comment.

### Departmental Accountability

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether any written instructions have been provided to his Department's Accounting Officer in accordance with paragraph 5.5 of the Ministerial Code since 1997.

[315324]

**Mr. Wills:** Since 1997 no written instructions have been provided to accounting officers of the Ministry of Justice or its predecessors, the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Lord Chancellor's Department, in accordance with paragraph 5.5 of the Ministerial Code.

### Departmental Consultants

**Julia Goldsworthy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much consultants employed by his Department and its agencies have been paid (a) in total and (b) in reimbursable expenses in each of the last 10 years. [313998]

**Mr. Straw:** The information requested is as follows.

(a) The Office of Government Commerce (OGC) collates dates on consultancy expenditure as part of its Consultancy Value Programme which assists Departments in driving greater value from Government's use of consultants. The Ministry's expenditure on consultancy for 2007-08 is reported as £56 million and can be found in the following link:

[http://www.ogc.gov.uk/professional\\_services\\_consultancy\\_value\\_programme.asp](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/professional_services_consultancy_value_programme.asp)

Expenditure for 2008-09 is £49.7 million and will be reported soon on the same website.

The OGC definition of consultancy is broad and includes professional services provided by, for example, lawyers, surveyors and architects and the employment of specialists on an interim basis to deliver project solutions, providing expertise for a defined period of time that is not available in-house.

Both the 2007-08 and 2008-09 figures reflect expenditure by the Ministry of Justice headquarters, Her Majesty's Courts Service, the Tribunals Service, and the National Offender Management Service (except for the Probation Service).

The Ministry was established in May 2007 so data is not available prior to 2007-08 in its current form.

(b) Expenses incurred by consultants in the course of Ministry of Justice business are normally included within their overall bills and are therefore included within the figures stated in part (a). The amount attributable to expenses can be disaggregated from the total only at disproportionate cost.

The costs of business related travel and accommodation by consultants may sometimes be met directly by the Ministry through contracted booking agents or by Government Procurement Card. Occasionally consultants may also claim for reimbursement of expenses met, in the first instance, from their own pocket. It is not possible to identify amounts relating specifically to consultants in any of these cases without incurring the disproportionate cost of examining huge numbers of supporting records held locally across the business.

**Julia Goldsworthy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many consultants his Department and its predecessors and its agencies have employed in each of the last 10 years; and how many hours were worked by such consultants for his Department and its agencies in each such year. [314020]

**Mr. Straw:** The Ministry of Justice was formed on 9 May 2007. This merger included the former Department of Constitutional Affairs and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). NOMS previously formed part of the Home Office.

Availability of the data requested is therefore incomplete due to several machinery of Government and organisational changes which meant that procurement for my Department was not centralised prior to April 2009, and this data could therefore be gathered only at disproportionate cost.

However, a manual data collection exercise for the period April 2008 to March 2009 was concluded on 31 October 2009. The scope of the manual data collection exercise was limited to NOMS (excluding Probation) and Access to Justice (excluding Legal Services Commission) and did not cover any non-departmental public bodies.

Using the data received, there were 694 consultants/interim managers working for the Ministry of Justice in the financial year of 2008-09.

Limitations with the collected data only make it possible to provide the total number of consultants/interim managers for 2008-09 without any breakdown of the specific hours worked.

### Departmental Manpower

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many employees in (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies are in transition prior to being managed out; how long on average the transition window between notification and exit has been in (i) his Department and its predecessors and (ii) each of its agencies in each of the last five years; what estimate he has made of the salary costs of staff in transition in each such year; and what proportion of employees in transition were classed as being so for more than six months in each year. [313237]

**Mr. Wills:** Currently, there are 520 employees in the Ministry of Justice (including all agencies) who are in transition after accepting a voluntary early departure on severance or retirement terms. The breakdown of staff across the Ministry is as follows: two from the Office for the Public Guardian, 308 from the Access to Justice group, 199 from the National Offender Management Service and Her Majesty's Prison Service, 11 from the Corporate Performance Group. The majority are due to leave the Ministry within the next two to three months and the terms are governed by the Civil Service Compensation scheme. There are also 185 employees across the Ministry actively seeking permanent re-deployment following organisational change programmes.

For the early departure, the term 'transition time' is defined as the elapsed time from a formal agreement to leave to the actual date of departure. For redeployment, it is the elapsed time from the re-organisation occurring to the individual taking up a new work post. The average transition time is 90 days. There are 10 staff who have remained on the redeployment list, as an exceptional basis, for longer than 6 months. Whilst employees are on the redeployment list, or have accepted voluntary early departure, they continue to undertake meaningful work duties.

The average transition time in previous years has been 90 days.

The department is unable to provide the average salary costs for staff in transition in each year. This information is not held centrally and obtaining it would incur a disproportionate cost as the department currently operates several pay and HR structures and would be reliant on a number of different sources to establish the information requested.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many performance reviews were undertaken in respect of staff of (a) his Department and its predecessors and (b) its agencies in each of the last five years; in how many cases performance was rated as unsatisfactory or below; how many staff left as a direct result of such a rating; and what percentage of full-time equivalent staff this represented. [313827]

**Mr. Wills:** Staff employed by the Ministry are subject to differing performance management arrangements according to their terms and conditions and depending on which part of the Ministry of Justice or its agencies they are employed in.

For all employees, performance management is a continuous process with annual and mid-year formal performance reviews of progress against objectives. The Ministry's performance management system requires poor performance to be addressed when it occurs and not simply at specific points in the reporting year. Where appropriate, additional coaching and support is provided to employees to enable them to reach and maintain the required standards of performance appropriate to their roles. However, when employees are unable to meet and maintain acceptable standards of performance, sanctions up to and including dismissal are available.

#### Senior civil servants

Members of the senior civil service (SCS) are subject to a common performance management system based on relative assessment of achievement. Since 2007, the system has had four performance categories. Performance group four denotes performance not meeting the required standard. Prior to this, the performance management system had three performance categories: top, middle and lower tranche. The number of SCS employees receiving either a lower tranche or performance group four assessment is set out as follows.

Year of award	Number in lowest performance group	Percentage of SCS staff
2009	15	5.9
2008	14	5.7
2007 <sup>1</sup>	8	5.6
2006 <sup>1</sup>	10	6.7
2005 <sup>1</sup>	12	9.1

<sup>1</sup> Refers only to former Department for Constitutional Affairs.

#### Non-SCS employees

Separate performance management arrangements (both in respect to in year and end of year assessment) exist for staff in grades below the SCS. Unlike the SCS, where employees are subject to relative peer group assessment with a guideline distribution between performance groups, below the SCS performance assessment is linked solely to the achievement of an individual's work objectives. Ministry of Justice (excluding the National Offender Management Services) employees receive annual performance appraisals that indicate one of three performance markings—"Outstanding", "Effective" and "Improvement Required". The number of employees receiving an "Improvement Required" or equivalent during the past five years is as follows:

Year of award	Number in lowest performance group	Percentage of staff <sup>1</sup>
2009	137	0.6
2008	107	0.4

Year of award	Number in lowest performance group	Percentage of staff <sup>1</sup>
2007	49	0.2
2006 <sup>2</sup>	25	0.2
2005 <sup>2</sup>	25	0.2

<sup>1</sup> The percentage does not reflect all poor performers in so far as the appraisal system does not capture those individuals who are exited for capability and performance reasons within a reporting year. The percentages are also different to the SCS position because the performance assessment basis is different.

<sup>2</sup> Figures for 2005 and 2006 omit staff from the former magistrates courts service who transferred to the Ministry in 2005. Details relating to these staff are included from 2007, following the introduction of common terms and conditions.

As the award of an unsatisfactory performance marking invokes poor performance procedures but does not directly result in dismissal it has not been possible to provide information on the number of staff who have left as a direct result of an "Improvement Required" rating during the past five years without incurring disproportionate costs. However, we can confirm that in 2009, of the 134 staff below the SCS who were judged "Improvement Required", 22 are no longer employed by the Ministry of Justice.

Appraisals are held annually for staff in the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in grades below the SCS and there are four possible ratings: "Exceeded", "Achieved", "Almost Achieved", and "Unacceptable". The number of staff in NOMS who received an "Unacceptable" marking during the past five years, and the total number of recorded markings is as follows:

For year	Number in lowest performance group	Percentage of staff <sup>1</sup>
2004-05	96	0.22
2005-06	134	0.33
2006-07 <sup>2</sup>	79	0.25
2007-08	77	0.19
2008-09	72	0.16

<sup>1</sup> The percentage does not reflect all poor performers in so far as the appraisal system does not capture those individuals who are exited for capability and performance reasons within a reporting year. The percentages are also different to the SCS position because the performance assessment basis is different.

<sup>2</sup> There were fewer markings recorded in 2006-07 due to a change in reporting systems.

Information on the number of staff who received an "Unacceptable" marking and then left NOMS within the following year is contained in the following table (departures could be for any reason).

For year	Staff receiving unacceptable markings who then left within one year	
	Number	As percentage of all staff
2004-05	45	46.9
2005-06	75	56.0
2006-07	37	46.8
2007-08	29	37.7
2008-09	10	13.9

NOMS processes mirror those in the rest of the Ministry in that performance management is a continuous process, based upon agreed objectives and in-year reviews. The "Unacceptable" marking does not automatically result in dismissal. However, employment may be terminated where the employee fails to meet the appropriate standard despite appropriate warnings and support. It has not been possible to provide information on the number of NOMS employees who have left the service as a direct result of an "Unacceptable" rating as the information is unavailable.

### Departmental Recruitment

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much his Department and its agencies spent on recruitment consultants in the last 12 months. [315292]

**Mr. Wills:** The majority of permanent recruitment is managed internally by the Ministry's HR function. For specialist or senior vacancies, it is sometimes necessary, however, to use recruitment consultants to access a wider pool of talent.

The Ministry's accounting systems do not separately identify expenditure on recruitment consultants. Payments to recruitment consultants are recorded within the wider categories of recruitment expenditure. To specifically identify expenditure on recruitment consultants would involve the disproportionate cost of examining a large number of invoices held locally across the business.

Additionally, recruitment consultants are usually involved in the continuing supply of temporary and contract staff where the fee paid represents the amount paid directly to the contractor, plus the agency's management fee which includes their charge for recruiting the contractor. The management fee element can vary depending on the terms negotiated for individual contracts. Fees to recruitment consultants for the continuing supply of contract and agency staff can only be distinguished from fees for specific recruitment campaigns at a disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much his Department and its agencies have spent on font licensing in the last three years. [315331]

**Mr. Wills:** Payments by the Ministry of Justice for software application licences, for example for Microsoft Windows, include an amount in respect of core fonts used within the application. Software publishers license fonts from foundries and are responsible for passing on the royalty to the foundries from the licence fee. The element of the total licence amount that relates to fonts is not identifiable to the Ministry of Justice as the purchaser of the software application licence.

The Ministry of Justice does, however, make some payments directly in respect of the licence of specialised fonts used in publications. The amounts are not separately identified in accounting records. Payments are normally made via the Government Procurement Card and could be identified only at disproportionate cost by examining thousands of statements held locally around the business.

However, we are aware that £437 has been paid in respect of five font licences in the 2009-10 year to date by the Ministry's central design team which is responsible for group wide publications.

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many job vacancies in his Department and its agencies were filled through external recruitment in the last 12 months. [315332]

**Mr. Wills:** For the period 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009 the Ministry of Justice and its agencies, including the National Offender Management Service, filled a total of 4,175 job vacancies through external recruitment. The vacancies advertised were for permanent as well as fixed-term posts.

The Ministry recruits in line with the Civil Service Commissioners' recruitment principles and is committed to recruitment on merit through fair and open competition.

### Driving Offences: Fines

**Mr. Goodwill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in other EU member states on the implementation of the Council Framework Decision 2005/214/JHA on the cross-border collection of fines for motoring offences. [316000]

**Bridget Prentice:** My officials have been in contact with officials at the European Commission, the Scottish and Northern Irish Ministries of Justice both prior to and post-implementation of this EU directive. They conducted a webcast on 9 October 2009 in conjunction with SPARKS in which a member of the EC responsible for MRFP also participated; they attended a European workshop in Stockholm on 15 October 2009 organised by the Commission; and they visited their counterparts in the Netherlands' Central Authority (CJIB) on 4 December 2009.

### Fines

**Mr. Goodwill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many applications have been received from other EU member states for the payment of fines under the terms of the Council Framework Decision 2005/214/JHA on the application of the principle of mutual recognition of financial penalties; and how many such applications have proceeded to court. [315999]

**Bridget Prentice:** The Central Authority for England and Wales has received four mutual recognition of financial penalties (MRFP) applications from EU member states since the Framework Decision was implemented on 1 October 2009. These applications concerned offences in the Netherlands which were convicted prior to the implementation date and therefore had to be returned to the originating state. No applications have yet proceeded to court.

### Freedom of Information

**John Hemming:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 9 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 351W, on freedom of information, if he will bring forward proposals to ensure that public bodies which enter into partnership with other public bodies are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. [315621]

**Mr. Wills:** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) gives the Secretary of State the power to extend the coverage of the Act, by way of a section 5 order, to organisations that he considers to exercise public functions or deliver public authority services under contract.

On 16 July 2009, the Government published its response to the consultation on extending the scope of the FOIA to cover additional bodies by way of a section 5 order. The Government response proposed an initial, focused section 5 order and noted its intention to consult Academies, ACPO, Financial Ombudsman Service and UCAS on their possible inclusion in such an order.

The Government are keeping the possibility of further section 5 orders under review.

### Injunctions

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme of 28 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 422W, on Trafigura: injunctions, when he expects to announce the result of his assessment of the effects of the practice of granting injunctions which prohibit the reporting of the grant of the injunction. [315309]

**Bridget Prentice:** At my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor's (Mr. Straw) request, senior officials at the Ministry of Justice have

met with representatives of the national press to discuss the issues raised by the Trafigura case and the use of so-called super-injunctions generally. The Justice Secretary is considering matters in the light of this, including engaging with the senior judiciary. He will make a statement to the House after that.

### Knives: Sentencing

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many retailers have been (a) cautioned, (b) fined and (c) imprisoned for selling knives to people under the necessary purchasing age in each police force area in each year since 1998-99. [315060]

**Claire Ward:** The requested information is shown in the following table.

*Cautions, fines and custodial sentences for selling a knife to a person under age<sup>1</sup> by criminal justice area, 1998 to 2008*

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Bedfordshire</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Custodial sentence	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Cumbria</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Derbyshire</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Custodial sentence	0	0	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Devon and Cornwall</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Gloucestershire</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Greater Manchester</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	3	2
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Hampshire</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Hertfordshire</b>											
Cautions	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Lancashire</b>											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0



Cautions, fines and custodial sentences for selling a knife to a person under age<sup>1</sup> by criminal justice area, 1998 to 2008

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gwent											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	3	0	1	2	0	0	1	0
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Wales											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Wales											
Cautions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fines	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
England and Wales total											
Cautions	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1
Fines	2	1	0	8	10	14	6	25	43	29	22
Custodial sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<sup>1</sup> 16 as enacted by the Criminal Justice Act 1988 amended to 18 by Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Includes City of London and Metropolitan police force areas.

Note:

Where a criminal justice area does not appear in the table there have been no fines, custodial sentences or cautions issued in any of the years shown.

### Land Registry

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many properties registered with the Land Registry have changed ownership in each month since January 2009. [315654]

**Mr. Wills:** Land Registry is able to provide information on the total number of registered properties sold in each month from January 2009 to December 2009. As these figures are extracted using price paid data, no information is available for any properties which have not been sold. The only way to identify other changes of ownership would be to extract data regarding every application event over the time period asked for. This could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The figures are reflected in the following table:

Month	Vol sales
January 2009	27399
February 2009	28387
March 2009	37423
April 2009	40004
May 2009	46142
June 2009	53901
July 2009	63382
August 2009	58276
September 2009	57838
October 2009	64123
November 2009	57613
December 2009	66664

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the (a) mean and (b) median sale price in 2008-09 prices was of house sales registered with the Land Registry in each year since 2000. [315655]

**Mr. Wills:** Land Registry is able to provide data on the mean price paid of all residential sales registered in each year since 2000. Details of the percentage change on annual average prices has been calculated on the basis of the 2008 calendar year prices as the RPI data covering the 2008-09 financial year is not yet available.

This question has been answered on the basis of recorded sales figures in England and Wales. Land Registry does not hold the information requested on median price paid and could not produce it except at disproportionate cost.

The figures are reflected in the following table:

	Mean price paid in (£)	Mean price paid in £ (adjusted to 2008 prices) <sup>1</sup>	RPI index (1987 = 100)
2000	108,164	136,428	170.3
2001	119,275	147,838	173.3
2002	138,200	168,475	176.2
2003	156,154	185,008	181.3
2004	178,542	205,414	186.7
2005	189,580	212,093	192
2006	203,708	220,881	198.1
2007	219,408	228,116	206.6
2008	217,010	217,010	214.8
2009	213,370	214,468	213.7

<sup>1</sup> Prices adjusted using the UK all items Retail Prices Index (RPI)

### Youth Justice Board and Legal Services Commission: Sick Leave

**Mr. Burrowes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what estimate he has made of the number of working days lost per employee at (a) the Legal Services Commission and (b) the Youth Justice Board in the latest period for which figures are available; and what steps he is taking to reduce levels of staff absence at each body. [312509]

**Bridget Prentice:** The average number of days taken as sickness absence at the Legal Services Commission during 2008-09 was 7.98 per employee. This has decreased from 9.17 in 2007-08 and 10.7 in 2006-07.

The LSC has been reviewing its absence policy year-on-year in order to reduce absence levels. The target for 2009-10 is 7.66 days (a 4 per cent. reduction on 2008-09). Following the most recent review in 2009, online training has been further developed to support managers and absence trigger points (where the return to work meeting between the manager and employee become a more formal process) have been lowered to seven days. An absence panel has been set up to review any long-term sickness absence and ensure support systems such as occupational health referrals, home visits and the employee assistance programme are in place.

No days are recorded as having been lost as a result of staff being unable to make it to work due to adverse weather conditions or travel disruption as it is the LSC's policy to give line managers the flexibility to authorise home working where appropriate or convert any absences in these circumstances into annual, flexible or special leave.

In 2008-09, the average number of days taken as sickness absence at the Youth Justice Board was 3.7 days per employee. It has a robust attendance management policy in place outlining clearly line managers' responsibilities to support staff, manage absence and the actions they need to take at different trigger points. This includes interventions at cumulative absence and consecutive absence points, the requirement to conduct documented "return to work" interviews, line manager and/or occupational health and welfare services contact and formalised case conferences.

The YJB's HR team works closely with line managers across the business to monitor instances of sickness absences and provide advice, support and interventions, where necessary, to reduce the level of sickness absence even further. Sickness absence figures are also included in the YJB's "Organisational Health Indicators".

In addition the YJB runs a health and well-being programme to encourage staff to be aware of the health and fitness and take steps to improve their well-being. This includes access to eye tests, cycle to work schemes, discounted gym memberships, advice on tackling stress and access to health screening.

No days are recorded as having been lost as a result of staff being unable to make it to work due to adverse weather conditions or travel disruption as it is the YJB's policy to give line manager's the flexibility to authorise home working where appropriate or convert any absences in these circumstances into annual, flexible or special leave.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### British Council

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the reason for the cost of (a) IT for his Department and (b) the finance function for the British Council referred to in the publication *Benchmarking the Back Office: Central Government*; and if he will make a statement. [312682]

**Chris Bryant:** The information requested is as follows:

*Cost of IT for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)*

The figures reported in 'Benchmarking the Back Office: Central Government' equate to costs of £115 million in running and maintaining the FCO IT estate in 2008-2009. This reflects the fact that the FCO operates over a substantial global network on behalf of the Government overseas and needs to conform to strict security standards. The figure also includes temporary costs related to the transformation of our IT platforms. We expect IT costs to reduce following completion of this transformation.

*Finance function for the British Council*

The figures reported in 'Benchmarking the Back Office: Central Government' report were based on the British Council's published 2008-09 statutory accounts and include all UK and overseas transaction processing staff, corporate finance, management accounting, tax, treasury and training staff together with their share of IT and accommodation costs.

The British Council has embarked on a programme to double its cultural relations impact. This includes a global finance transformation project to ensure effective and efficient support services, which will deliver improved service quality and increased efficiency with significantly lower transactional costs.

## Departmental Billing

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the average length of time taken by (a) his Department and (b) its agencies to pay invoices from (i) small and medium-sized enterprises and (ii) all creditors in the last 12 months. [315132]

**Chris Bryant:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced in October 2008 that all central Government Departments would aim to pay invoices within 10 days.

In December 2009, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and FCO Services (its Trading Fund) together paid 97.5 per cent. of invoices within 10 days. This performance is an increase of 27.2 per cent. points compared to November 2008, when 70.3 per cent. of invoices were paid within 10 days.

We do not differentiate payments by supplier size as we have determined to pay all suppliers within 10 days.

This response relates to the FCO in the UK. Information regarding the status of suppliers overseas is not available without incurring disproportionate costs.

## Departmental ICT

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department and its agencies have spent on font licensing in the last three years. [315504]

**Chris Bryant:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has no font licensing agreements and no expenditure was incurred on font licensing in the last three years.

### Departmental Information Officers

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff in his Department and its agencies have the status of (a) embedded communicators and (b) are members of the Government Communications Network and are not listed in the Central Office of Information White Book. [315567]

**Chris Bryant:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold this information centrally and it is available only at disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Manpower

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many employees in (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies are in transition prior to being managed out; how long on average the transition window between notification and exit has been in (i) his Department and (ii) each of its agencies in each of the last five years; what estimate he has made of the salary costs of staff in transition in each such year; and what proportion of employees in transition were classed as being so for more than six months in each year. [313241]

**Chris Bryant:** As there were fewer than five cases, in line with Cabinet Office guidance, details are not provided to avoid revealing the identity of individuals and on grounds of confidentiality.

### Departmental Recruitment

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many job vacancies in his Department and its agencies were filled through external recruitment in the last year for which figures are available. [315503]

**Chris Bryant:** Since February 2009 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has filled 211 vacancies through external recruitment.

In the same period the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has also filled one vacancy at the Imperial War Museum through external recruitment.

### European Council

**Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose at the next meeting of the European Council at which the proposed inter-governmental conference is to be discussed, amendments under Article 48 of the Treaty on European Union to (a) assert the sovereignty of the UK and (b) ensure that the Declaration of Primacy No. 17 of the Lisbon Treaty shall not be deemed as being capable of being construed by UK courts as preventing Parliament (i) legislating expressly and inconsistently with and (ii) amending or overriding European legislation. [315344]

**Chris Bryant:** No.

**Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons he agreed at the meeting of the European Council in December

2009 to request that the European Parliament should not convene an intergovernmental conference; and if he will make it his policy to seek such a conference to be convened. [315345]

**Chris Bryant:** The European Parliament has no power to convene an intergovernmental conference.

### Iraq: Peacekeeping Operations

**John Hemming:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the UN in respect of the rules of engagement in the (a) Southern and (b) Northern No Fly Zones in Iraq between 1998 and 2002; [315619]

(2) what representations his Department has received in respect of the rules of engagement in the Southern No Fly Zones in Iraq between 1998 and 2002. [315620]

**Chris Bryant:** During the period in question the Department had a number of discussions with the UN and allies on the No Fly Zones in Iraq. The zones, established in support of UN Security Council Resolution 688, were justified under international law in response to a situation of overwhelming humanitarian necessity due to Saddam Hussein's violent oppression of Iraq's minority communities. Between 1998 and 2002 Saddam Hussein waged a systematic campaign against UK (and US) aircraft carrying out patrols—violating the No Fly Zones—designed to prevent a return to the brutal repression of the Kurdish and other minorities in the north and the Shi'a in the south. Our aircraft were authorised to respond to attacks solely in self-defence. All such defensive action was strictly limited to proportional responses against Iraqi weapons and facilities that posed a direct threat to coalition forces. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Lewis) will write to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley with more detail on the representations made between 1998 and 2002.

### Middle East: Armed Conflict

**Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 21 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 468W, on Palestinians: overseas aid, what assessment he has made of whether Israel is in compliance with its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention in respect of the population of Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [314058]

**Chris Bryant:** We have serious concerns about the Israeli restrictions on Gaza and the impact they have on the lives of Gazans. Although there is no permanent physical Israeli presence in Gaza, given the significant control that Israel has over Gaza's borders, airspace and territorial waters, Israel retains obligations under the fourth Geneva convention as an occupying power. The fourth Geneva convention is clear that an occupying power must co-operate in allowing the passage and distribution of relief consignments. The restrictions currently imposed on the passage of relief supplies are, as we see it, a disproportionate response to the security threat.

We have consistently pressed the Israeli Government to comply with their obligations under international law and allow passage of relief supplies. Although aid is entering Gaza, according to the UN this is insufficient to meet the needs of the Gazan people.

### USA

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to make an official visit to the United States. [315933]

**Chris Bryant:** For security and operational reasons, we do not announce visits by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary significantly in advance.

### USA: Nuclear Weapons

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the US administration on stockpiles of nuclear weapons; and what his policy is on the steps to be taken by the Government and the US administration on reducing such stockpiles. [315931]

**Chris Bryant:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton regularly discuss nuclear issues, and UK officials frequently discuss with the US the implementation of all aspects of the non-proliferation treaty including our article VI disarmament obligations.

We look forward to an agreement between the US and Russia to achieve significant cuts in their nuclear arsenals by agreeing a successor to the strategic arms reduction treaty. This will be a major contribution to our shared endeavour towards a world without nuclear weapons, and will help to build trust and pave the way for greater reductions.

The UK has taken a number of significant disarmament steps in recent years, and is committed to retaining only the minimum credible nuclear deterrent capability; we regularly review the number of warheads in the UK stockpile in that light. The UK firmly believes that sustainable global nuclear disarmament can only be achieved through a multilateral process, and stands ready to engage in a broader multilateral process when the conditions are right.

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the US administration on international nuclear proliferation. [315932]

**Chris Bryant:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discusses a range of international nuclear proliferation issues regularly with Secretary of State Clinton and the US Administration and did so most recently on 28 January 2010. My hon. Friend Mr. Ivan Lewis has done likewise with his counterparts. Strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and re-energising the nuclear non-proliferation treaty is a top foreign policy priority for the Government and the US Government.

### War Crimes: Arrest Warrants

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each representation he has received from the US State Department (a) orally and (b) in writing on UK procedures for the issue of arrest warrants in respect of foreign nationals alleged to have committed war crimes in the last 12 months. [315804]

**Chris Bryant:** I have not had any direct representations from the US State Department on UK procedures for the issue of arrest warrants in respect of foreign nationals alleged to have committed war crimes in the last 12 months. My officials have been asked by colleagues in the State Department for factual accounts of incidents in which such arrest warrants have been sought. There have been no written representations from the US State Department on this subject during this time.

### HEALTH

#### Cancer: Drugs

**Mr. Binley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many persons with cancer in Northampton South constituency did not receive drugs designed to prolong their life following a report for such drugs in the latest period for which figures are available. [315007]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** This information is not collected centrally. However this information might be available direct from Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust.

#### Drugs: Children In Care

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether medical practitioners are required to inform local authorities when they administer drugs to children in care. [316072]

**Ann Keen:** There is no requirement on medical practitioners to inform local authorities when administering drugs to child in care. However, treatment of a child, including the prescription or administering of drugs by medical practitioners, requires consent. In the case of children who lack the capacity to consent for themselves, a doctor would need to ask for consent from those with parental responsibility, which, for those on a care order, would be a local authority.

#### Drugs: Testing

**Jo Swinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has evaluated on the comparative (a) safety and (b) effectiveness of (i) human biology-based testing and (ii) animal testing of new drugs and treatments. [316006]

**Ann Keen:** The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is the competent authority responsible for the issuing on Marketing Authorisations (licences) and assessing Clinical Trial Applications for medicinal products and devices.

The MHRA has not directly evaluated any specific studies on the comparative safety and effectiveness of human biology testing and animal testing of new drugs and treatment. The MHRA has, however, been indirectly

involved in a number of initiatives in this field that are actively evaluating the replacement of whole animal studies with suitable alternatives, including the use of human tissue samples. Today's approaches to drug development, involving an integrated programme of non-clinical testing and clinical trials, have been built up on a rational and scientific basis for more than 30 years. At present there are no validated and established laboratory methods available to totally replace animal testing of medicinal products.

#### Health Protection Agency

**Robert Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent progress has been made on the Health Protection Agency's Project Chrysalis; and if he will make a statement. [316063]

**Gillian Merron:** The Health Protection Agency was given approval of its strategic outline case for Project Chrysalis in August 2008 and since then has been working on the next stage, the outline business case.

**Robert Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has for the future of the Health Protection Agency site at Porton Down; and if he will make a statement. [316065]

**Gillian Merron:** The Department will consider the Health Protection Agency's business case for redevelopment of its facilities at Porton Down (Project Chrysalis) when it is submitted.

#### Health Protection Agency: Finance

**Robert Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the Health Protection Agency's Project Chrysalis had cost on the latest date for which figures are available. [316062]

**Gillian Merron:** The Health Protection Agency's project Chrysalis has spent a total of £9.4 million from its inception to 31 December 2009.

#### Health Protection Agency: Location

**Robert Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on the proposed relocation of the Health Protection Agency Centre for Emergency Preparedness from Porton Down to Harlow, Essex; and if he will make a statement. [316064]

**Gillian Merron:** Written representations have been received from the hon. Member for Salisbury to the Minister for Public Health in July 2009 and from the Leader of Wiltshire council to departmental officials in January 2010.

#### Health Protection Agency: Manpower

**Robert Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many employees work at the Health Protection Agency's Porton Down site. [316061]

**Gillian Merron:** The Health Protection Agency's Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response, at Porton Down, directly employs 598 staff. After allowing for part-time working, this equates to 578 whole time equivalents.

#### Health Services: Disabled

**Mr. Harper:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the £340 million included in primary care trust (PCT) baseline allocations for the three years from 2008-09 to 2010-11 for disabled children's services under the Child Health Strategy has been allocated to each PCT. [316101]

**Ann Keen:** Individual primary care trusts (PCTs) allocations are not broken down or ring-fenced into funding for individual policies such as the Child Health Strategy. It is for PCTs to decide how best to deliver the national and local requirements of the NHS Operating Framework, including how much resource to invest on individual priorities.

#### Hospital Beds

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds (a) there were and (b) were occupied in each type of hospital ward in 2008-09. [315539]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The number of occupied and available bed days and day only beds is collected annually, from national health service providers by ward classification. The following tables show the number of available beds by ward classification and the occupancy rate for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009:

*Average daily number of available and occupied beds in wards open overnight by ward classification, England, 2008-09*

Ward classification	Available beds	Occupied beds
All ward types	159,386	136,203
Intensive care: neonates	1,805	1,321
Intensive care: paediatric	317	231
Intensive care: wholly or mainly adult	3,727	3,046
Terminally ill/palliative care: wholly or mainly adult	458	365
Younger physically disabled	487	378
Other general and acute: neonates and children	8,123	5,332
Other general and acute: elderly: normal care	19,382	17,898
Other general and acute: elderly: limited care	1,413	1,237
Other general and acute: other	85,976	75,691
Maternity	8,386	5,532
Mental illness: children: short stay	528	389
Mental illness: children: long stay	29	23
Mental illness: elderly: short stay	6,344	5,147
Mental illness: elderly: long stay	2,047	1,646
Mental illness: other ages: secure unit	3,292	3,003
Mental illness: other ages: short stay	11,242	10,040
Mental illness: other ages: long stay	2,948	2,532

*Average daily number of available and occupied beds in wards open overnight by ward classification, England, 2008-09*

Ward classification	Available beds	Occupied beds
Learning disabilities: children: short stay	186	115
Learning disabilities: children: long stay	19	14
Learning disabilities: other ages: secure unit	539	504
Learning disabilities: other ages: short stay	938	709
Learning disabilities: other ages: long stay	1,200	1,051

*Average daily number of available beds in wards open day only, England, 2008-09*

	Available beds	Occupied beds
Total	10,959	9,717
Neonates and children	798	573
Other ages	10,161	9,143

*Average daily number of available and occupied residential beds, England, 2008-09*

	Available beds	Occupied beds
Total	2,941	2,568
Mental illness	1,186	1,017
Learning disabilities	1,646	1,477
Other	109	74

Source:

Department of Health form KH03

### NHS Trusts: Registration

**Anne Milton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS trusts did not submit an application for registration with the Care Quality Commission by 29 January 2010. [315947]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The information has been provided by the Care Quality Commission. Of the 382 trusts due to submit an application for registration with the Care Quality Commission, 376 did so by 29 January. Of the six applications which were not submitted, two were late. The remaining four did not submit applications by 29 January with the prior agreement of the Commission, because they are in the process of transferring registered services.

### NHS: Finance

**Norman Lamb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on (a) management, (b) administration and (c) estates staff by each (i) strategic health authority, (ii) primary care trust, (iii) NHS trust and (iv) non-departmental public body for which his Department is responsible in each year since 1997. [315586]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The information in respect of strategic health authorities, primary care trusts and NHS trusts has been placed in the Library. The Department holds information at organisation level for seven years, therefore 2002-03 is the earliest period for which figures are available.

The information requested for non-departmental public bodies is not held centrally.

### NHS: Standards

**Sandra Gidley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department took to inform those not party to the negotiations that discussions on the Quality and Outcomes Framework had been postponed. [315251]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The Department issued a press notice on 15 September 2009 announcing that as part of the agreement with the British Medical Association on a vaccination programme for the at-risk groups against swine flu, that there will be no changes to the Quality and Outcomes Framework in 2010-11. A copy has been placed in the Library.

In addition, NHS Employers who negotiate changes to the General Medical Services contract on behalf of the Department published details on the conclusion of the negotiations on its website on 14 January 2010, with a parallel announcement to local primary care trusts issued by NHS Primary Care Commissioning in their newsletter on 13 January 2010.

Details can be found on NHS Employers website at: [http://www.nhsemployers.org/PayAndContracts/GeneralMedicalServicesContract/LatestNews-GMS/Pages/Agreement\\_reachedonGeneralMedicalServices%E2%80%99contract\\_negotiations.aspx](http://www.nhsemployers.org/PayAndContracts/GeneralMedicalServicesContract/LatestNews-GMS/Pages/Agreement_reachedonGeneralMedicalServices%E2%80%99contract_negotiations.aspx)

### Nurses: Schools

**Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified school nurses are employed in schools in (a) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency and (b) the London Borough of Bexley. [314291]

**Ann Keen:** The information is not held in the format requested. Information is available for the number of qualified nursing staff in the school nursing area of work, directly employed by national health service organisations. The two NHS organisations which employ school nurses in the Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency or the London borough of Bexley are Bromley Hospitals NHS Trust and Bexley Care Trust. The NHS Information Centre reports that there was one qualified nursing staff in the school nursing area of work in the Bromley Hospitals NHS Trust as at 30 September 2008. At a local level, the staff who carry out school nursing roles carry out a range and variety of other duties in addition to their school nursing role and therefore may have different job titles. Bexley Care Trust did not report any school nursing staff on their 2008 census return. However, recent correspondence with the Trust has revealed that this was due to a local coding issue. We advise contacting Bexley Care Trust directly to obtain their figures.

### DEFENCE

#### Air Force: Deployment

**Dr. Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the average unit tour interval was for each (a) aircraft and (b) helicopter crew type in the Royal Air Force in the latest period for which figures are available. [314479]

**Bill Rammell:** The average unit tour interval for each RAF aircraft and helicopter crew type, including those in Joint Helicopter Command, as at 1 February 2010 is provided in the table. The roles and deployment patterns vary between each type of aircraft and this is reflected in the tour intervals experienced by their aircrew. Aircrew when not deployed on operations continue to meet defence commitments and conduct training.

Aircraft type	Average tour interval	Tours
Hercules C130K	42 days	Afghanistan
Hercules C130J	92 days	Afghanistan and Iraq
Hercules C130K	90 days	Falkland Islands
Sentinel	63 days	Afghanistan
Tristar	70 days	Afghanistan
VC10	20 months	Falkland Islands
Tornado GR4	18 months	Afghanistan
Typhoon	45 Weeks	Falkland Islands
BAE125	3 months	Afghanistan
BAE146	3 months	Afghanistan
Chinook	42 weeks	Afghanistan
Merlin	44 weeks	Afghanistan
Sea King	17 months	Falkland Islands

#### Armed Forces: Health Services

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he decided to hold a review of out-of-hours primary care for service personnel; what the terms of reference are of that review; and when it will be concluded. [316071]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** The review was initiated by the Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff for Health in January 2010. It will look at the current provision of out-of-hours primary care cover for service personnel, and consider other options for providing a service that is both efficient and cost-effective, while fully meeting the needs of patients. An interim report is due in March 2010, from which further plans will be made.

#### Armed forces: Housing

**Danny Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 26 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 792-4W, on armed forces: housing, to whom the 370 houses in Scotland sold by his Department to persons other than registered social landlords or local authorities were sold. [314919]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** Of the 370 houses sold by the MOD in financial year 2008-09, other than to registered social landlords or local authorities, 321 houses in the Moray council area were sold through open competition in two separate transactions to Julian Hodge Bank Ltd., following informal discussions with the local authority and registered social landlords. The remaining 49 houses were sold individually on the open market, further details of which can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Danny Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 517-18W, on armed forces: housing, for what reason Helensburgh was chosen for the small-scale representative assessment; whether his Department plans to undertake further assessments;

and whether the Helensburgh assessment is assumed to be representative of the housing stock held by his Department in Scotland. [314920]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** As stated in my earlier response of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 517-18W, the small scale representative survey at Helensburgh was carried out in order to assess proposed future investment priorities at that location. We have no plans to carry out any assessments for Energy Performance certificates on any further properties. No assumptions have been made as to the wider implications of the Helensburgh assessment.

As the hon. Member will already be aware, MOD uses the Code for Sustainable Homes for new build and the EcoHomes06 Sustainability Assessment model for major improvement works.

#### Iraq and Afghanistan: Injuries

**Mike Penning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel injured in (a) Iraq and (b) Afghanistan have (i) lost both legs and both arms, (ii) lost both legs at or above the knee, (iii) lost both legs below the knee, (iv) lost one leg at or above the knee, (v) lost one leg below the knee, (vi) lost both arms at or above the elbow, (vii) lost both arms below the elbow, (viii) lost one arm at or above the elbow, (ix) lost one arm below the elbow, (x) received deep second degree or third degree burns to more than 70 per cent. of the body, (xi) been blinded in both eyes and (xii) been made deaf in each month since both conflicts began; and if he will make a statement. [315798]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** The Ministry of Defence publishes the numbers of personnel categorised as very seriously injured and seriously injured as a result of Operations Telic and Herrick on its website at:

[www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk)

The figures are updated fortnightly. In addition, we are committed to publishing on a quarterly basis the numbers of service personnel who have suffered limb amputations as a result of injuries sustained while on operational deployment, and DAS A will be publishing figures up to the end of 2009 shortly. However, in order both to protect the identities of small numbers of patients and to maintain operational security for the effectiveness of our protective countermeasures, we do not routinely publish VSI and SI sub-classified by other types of physical injury.

We will of course continue to welcome and encourage the publication by members of the Defence Medical Services of clinical papers that advance medical knowledge. These will normally appear in the appropriate peer-reviewed publications, and although they may contain statistics and analysis of specific injuries, care will be taken to ensure that they do not compromise operational security or patient confidentiality.

#### Military Aircraft: Helicopters

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 19 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 205W, on military aircraft: helicopters, when he expects main gate approval to be obtained for specific upgrades to extend the service life of the (a) Merlin Mk3, (b) Merlin Mk3a, (c) Sea King Mk4, (d) Sea King Mk7, (e) Apache, (f) Chinook Mk2 and (g) Chinook Mk2a. [316069]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** We expect to proceed to main gate approval for Sea King Mk4 this year. All other main gate approvals, with the exception of the procurement of an additional 22 new Chinook and a relatively modest investment in Sea King Mk7, will not take place until the conclusion of the Defence Review.

#### RAF Northolt

**Mr. Randall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) military and (b) civilian aircraft (i) arrived at and (ii) departed from RAF Northolt in each year since 2007. [315378]

**Bill Rammell:** This information is not held in the format requested; however, the following table details the number of aircraft movements, which could be an arrival or departure, for each of the last three years:

	<i>Civilian</i>	<i>Military</i>
2007	7,377	4,712
2008	7,139	5,373
2009	5,905	6,980

The number of civilian movements quoted in the above table includes non-commercial civilian aircraft movements, for example those transporting visiting Royalty and Heads of State. Civil commercial movements at RAF Northolt are limited to 7,000 per calendar year.

#### Rescue Services: Helicopters

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contractual provisions his Department has negotiated to ensure that providers of equity capital to the successful bidder for the search and rescue helicopter service private finance initiative contract are required to hold their investment for a defined period of time; and if he will make a statement. [315713]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** Under the draft contract the equity providers to the successful service provider for the SAR-H PFI will not be allowed to change their holding in the service provider for a number of years after the service has commenced. After this time, the equity providers may transfer their holding provided they give notice to the Government and the transferee is a suitable third party.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assurances his Department has (a) sought and (b) received that the successful bidder for the search and rescue helicopter service private finance initiative contract will take full responsibility for helicopter search and rescue services and ensure continuity of management and ownership over the period of the proposed contract. [315714]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** Assurances have been sought and received from bidders that if successful they will take full responsibility for helicopter search and rescue services and ensure continuity of efficient management for the duration of the contract.

The owners of the service provider will not be allowed to change their holding in the service provider for a number of years after the service has commenced. After

this time, the Government restrict the circumstances in which ownership and the principal sub-contracting chain may change.

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 19 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 206W, on rescue services: helicopters, when he expects the competition for new search and rescue helicopters to be completed; and what progress has been made in the competition. [316070]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** The Search and Rescue Helicopter (SAR-H) competition is ongoing. We anticipate making an announcement of the preferred bidder very shortly and, thereafter, working with the preferred bidder to bring the project to contract later in the year.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Cold Weather Payments

**Mr. Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in (a) Ribbles Valley constituency, (b) Lancashire and (c) the UK received cold weather payments in December 2009. [315029]

**Helen Goodman** [*holding answer 2 February 2010*]: Cold weather payment information is only available by weather station, not by constituency or county. The number of cold weather payments authorised in December 2009 for Great Britain is estimated to be 4.0 million. Information on cold weather payments in Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

#### Notes:

1. The information provided is for the estimated number of payments that were authorised in December- this does not necessarily mean they were paid in December.
2. Some people had more than one payment authorised, so the number of payments authorised is greater than the number of people for whom payment was authorised.

#### Source:

DWP records of triggers to weather stations notified in December 2009 and estimates of potential qualifiers by weather station.

### Departmental Consultants

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what expenditure her Department has incurred on each management consultant engaged in connection with the Pensions Transformation programme in the last 12 months. [315598]

**Angela Eagle:** The Department for Work and Pensions spent £5.007 million on consultants engaged in connection with the Pension Transformation programme for 2008-09. The spend for 2009-10 to date is nil.

We are unable to provide expenditure by individual supplier as this information is commercial in confidence.

### Housing and Council Tax Benefit

**Julia Goldsworthy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many people received housing benefit in each of the last 10 years, broken down by local authority area; [313976]

(2) how many households received council tax benefit in each of the last 10 years, broken down by local authority area. [313977]

**Helen Goodman** [*holding answers 28 January 2010*]: The available information has been placed in the Library.

### Members: Correspondence

**Sir Gerald Kaufman**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) when she plans to reply to the letter of 14 December 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. J Duncan; [315018]

(2) when she plans to reply to the letter of 21 December 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. P Harris; [315020]

(3) when she plans to reply to the letter of 22 December 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. M. Naseem. [315021]

**Helen Goodman**: Replies were sent to my right hon. Friend on 2 February 2010.

**Steve Webb**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when she plans to answer the letter of 11 November 2009, ref. SJW/SJW, from the hon. Member for Northavon on the state pension of a constituent. [315953]

**Angela Eagle**: I replied to the hon. Member on 4 February 2010 and I apologise again for the delay in doing so.

### Nuclear Submarines: Safety

**Mr. Hancock**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 9 November 2009, *Official Report*, column 46W, on nuclear submarines, what methodology the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate used to determine the radius of the emergency pre-planning zone around a berthed nuclear-powered submarine. [314712]

**Mr. Kidney**: I have been asked to reply.

As required under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) identified the potential radiation hazards from berthed nuclear-powered submarines and furnished this information to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Having assessed the hazards so identified, HSE formed the judgment that a Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) set at a radius of 1.5 km from the submarines would provide a valid area in which the arrangements of local authorities should be applied to protect the public and society in the event of a reasonably foreseeable radiation emergency involving one of the submarines. The decision to reduce the DEPZ from 2 km to 1.5 km took account of an improved analysis of the potential radiation hazards by MOD.

### Pension Credit

**Paul Holmes**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioner households were paid (a) pension guarantee credit, (b) pension savings credit and (c) pension guarantee and pension savings credit in 2009. [314667]

**Angela Eagle**: The information requested is in the following table.

*Households in receipt and individual beneficiaries of pension credit as at May 2009*

	<i>Household recipients</i>	<i>Individual beneficiaries</i>
Guarantee credit only	925,710	1,123,530
Savings credit only	599,590	791,520
Guarantee and savings credit	1,205,230	1,425,130

#### *Notes:*

1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Household recipients are those people who claim pension credit either for themselves only or on behalf of themselves and a partner.
3. The number of individual beneficiaries includes both claimants and their partners.

#### *Source:*

DWP Information Directorate Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study 100 per cent. data

### Pension Credit: Derbyshire

**Paul Holmes**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what her latest estimate is of the number of pensioners in each constituency in Derbyshire who are eligible for but do not claim pension credit. [314665]

**Angela Eagle**: Estimates of eligibility and therefore those who are entitled to pension credit but have not claimed it are not available below the level of Great Britain.

The latest estimates of the take-up rates and the number of those entitled but not receiving pension credit are published in the report 'Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-Up in 2007-08'.

### Pension Credit: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Shona McIsaac**: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people resident in (a) Cleethorpes constituency, (b) North East Lincolnshire local authority area and (c) North Lincolnshire local authority area are in receipt of pension credit; and what the average award was for such people in the most recent period for which figures are available. [315234]

**Angela Eagle**: The information requested is in the following table.

<i>As at May 2009</i>	<i>Households in receipt of pension credit</i>	<i>Average award (£)</i>
Cleethorpes constituency	5,070	47.61
North East Lincolnshire local authority area	9,300	48.97
North Lincolnshire local authority area	8,380	46.18

#### *Notes:*

1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Household recipients are those people who claim pension credit either for themselves only or on behalf of themselves and a partner.

#### *Source:*

DWP Information Directorate Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study 100 per cent. data.

### Poverty: Children

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many children were living in poverty in each local authority area in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland in (i) 1997 and (ii) the most recent period for which figures are available. [314269]

**Helen Goodman:** Estimates of poverty for children are published in the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series. These figures only allow a breakdown of the overall numbers in poverty at Government Office Region level. Therefore, information is not available for the local authority areas.

However, a local child poverty indicator—including constituency level information—has been developed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to try and replicate

this national measure as closely as possible. It captures the number and proportion of children in families in receipt of out of work benefits, or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income is less than 60 per cent of median income. Details can be found via the HMRC website:

[http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child\\_poverty.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child_poverty.htm)

The Public Service Agreement to halve child poverty by 2010-11 as a step towards eradicating it by 2020 uses a headline indicator of the proportion of children in households with an income below 60 per cent of contemporary household median income before housing costs.

The following table shows the three-year average volumes of children with incomes below 60 per cent. of contemporary median (before housing costs) between 1997-2000 and 2005-08.

*Numbers of children living in households with less than 60 per cent of contemporary median income, by Government Office Region and Country, Before Housing Costs, 1997-98 to 1999-2000—2005/06 to 2007-08*

<i>Government Office Region/Country</i>	<i>1997-98 to 1999-2000</i>	<i>2005-06 to 2007-08</i>
England	2.8	2.4
North East	0.2	0.1
North West	0.5	0.4
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.4	0.3
East Midlands	0.2	0.2
West Midlands	0.3	0.3
East of England	0.2	0.2
London	0.4	0.4
South East	0.3	0.3
South West	0.2	0.2
Scotland	0.3	0.2
Wales	0.2	0.2
Northern Ireland	n/a	0.1

n/a = Indicates figures are not available. Data for Northern Ireland is only available on the Family Resources Survey from 2002-03.

1. These statistics are based on Households Below Average Income, sourced from the Family Resources Survey, both of which are available in the Library.

2. Small changes should be treated with caution as these will be affected by sampling error and variability in non-response.

3. The reference period for Households Below Average Income figures are single financial years. Three sample years have been combined as regional single year estimates are subject to volatility.

4. The income measures used to derive the estimates shown employ the same methodology as the Department for Work and Pensions publication 'Households Below Average Income' series, which uses disposable household income, adjusted (or 'equivalised') for household size and composition, as an income measure as a proxy for standard of living.

5. For the Households Below Average Income series, incomes have been equivalised using Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) equivalisation factors.

6. Information for adults includes those above state pension age.

7. Numbers of children in low-income households have been rounded to the nearest 100,000 children.

Source:

Households Below Average Income, DWP

### Winter Fuel Payments: Torbay

**Mr. Sanders:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what estimate she has made of the number of households in Torbay constituency who will receive the (a) £250 and (b) £400 winter fuel payment in 2009-10; [314619]

(2) how many pensioners in Torbay constituency are in receipt of winter fuel allowance; and how much her Department paid to such pensioners in winter fuel allowance in 2009. [314620]

**Angela Eagle:** For winter 2008-09 (the last year for which information is available) 13,980 households received £250 and 5280 households received £400 in Torbay. We expect to have made a similar number of payments for winter 2009-10.

For winter 2008-09, 29,950 individuals received the Winter Fuel Payment in Torbay at a cost of £6 million.

Notes:

1. Payment figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

2. Expenditure figures are rounded to the nearest £0.1 million

3. Parliamentary constituencies are assigned by matching postcodes against the relevant ONS postcode directory.

Source:

Information Directorate

### Winter Fuel Payments: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Shona McIsaac:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners aged over (a) 80 and (b) 60 years have received winter fuel payments in (i) Cleethorpes constituency, (ii) North East Lincolnshire local authority area and (iii) North Lincolnshire local authority area in each year since 2007-08. [315236]

**Angela Eagle:** Information on winters 2007-08 and 2008-09 (the last year for which information is available) is in the following table.

	<i>Individual winter fuel payments</i>			
	<i>Winter 2007-08</i>		<i>Winter 2008-09</i>	
	<i>Aged 60-79</i>	<i>Aged 80 and over</i>	<i>Aged 60-79</i>	<i>Aged 80 and over</i>
Cleethorpes	17,820	3990	18,290	4130
North East Lincolnshire	27,230	6390	27,670	6520
North Lincolnshire	29,170	6560	30,000	6740

Notes:

1. Payment figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

2. Parliamentary constituencies are assigned by matching postcodes against the relevant ONS postcode directory.

Source:

Information Directorate

## PRIME MINISTER

### Deputy Prime Minister

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Prime Minister for what reasons he has not appointed a Deputy Prime Minister. [314738]

**The Prime Minister:** The responsibilities of Government are carried out by the Cabinet and Ministers.

### Epilepsy: Drugs

**Mrs. Moon:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will take steps to inform the signatories to the e-petition to No. 10 Downing Street on the generic prescribing of anti-epilepsy drugs submitted on 1 October 2009, of the consultation on that matter which was recently opened by the Department of Health. [313934]

**The Prime Minister:** Yes. I refer the hon. Member to the response on the Number 10 website which can be found at

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page22367>

which gives details of the consultation.

### Iraq Committee of Inquiry

**Mr. Dai Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will release for publication the documents to which Lord Goldsmith made specific reference during his appearance at the Chilcot Inquiry on 27 January 2010 and which he stated he would wish were made public. [314888]

**The Prime Minister:** Decisions on declassification are made in line with the protocol agreed between the Government and the inquiry. I have no role in the declassification process.

### Northern Ireland

**Kate Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister how many hours he has spent in Northern Ireland on official visits between the date of his appointment and 26 January 2010. [314560]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to my written ministerial statement of 16 July 2009, *Official Report*, column 76WS. A list of my UK visits for 2009-10 will be published in the usual way.

## Parliamentary Private Secretaries

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) pursuant to the answer of 14 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 711W, on parliamentary private secretaries, which parliamentary private secretary posts are (a) filled and (b) vacant; [315225]

(2) pursuant to the answer of 14 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 711W, on parliamentary private secretaries, on what date the list of parliamentary private secretaries was most recently provided to Dods for inclusion in Vacher's Quarterly; and if he will place in the Library a copy of this list. [315226]

**The Prime Minister:** I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave on 14 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 711W.

## West Wing Writers

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Prime Minister with reference to the registration statement made to the United States Department of Justice under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act 1938, registration number 5838, what expenditure his Office has incurred on procuring services from West Wing Writers to date since he took up his Office; and on what dates and for what purposes such payments were made. [315199]

**The Prime Minister:** All expenditure is accounted for in the Cabinet Office annual report and accounts.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Antisocial Behaviour: Greater London

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 429W, on antisocial behaviour: Greater London, which areas in Greater London have been designated priority areas for combating antisocial behaviour. [315000]

**Alan Johnson:** Designated priority areas for combating antisocial behaviour in Greater London are:

Barking and Dagenham  
Bexley  
Brent  
Camden  
Ealing  
Enfield  
Greenwich  
Hackney  
Hammersmith and Fulham  
Haringey  
Hillingdon  
Hounslow  
Islington  
Lambeth  
Newham  
Redbridge  
Southwark  
Tower Hamlets  
Waltham Forest.

### Asylum

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give interim permission to work to asylum applicant Mr. Joseph Bashir Yousif Bunni (HO Ref: B1135644); [315053]

(2) when he expects the UK Border Agency to decide on the application for asylum in respect of Mr. Joseph Bashir Yousif Bunni. [315055]

**Alan Johnson:** I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 8

January  
2010.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the UK Border Agency to decide on the application for asylum in respect of Ms Rachel Muadi Kumba (HO Ref: K1209955). [315054]

**Alan Johnson:** I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 7

January  
2010.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the UK Border Agency to decide on the application for asylum in respect of Ms Sara Kidane (HO Ref: K1203107). [315059]

**Alan Johnson:** I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 8 January 2010.

### Asylum: Children

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many unaccompanied minors have arrived in the country seeking asylum in each year since 1999; and how many of them were granted asylum. [313613]

**Mr. Woolas:** The table shows the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) applications, initial decisions and grants of asylum, Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR), Humanitarian Protection (HP) and Discretionary Leave (DL) between 1999 and September 2009. Statistics on UASC asylum decisions and outcomes until 2002 are not available. Figures only include initial decisions on UASC asylum applications and not any later asylum decisions (e.g. after appeal).

Information on asylum applications is published annually in the Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom bulletin which is available from the Library of the House and from the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate website at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration-asylum-stats.html>

*Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children applications<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> received in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and initial decisions<sup>4</sup> on applications by year, all nationals*

	Applications			Total decisions <sup>4</sup> Number	Grants of asylum Total granted	Grants of ELR <sup>5</sup> Total ELR	Grants of HP <sup>5</sup> Total HP	Grants of DL <sup>5</sup> Total DL
	Total	Port	In-country					
1999	3,350	1,500	1,850	6	6	6	7	7
2000	2,735	1,395	1,340	6	6	6	7	7
2001	3,470	1,645	1,820	6	6	6	7	7
2002	6,200	1,240	4,955	6,990	585	4,830	7	7
2003	3,180	645	2,535	3,835	150	1,255	15	1,525
2004	2,990	540	2,450	3,440	85	7	20	2,505
2005	2,965	445	2,520	2,835	150	7	20	1,965
2006	3,450	395	3,055	2,880	195	7	10	1,960
2007	3,645	480	3,165	3,385	445	7	15	1,780
2008 <sup>8</sup>	4,285	380	3,905	3,375	335	7	15	1,795
January- September 2009 <sup>8</sup>	2,400	200	2,200	2,645	265	7	15	1,490

<sup>1</sup> Figures are rounded to the nearest five and may not sum to the totals shown because of independent rounding.

<sup>2</sup> Figures exclude cases where the age of the applicant is disputed.

<sup>3</sup> An Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC) is a person under 18, or who, in the absence of documentary evidence establishing age, appears to be under that age; is applying for asylum in his or her own right and; is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.

<sup>4</sup> The year of asylum application may not be the same as the year of initial asylum decision.

<sup>5</sup> Humanitarian Protection (HP) and Discretionary Leave (DL) replaced Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) from 1 April 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Not available.

<sup>7</sup> Not applicable.

<sup>8</sup> Provisional figures.

### Borders: Personal Records

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department plans to introduce passenger name record checks on all passenger movements (a) into, (b) through and (c) out of the UK. [312898]

**Mr. Woolas:** Passenger name record data (PNR) will be collected on a phased, intelligence-based approach over five years. It is expected that a maximum of 100

million passenger movements will have been collected by the end of December 2013. This equates to approximately 40 per cent. of all passenger and crew movements into, through and out of the UK. The selection of routes required to provide PNR will be based according to risk.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the e-borders programme to include an automated authority to carry capability. [312899]

**Mr. Woolas:** An automated authority to carry (ATC) capability is not included in the e-Borders contract. UK Border Agency (UKBA) has the option to include this capability at a later stage, but this will need to be funded separately.

As part of the wider rollout of e-Borders in 2011, a capability to support a manual ATC process will be delivered.

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of progress in the manual trial period for authority to carry capabilities as part of the e-borders programme. [313295]

**Mr. Woolas:** The UK Border Agency has completed a proof of concept trial of a manual authority to carry scheme. We are currently evaluating this data in the context of the Prime Minister's recent statement on security and border protection, to examine the broader options for preventing people from travelling to the United Kingdom.

#### Case Resolution Directorate

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases were resolved by the Case Resolution Directorate in the most recent period for which figures are available. [313895]

**Mr. Woolas:** The UK Border Agency has made good progress in concluding the estimated 400,000 to 450,000 electronic and paper records in the asylum backlog and remains on track to conclude these cases by summer 2011. The total conclusions now stand at over 220,000 cases concluded to end of September 2009. Lin Homer will update the Home Affairs Select Committee on performance up to December 2009 next month.

#### Crime

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 637W, on crime, which universities received such expenditure; and what crime awareness campaigns were undertaken in each case. [315001]

**Alan Johnson:** In 2005-06 the Home Office ran a marketing campaign called 'Let's Keep Crime Down'. An element of this campaign targeted students. Digital advertising space was purchased to targeted student bars and libraries. Advertising was centred on Leeds, London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Nottingham, Bristol, Bolton and Newcastle.

In 2009-10 Home Office gave a grant to the National Union of Students (NUS) as part of the Securing Homes: Action Against Burglary programme. £78,905.50 has been allocated for NUS to deliver communications activity. The communications work is varied and does not come under a single branded campaign. NUS have distributed a Home Office leaflet called 'The Student Survival Guide' that provides crime reduction and personal safety information and a 'Let's Keep Crime Down' branded 'doorhanger' to 119 students unions across England and Wales and have launched a crime reduction website:

[www.nus.org.uk/thelock](http://www.nus.org.uk/thelock)

In both 2005-06 and 2009-10, Home Office has not given individual universities money to deliver crime awareness campaigns.

#### Departmental Font Licensing

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department and its agencies have spent on font licensing in the last three years. [314752]

**Mr. Woolas:** From the best available information the Home Department inclusive of its agencies have not incurred any costs on font licensing in the last three years.

#### Departmental Housing

**Sarah Teather:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent estimate he has made of the (a) potential annual rental and (b) total book value of the residential property owned by his Department. [313741]

**Mr. Woolas:** My Department currently owns one residential property which is in the process of being sold. Accordingly no estimates have been made of potential rental amounts and the property has an indicated guide sale price of £4 million.

#### Departmental Pay

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much funding his Department has allocated for (a) year-end and (b) in-year bonuses for its staff in 2009-10. [307031]

**Mr. Woolas:** An element of the overall pay award for the Home Office is allocated to non-consolidated variable pay related to performance. These payments are used to drive high performance and form part of the pay award for members of staff who demonstrate exceptional performance, for example by exceeding targets set of meeting challenging objectives.

Non-consolidated variable pay awards are funded from within existing pay bill controls and have to be re-earned each year against pre-determined targets and, as such, do not add to future pay bill and pension costs. The percentage of the pay bill set aside for performance-related awards for the Senior Civil Service is based on the recommendations of the independent Senior Salaries Review Body.

Non-consolidated end-of-year performance payments made in the 2009-10 financial year (in relation to the 2008-09 performance year) amounted to £5.69 million, (0.69 per cent. of the estimated total salary provision for the 2009-10 year). Up to 0.3 per cent. of the pay bill for the current year is allocated for the purpose of non-consolidated special payments to reward exceptional in-year performance.

#### Departmental Public Consultation

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 19 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 261W, on departmental public consultation, how much was spent by his Department under each budgetary headline on the burglary summit on 4 February 2009. [314026]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office burglary summit was held on 4 February 2009 at the Home Office headquarters in 2 Marsham Street London. The summit was attended by 40 voluntary, private and public sector representatives. The only costs incurred were for hospitality (refreshments). The total amount spent on hospitality was £203.60

The summit resulted in the launch of the Securing Homes programme two months later under which the Government have invested £20 million in further preventing and tackling burglary.

### Departmental Public Expenditure

**David Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spent on (a) new furnishings, (b) works of art and (c) new vehicles in each of the last three years. [312512]

**Mr. Woolas:** The information requested is as follows:

(a) Figures for the purchase of furniture and fittings are 2006-07 (£4.358 million), 2007-2008 (£2.267 million) and 2008-09 (£5.956 million).

(b) There has been no expenditure on works of art installed by the department at its HQ at 2 Marsham Street over the last three years, other than the cost of maintaining Public Art at 2 Marsham Street which is met by the PFI supplier. Information on any possible expenditure on art elsewhere is not held centrally.

(c) The Department including UK Border Agency spent the following on the purchase of new vehicles in the last three years: 2006-07 £771,660, 2007-08 £785,207 and 2008-09, £230,893 exclusive of post purchase operational equipment provided in the vehicles.

### Deportation: Offenders

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people serving prison sentences in England are liable for deportation on their release; and if he will make a statement. [315009]

**Mr. Woolas:** As at 18 December 2009, Her Majesty's Prison Service published the foreign national prison population as 11,546. This includes those on remand, those serving a custodial sentence (time serving) and those time-served held under the Immigration Act 1971, including those in the immigration removal centres Dover, Haslar and Lindholme, who we are seeking to deport.

There was a monthly average in 2009 of 550 time-served foreign national offenders detained in prisons who the UK Border Agency was seeking to deport.

Those serving prison sentences will at some point during their sentence be considered for deportation against the following criteria:

A court recommendation;

For non-European Economic Area nationals—A custodial sentence of 12 months or more either in one sentence, or as an aggregate of two or three sentences over a period of five years or a custodial sentence of any length for a drug offence (an offence other than possession only);

For EEA nationals: a custodial sentence of 12 months or more for an offence involving drugs, violent or sexual crimes or a custodial sentence of 24 months or more for other offences.

### Detention Centres: Mobile Telephones

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) mobile telephones and (b) SIM cards were confiscated from persons held in immigration detention centres in each of the last five years. [313450]

**Mr. Woolas:** Detainees are permitted to retain their own mobile telephone while in the UK Border Agency's detention estate with the exception of those with a camera, recording facility or provide access to the internet; such phones are placed into the detainee's property store and returned upon discharge.

Mobile phones and SIM cards may be removed from detainees for security reasons if a detainee has been removed from association in accordance with Rule 40 and Rule 42 of the Detention Centre Rules 2001. The phone is returned to the detainee when he or she is returned to the rest of the population.

We do not keep a central record of phones confiscated from detainees.

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) mobile telephones and (b) SIM cards have been issued to immigration detainees in each of the last five years. [313500]

**Mr. Woolas:** We do not keep a central record of mobile telephones borrowed or purchased by detainees held in immigration removal centres.

### DNA: Databases

**Mr. Godsiff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which organisation is responsible for the implementation of his Department's DNA isotope testing regime. [312203]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Forensic Science Service and the university of Reading are carrying out the analysis of the DNA and isotope samples taken by the UK Border Agency.

### Entry Clearances

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many decisions on visa applications made at each British embassy or consulate were overturned by immigration judges in each of the last three years. [312836]

**Mr. Woolas:** I have placed tables in the Library giving the requested information. Immigration statistics for October—December 2009 will be published on 25 February.

UKBA monitors closely the reasons why appeals were overturned and uses the information to improve decision making quality.

**Patrick Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visas were issued more than six months following a successful appeal against a refusal to issue entry clearance in 2009. [315146]

**Mr. Woolas:** The information requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

### Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

**Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of students studying at colleges which have received and subsequently lost accreditation as a bona fide institution offering courses for overseas students.

[314606]

**Mr. Woolas** [*holding answer 3 February 2010*]: 145 international students were granted entry clearance or given leave to remain in the United Kingdom under tier 4 of the points based system, to study at a private college which has since lost its accreditation.

**Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision his Department makes for students studying at colleges which lose accreditation as a bona fide institution offering courses for overseas students to enable them to continue their studies.

[314607]

**Mr. Woolas** [*holding answer 3 February 2010*]: Students studying under tier 4 of the points based system are given 60 days in which to find the same or similar course with a different sponsor and make a new application for leave to remain in the United Kingdom to the UK Border Agency.

### Human Trafficking

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Totnes of 30 November 2009, *Official Report*, column 486W, on human trafficking, how many cases the 180 specialists with the UK Border Agency dealt with in the last 12 months; and what average amount of time was spent on each case.

[313656]

**Mr. Woolas:** In the first nine months since a National Referral Mechanism for identifying and protecting trafficking victims was established in April 2009, 405 cases have been referred to specialist decision-makers in UKBA competent authorities, either directly or through the UK Human Trafficking Centre.

Each case is unique and a case owner will devote as much time as is needed to reach an informed decision, including by consulting with other relevant agencies such as the police, children's services and support providers. In some instances, competent authorities may also need to conduct or commission a further interview to gather more evidence. The timing will vary greatly depending on whether the initial 'reasonable grounds' decision is positive, how complex the case is, the ability of the potential victim to provide information and how prompt

other parties are in responding to queries for more information or reports. But it would not be unusual for a competent authority to spend two to four days in total on a given case.

### Immigrants: Somalia

**Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Somali nationals are estimated to be in the UK illegally.

[314059]

**Mr. Woolas:** The information requested is not available. By its very nature, illegal immigration is exceptionally difficult to quantify and no Government have previously been able to produce a definitive figure for the number of people who are in the country illegally, including Somali nationals.

We are continuing to strengthen UK Border Controls. The e-Borders system screens passenger information against watch lists to identify high risk individuals before they travel and will also enable us to count people in and out of the country. The system will screen 95 per cent. of all passenger and crew movements in and out of the UK by December 2010 and 100 per cent. by March 2014.

Local immigration teams are being established to serve every community in the UK. Each team will work closely with police, local authorities and many other local partners to target immigration crime, including working to detect and remove those who are in the UK illegally.

**Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Somali nationals have arrived in the UK in each year since 1998.

[314060]

**Mr. Woolas:** The latest available statistics relate to the number of Somali nationals given leave to enter the United Kingdom, 1998 to 2008, and are given in the following table. Data for 2009 are scheduled for publication in August 2010.

The statistics are based on landing card information and may include the same individuals more than once if they visited the United Kingdom on multiple occasions in the period.

Statistics on passengers given leave to enter the United Kingdom by country of nationality and purpose of journey are published annually in the series "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom". These publications are available from the Library of the House and from the Home Office Research, Development and Statistics website at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration-asylum-stats.html>

*Somali nationals given leave to enter the United Kingdom, 1998 to 2008*

<i>Passengers admitted</i>	<i>Number of journeys</i>										
	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>2007<sup>2, 3</sup></i>	<i>2008<sup>2, 4</sup></i>
Somalia	4,900	3,680	8,160	9,430	10,200	7,460	5,330	5,610	3,540	3,240	3,000

<sup>1</sup> Due to some gaps in the data from ports, estimates have been used.

<sup>2</sup> May understate due to some administrative records on non-EEA nationals being unavailable for statistical analysis. The Border Control Chapter Notes in the "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2008" gives further details.

<sup>3</sup> Revised

<sup>4</sup> Provisional

Note:

Data rounded to three significant figures.

### Immigration Controls

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many employers have (a) requested and (b) been granted certificates of sponsorship under the Tier 2 (i) general and (ii) intracompany transfer categories in each month since October 2009. [312411]

**Mr. Woolas [holding answer 21 January 2010]:** The tables show how many sponsors have (a) requested and (b) been granted certificates of sponsorship under tier 2 general and tier 2 intra-company transfer categories of the points-based immigration system in each month since October 2009.

Number of sponsors requested certificates of sponsorship under tier 2

	Migrant classification	
	General	Intra-company transfer
October 2009	1,550	595
November 2009	1,485	585
December 2009	1,435	580
Total	4,470	1,760

Number of sponsors granted certificates of sponsorship under tier 2

	Migrant classification	
	General	Intra-company transfer
October 2009	1,315	560
November 2009	1,280	545
December 2009	1,355	545
Total	3,950	1,650

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to nearest five.

2. The figures quoted are not provided under National Statistics protocols and have been derived from local management information and are therefore provisional and subject to change.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Tier 2 (a) general and (b) ICT certificates of sponsorship had (i) been requested, (ii) been allocated and (iii) were pending in each month since October 2009. [312413]

**Mr. Woolas [holding answer 21 January 2010]:** The following tables shows how many certificates of sponsorship, under tier 2 general and tier 2 intra-company transfer categories of the Points-based Immigration system have been (a) requested, (b) allocated and (c) were pending in each month since October 2009.

Certificates of sponsorship requested—Tier 2

Migrant classification	October 2009	November 2009	December 2009	Total
General	2,975	2,820	2,710	8,505
Intra company transfer	2,885	2,985	3,270	9,140

Certificates of sponsorship allocated—Tier 2

Migrant classification	October 2009	November 2009	December 2009	Total
General	2,385	2,200	2,380	6,965
Intra company transfer	2,580	2,550	2,555	7,680

Certificates of sponsorship pending—Tier 2

Migrant classification	October 2009	November 2009	December 2009	Total
General	985	955	790	2,735
Intra company transfer	1,070	910	865	2,845

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to nearest 5.

2. The figures quoted are not provided under National Statistics protocols and have been derived from local management information and are therefore provisional and subject to change.

### Immigration: Children

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the UK Border Agency keeps records of the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in the UK. [313611]

**Mr. Woolas:** The UK Border Agency does not keep records of all unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK.

Border force officers remain vigilant in identifying any arriving child who may be at risk of harm. When an unaccompanied child arrives, the border force officer must be satisfied that suitable arrangements have been made for the child's reception and welfare in the UK before allowing them entry. The UK Border Agency works closely with the police and children's services and will if appropriate alert them to any concerns.

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to identify unaccompanied minors who are suspected of being trafficked. [313612]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Government's response to human trafficking is set out in their comprehensive 2007 Action Plan, which was updated in October 2009 and contains a number of specific measures to identify and protect child victims, including training for front line staff.

In December 2007 the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Home Office published practice guidance, "Working Together to Safeguard Children Who May Have Been Trafficked" to help practitioners safeguard and promote the welfare of children who may have been trafficked. We also established with the NSPCC, a national Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line in October 2007 to support practitioners with advice on safeguarding vulnerable children believed to have been trafficked.

As part of our improved services for trafficked children under the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, we have introduced a National Referral Mechanism, which provides enhanced procedures for local agencies to identify, refer and support all victims of trafficking early on, including children. Alongside NRM, we are piloting a child trafficking assessment tool in 13 local authority areas, to trial a process for local practitioners to assess cases of separated children who may be trafficking victims and to take initial safeguarding action and make a referral to a Competent Authority under the NRM.

From 2 November 2009, Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act (2009) placed a new duty on UKBA to safeguard children subject to immigration controls, including trafficked children and those seeking asylum. All UK Border Agency staff at operational and case working grades are required to complete training on how to identify potential victims of trafficking, which contains specific sections on the features of child trafficking.

Updated multi agency guidance was issued on 10 June 2009 and 1 July 2009 on children at risk of sexual exploitation and those who go missing from care both of which highlight how trafficked children may be identified and protected from harm. We have incorporated child trafficking into the cross Government "Staying Safe" Action Plan and established trafficking sub groups at local and regional levels.

#### Immigration: ICT

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent on the Integrated Case Work IT system (Integrity) to date; and what the overall budget for the project is. [313457]

**Mr. Woolas:** Spend to date for the whole programme, from inception in 2007 up to 31 December 2009, is £71.7 million.

The total estimated cost of delivering the Immigration Case Work programme is £370 million over the period 2008-09 to 2015-16.

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Integrated Case Work IT system (Integrity) to be fully operational. [313458]

**Mr. Woolas:** Implementation has commenced with three on-time releases during 2009. The target date to complete all functional components of INTEGRITY is the end of 2013, with full deployment and realisation of benefits expected by 2015.

#### Members: Correspondence

**Sir Gerald Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to reply to the letter dated 15 October 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mrs Saima Noreen Rashid; [310498]

(2) when he plans to reply to the letter to him dated 15 October 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Mrs Saima Noreen Rashid; [311509]

(3) when he plans to reply to the letter of 15 October 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mrs Saima Noreen Rashid. [309155]

**Alan Johnson:** Due to an administrative error the UK Border Agency did not receive my right hon. Friend's letter until December 2009. I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 26 January 2010.

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter dated 7 December 2009 from the hon. Member for Walsall North regarding a constituent Ref: S1410402/K1287157. [313772]

**Mr. Woolas [holding answer 28 January 2010]:** The chief executive of the UK Border Agency wrote on 27 January 2010.

**Sir Gerald Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to reply to the letter of 30 November 2009 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Zaheer Iqbal. [315022]

**Alan Johnson:** I wrote to my right hon. Friend on 1 February 2010.

#### Opinion Polls

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent on opinion polling in 2009-10. [314333]

**Mr. Woolas:** During the financial year 2009-10 the Home Office expenditure on opinion polling has been £240,816.

#### Prisoners: Foreigners

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign national prisoners were transferred from immigration removal centres to open prisons in each of the last three years; and what the criteria for transferral are. [313453]

**Mr. Woolas:** Detainees being held in the UK Border Agency's detention estate would only be transferred to a prison where their behaviour threatens the security or safety of an immigration removal centre. Such detainees are transferred to closed, not open prisons.

#### Rape: Victim Support Schemes

**Chris Huhne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been spent on services of each type for rape victims in each year since 1997. [309410]

**Alan Johnson:** Although the bulk of funding for local services comes from local sources the Home Office and other Government Departments including Ministry of Justice and Government Equalities Office do provide some grant funding to help meet the costs of providing services to sexual assault victims.

Based on the best available information, the approximated total of grants awarded:

*Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) funding*

2004-05—Home Office SARC Funding £310,000  
 2005-06—Home Office SARC Funding £709,000  
 2006-07—Home Office SARC Funding £620,000  
 2007-08—Home Office SARC Funding £805,000  
 2008-09—Home Office SARC Funding £663,000  
 2009-10—Home Office SARC Funding £1,500,000

*Victim's Fund—grants to local sexual assault services (administered by MoJ)*

2005-06—£1,458,718  
 2006-07—£1,300,600  
 2007-08—£1,249,644  
 2008-09—£1,249,644  
 2009-10—£1,250,000

*Special Fund for local sexual assault services (administered by GEO)*

2008-09—£1,000,000  
 2009-10—£1,600,000

*Home Office funding for Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs)*

2006-07—£760,000  
 2007-08—£720,000  
 2008-09—£720,000  
 2009-10—£860,000

*Home Office funding for Rape Crisis national head office*

2008-09—£75,000  
 2009-10—£75,000

*Home Office funding for Survivors Trust head office*

2008-09—£75,000  
 2009-10—£75,000

On 27 January the Government announced the following funding for 2010-11:

*Home Office ISVA Funding*

2010-11—£860,000

*Funding for local sexual assault services*

2010-11—£2,250,000

The VAWG strategy also announced a Government commitment to provide £3.2 million of funding for SARCs for 2010-11—further details will be announced shortly.

### Reoffenders: Greater London

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been re-arrested whilst released on bail for committing (a) a sexual offence, (b) an offence of violence against the person and (c) homicide in Greater London in each year since 1998. [314740]

**Alan Johnson:** The arrests data reported to the Home Office does not include information on the individual circumstances of arrests, including whether or not the person arrested was on bail at the time of the arrest.

### Snow and Ice

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the costs to his Department arising from the severe weather conditions in the period 4 January to 18 January 2010; and if he will make a statement. [313590]

**Mr. Woolas:** In common with many other employers the Home Office recognised that the severe weather conditions during the period 4-18 January caused difficulty for many staff travelling to and from work.

Where staff experienced travel delays or were unable to get to work, line managers were reminded that they could use their discretion as to whether credit time should be given or whether annual leave, special leave or flexi-time should be used. The appropriate arrangements for individual staff were dependent upon local travel conditions, the availability of public transport and the length and difficulty of the journey into work. Many staff were also able to work from home thus reducing the amount of working time lost.

This guidance reflected existing departmental arrangements on travel disruptions set out in the staff handbook.

Records of the number of staff who were not able to attend work between 4-18 January as a result of the disruption to the transport system were not collated centrally and could therefore only be obtained at disproportionate cost. For the same reason it is not possible to provide an estimate of the cost to the Department or the total number of working hours that were lost.

### Terrorism: Finance

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been convicted under counter-terrorism legislation of an offence relating to fundraising in each of the last five years. [314747]

**Alan Johnson:** Figures on the number of people convicted under the Terrorism Act 2000 for fundraising offences are available in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/09—Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation; arrests, outcomes and stops and searches 2008/2009. Page 26, Table 1.10 (a) refers. This is available on the Home Office website via the following link:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1809.pdf>

From September 2001 to 2009, a total of 11 people were convicted under section 15 to 19 TACT 2000 offences. The following table contains the relevant figures. No figures are available prior to this date.

	<i>Numbers of individuals convicted of sections 15-19 TACT 2000—fundraising offences</i>
2001-02	2
2002-03	0
2003-04	0
2004-05	0
2005-06	4
2006-07	1
2007-08	3
2008-09	1

### Terrorism: Internet

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were convicted of (a) each category of terrorism offence and (b) terrorism offences involving the internet in each year since 1998. [314998]

**Alan Johnson:** The information requested is as follows.

(a) Figures on the number of people convicted under each category of terrorism offence from September 2001 to 2009 are available in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/09—Operational of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and Subsequent Legislation; Arrests, Outcomes and Stops and Searches 2008-09. This is available on the Home Office website via the following link:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1809.pdf>

The information includes those convicted of offences under terrorism legislation as well as under non-terrorism legislation for terrorist-related offences. Tables 1.10 (a) and 1.10 (b) illustrate the principal offences of which suspects were convicted.

(b) Information on the number of individuals convicted of terrorism offences involving the internet from 1998 is not available. Offences relating to the dissemination of terrorist material and the glorification of terrorist acts on the internet were introduced under the Terrorism Act 2006 Part one, sections 1 and 2.

Statistics preceding the Terrorism Act 2000, covering the period up to February 2001 are available in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin 16/01. This is available on the Home Office website via the following link:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hosb1601.pdf>

This includes offences under the previous terrorist legislation, The Prevention of Terrorism Acts 1984 and 1989.

#### UK Border Agency: Contracts

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many contracts with a monetary value of over £2 million the UK Border Agency and its predecessors have signed in each of the last five years. [313503]

**Mr. Woolas:** The number of contracts let with a monetary value of over £2 million in each of the last five years is as follows:

Total number of contracts over £2 million let by UKBA for the year	Number
2009	13
2008	15
2007	13
2006	41
2005	3

#### UK Border Agency: Travel

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much the UK Border Agency spent on first class travel in each year since 2005. [313451]

**Mr. Woolas:** The amount spent on first class rail travel during the calendar year 2009 was £1,013,841. The amount spent on first class air travel during the calendar year was £10,936. Figures over a longer period are not available as the UK Border Agency changed the contractor through whom travel is booked in December 2008. To seek data from the previous contractor would incur a disproportionate cost.

Because the UK Border Agency's work is national and indeed international in scope, it is necessary in some cases for staff to travel in order to facilitate that work. All travel is undertaken in accordance with the

civil service management and ministerial codes which include limited circumstances in which first class travel will be permitted.

The UK Border Agency is focused on driving down the cost of travel expenditure. In addition the Home Office has a travel contract that enables significant savings to be achieved compared with the standard price of UK rail travel.

#### Workers Registration Scheme: North East

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many EU workers were registered in the Worker Registration scheme in each local authority in the North East in (a) March 2007, (b) March 2008, (c) March 2009 and (d) the latest period for which figures are available. [314034]

**Mr. Woolas** [*holding answer 29 January 2010*]: The data requested is published on the local government website:

[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

on the current following page:

[www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=1095225](http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=1095225)

Officers within the House Library have direct access to the electronic documents via the local government analysis and research website.

## BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

### Anne Street Partners

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether any action has been taken against Anne Street Partners Limited and its directors in respect of the accounts it has filed for the period to 30 September 2008. [316059]

**Ian Lucas:** No action has been taken against Anne Street Partners Limited or its directors in relation to its accounts for the period to 30 September 2008.

The accounts the company filed on 30 July 2009 are abbreviated accounts, which have been accepted by Companies House as complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 1985. If any person believes the accounts are deficient they may write to Mr. Mark Youde, Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff, CF14 3UZ; e-mail address:

[myoude@companieshouse.gov.uk](mailto:myoude@companieshouse.gov.uk)

with further details and he will investigate the matter.

### Astraporta

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether Astraporta (UK) Limited filed its accounts for the period to 30 September 2008 within the statutory period provided for in the Companies Act 2006. [315952]

**Ian Lucas:** Astraporta (UK) Limited has not filed its accounts for 30 September 2008. The company went into Liquidation in March 2009 and it was not required

to file accounts from that point on. The company came out of Liquidation in November 2009 and is due to be struck off on 1 March 2010.

### Bearwood Holdings

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether Bearwood Holdings Limited filed its accounts for the period to 30 September 2008 within the statutory period provided for in the Companies Act 2006. [315951]

**Ian Lucas:** Bearwood Holdings Limited has not filed its accounts for 30 November 2008. The company went into Liquidation in March 2009 and it was not required to file accounts from that point on. The company came out of Liquidation in November 2009 and is due to be struck off on 1 March 2010.

### Business: Government Assistance

**Mr. Sanders:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many small businesses in each constituency in the South West have applied for financial assistance under the (a) Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme and (b) Capital Enterprise Scheme since its inception; and how many such applications were granted. [314622]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Under the Enterprise Finance Guarantee, as of 27 January, 744 businesses in the South West region have drawn down loans totalling £66.38 million. The figures for each individual constituency in the South West region will be deposited in the Library of the House. Businesses may apply for a loan from any one of the participating lenders who will assess which form of lending, including the Enterprise Finance Guarantee, is most appropriate. We do not hold figures for those businesses which are instead offered a normal commercial loan, or are rejected for failing to meet the lender's commercial criteria.

With respect to the Capital for Enterprise Fund equity scheme, CfEF received 77 enquiries from businesses in the South West seeking investment to the value of £84.3 million. Thus far, no businesses have received investment, two businesses have agreed terms on investments with a value £4 million, one business has been offered investment totalling £2 million and one proposition is under active consideration with a value of £1.3 million. The remaining inquiries are either being considered subject to further information to be supplied by the applicant or have been rejected or withdrawn. I am not providing a breakdown by parliamentary constituency or local authority as this could make it possible to identify the individual companies that have received support.

*Offered: South West, offered 27 January 2010*

<i>Constituency name</i>	<i>Count of loan amount</i>	<i>Sum of loan amount (£ million)</i>
Bath	24	1.20
Bournemouth East	12	1.07
Bournemouth West	20	2.50
Bridgwater	11	0.85

*Offered: South West, offered 27 January 2010*

<i>Constituency name</i>	<i>Count of loan amount</i>	<i>Sum of loan amount (£ million)</i>
Bristol East	21	2.76
Bristol North West	10	0.71
Bristol South	6	0.45
Bristol West	30	5.02
Cheltenham	21	1.99
Christchurch	15	1.55
Cotswold	16	0.82
Devizes	20	1.22
East Devon	6	0.37
Exeter	24	2.46
Falmouth and Camborne	11	0.85
Forest of Dean	9	0.87
Gloucester	13	0.75
Kingswood	19	1.88
Mid Dorset and North Poole	10	0.58
North Cornwall	31	1.93
North Devon	17	1.61
North Dorset	11	1.02
North Swindon	11	2.02
North Wiltshire	13	1.48
Northavon	19	1.48
Plymouth, Devonport	13	1.65
Plymouth, Sutton	29	1.77
Poole	15	1.57
Salisbury	12	1.01
Somerton and Frome	19	0.90
South Dorset	12	0.64
South East Cornwall	15	2.43
South Swindon	19	3.54
South West Devon	25	3.48
St. Ives	12	0.37
Stroud	21	1.24
Taunton	16	1.27
Teignbridge	6	0.21
Tewkesbury	26	2.69
Tiverton and Honiton	25	2.58
Torbay	13	0.80
Torrige and West Devon	25	1.98
Totnes	19	2.05
Truro and St. Austell	24	1.93
Wansdyke	24	1.17
Wells	26	3.74
West Dorset	22	1.69
Westbury	27	1.54
Weston-Super-Mare	12	1.00
Woodspring	9	0.70
Yeovil	8	0.44
Grand total	874	79.81

*Drawn: South West, guaranteed 27 January 2010*

<i>Constituency name</i>	<i>Count of loan amount</i>	<i>Sum of loan amount (£ million)</i>
Bath	20	0.87
Bournemouth East	11	0.95
Bournemouth West	14	2.05
Bridgwater	8	0.71
Bristol East	18	2.24

Drawn: South West, guaranteed 27 January 2010

Constituency name	Count of loan amount	Sum of loan amount (£ million)
Bristol North West	9	0.64
Bristol South	6	0.45
Bristol West	26	3.42
Cheltenham	21	1.99
Christchurch	13	1.43
Cotswold	13	0.66
Devizes	18	1.05
East Devon	6	0.37
Exeter	20	2.32
Falmouth and Camborne	9	0.78
Forest of Dean	7	0.48
Gloucester	12	0.74
Kingswood	18	1.85
Mid Dorset and North Poole	9	0.55
North Cornwall	28	1.71
North Devon	16	1.37
North Dorset	9	0.66
North Swindon	6	1.76
North Wiltshire	12	1.47
Northavon	16	1.30
Plymouth, Devonport	11	1.60
Plymouth, Sutton	26	1.55
Poole	12	1.21
Salisbury	12	1.01
Somerton and Frome	16	0.77
South Dorset	9	0.48
South East Cornwall	14	2.14
South Swindon	12	2.09
South West Devon	23	3.24
St. Ives	12	0.37
Stroud	19	1.16
Taunton	15	1.21
Teignbridge	5	0.16
Tewkesbury	20	1.37
Tiverton and Honiton	25	2.58
Torbay	10	0.60
Torrige and West Devon	18	1.60
Totnes	16	1.96
Truro and St. Austell	21	1.37
Wansdyke	18	0.81
Wells	22	3.23
West Dorset	20	1.61
Westbury	21	1.00
Weston-Super-Mare	8	0.70
Woodspring	8	0.37
Yeovil	6	0.37
Grand total	744	66.38

### Business: Wales

**Mr. Touhig:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to promote small business start-up schemes among young people in Wales. [308156]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The promotion of small business start-up schemes is a devolved matter and as such is the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government.

### Business: Young People

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what assistance his Department provides to young people to obtain support from small business start-up schemes in Stroud constituency. [312756]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Young people in Stroud are able to benefit from a range of core services (see following list) provided by Business Link in the south-west. Support provided will depend on the needs of the individual and will follow the core Business Link IDB (Information, Diagnosis and Brokerage) Model.

Examples of the type of support available are:

The “gateway”—a helpline staffed by trained and accredited staff is the first point of contact for all business support inquiries.

Regional website—providing a wide range of support on all business topics.

E-alerts and E-newsletters—the monthly “Business-I” provides subscribers with information on relevant issues and updates, e.g. changes to legislation.

One to one advice—provided by a trained and accredited expert adviser who will review the a range of business topics resulting in an agreed business action plan.

Events—in addition to one to one advice, Business Links run advice workshops and seminars on specific or common areas of support, for example Start up Awareness courses or Business Finance and Financial awareness courses.

### Counterfeit Manufacturing: International Cooperation

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 20 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 402W, on the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, what further steps he plans to take to increase transparency in the negotiating process of the agreement. [314036]

**Mr. Lammy:** I have instructed my officials to take every opportunity to press for more transparency in the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement negotiations. They have consistently argued for more transparency in the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement negotiations. The issue was raised again during the EU co-ordination meetings and in several bilateral discussions at the talks in Mexico during 26-29 January. As a result of our calls, and those of like-minded countries, the negotiating parties have agreed to update the summary of the key elements being discussed. A joint statement issued after the Mexico round, which mentions transparency, can be found on the Intellectual Property Office website.

### Education Maintenance Allowance

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many students received non-repayable maintenance grants from (a) each education authority in the county of Tyne and Wear and (b) English local education authorities in each of the last five years; and what the average grant received by such students was in each case in each of the last five years. [314006]

**Mr. Lammy:** The information requested is in the table.

<i>Grants for maintenance—Tyne and Wear and England<sup>1</sup></i>								
<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Grant</i>		<i>Gateshead</i>	<i>Newcastle upon Tyne</i>	<i>North Tyneside</i>	<i>South Tyneside</i>	<i>Sunderland</i>	<i>England</i>
2004/05	HE Grant	Students	—	—	—	n/a	n/a	101,800
		Average (£)	—	—	—			860
2005/06	HE Grant	Students	710	1,050	640	580	1,100	195,900
		Average (£)	850	900	830	870	840	870
2006/07	Maintenance Grant <sup>2</sup>	Students	640	940	610	420	1,010	166,200
		Average (£)	1,920	2,130	1,850	2,040	2,000	2,010
	HE Grant	Students	540	820	500	450	680	154,700
		Average (£)	890	910	840	890	970	890
2007/08	Maintenance Grant <sup>2</sup>	Students	1,120	1,690	1,090	760	1,740	301,400
		Average (£)	2,050	2,170	1,920	2,200	2,140	2,090
	HE Grant	Students	300	490	270	260	510	93,800
		Average (£)	890	890	860	890	890	890
2008/09	Maintenance Grant <sup>2</sup>	Students	1,640	2,520	1,700	1,110	2,740	466,100
		Average (£)	2,100	2,230	2,000	2,190	2,180	2,140
	HE Grant	Students	100	140	80	80	160	29,600
		Average (£)	890	890	870	970	860	890

n/a = not available

<sup>1</sup> Applicants awarded a full or partial grant. England student numbers rounded to nearest 100, other figures rounded to nearest 10. Consistent 2004/05 figures not available at local authority level.

<sup>2</sup> Maintenance Grant figures include Special Support Grant.

Source:

Student Loans Company

### Financial Services: Portsmouth

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what his most recent assessment is of the effect on the financial services industry in Portsmouth of the recession; and if he will make a statement. [313073]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** At present data is only available for the period to the end of the 2008 calendar year. In 2008 there were some 2,400 people employed in this sector, which represented a 23 per cent. reduction on the 2007 figure.

However, a comparison over this relatively short time period is unlikely to present a comprehensive picture. A clearer indication of the effect of the recession on the financial services sector in Portsmouth will emerge over time, as more information becomes available.

### Higher Education: Free School Meals

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many and what percentage of pupils (a) eligible and (b) not eligible for free school meals progressed to (i) a university and (ii) a Russell Group university in (A) 1997 and (B) the most recent year for which figures are available. [311211]

**Mr. Lammy [holding answer 15 January 2010]:** The figures in the table show pupils who were in English maintained schools and aged 15 at the start of academic years 2001-02 and 2002-03 who progressed to HE by the age of 19 (in 2005-06 and 2006-07 respectively). 2005-06 is the earliest year for which these figures are available.

These figures have been estimated using matched data from the National Pupil Database, the Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record and the Learning and Skills Council Individualised Learner Record. Figures for 2007-08 will be available later this year.

*Estimates of the number and proportion of pupils aged 15 in 2001-02 and 2002-03 academic years, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2005-06 and 2006-07*

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Young persons in UK HE<sup>1</sup></i>				<i>of which; Russell Group HEIs</i>			
	<i>FSM<sup>2</sup></i>		<i>Non-FSM<sup>2</sup></i>		<i>FSM</i>		<i>Non-FSM</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
2005-06	10,800	13	156,000	33	1,000	1	33,000	7

Estimates of the number and proportion of pupils aged 15 in 2001-02 and 2002-03 academic years, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2005-06 and 2006-07

Academic Year	Young persons in UK HE <sup>1</sup>				of which; Russell Group HEIs			
	FSM <sup>2</sup>		Non-FSM <sup>2</sup>		FSM		Non-FSM	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
2006-07	11,400	14	164,000	33	1,000	1	32,600	7

<sup>1</sup> Includes HE level courses at English Further Education Colleges.

<sup>2</sup> FSM and non-FSM indicate receipt and non-receipt of Free School Meals respectively.

Notes:

In 2002-03 there were 81,100 maintained school pupils aged 15 claiming free school meals. This represents around 14 per cent. of all pupils in English maintained schools.

Source:

Matched data from the National Pupil Database, the Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record and the Learning and Skills Council Individualised Learner Record. All figures are estimates and numbers have been rounded to the nearest 100.

### Higher Education: Lincolnshire

**Shona McIsaac:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many residents in each electoral ward in (a) Cleethorpes constituency, (b) North East Lincolnshire local authority area and (c) North Lincolnshire local authority area attended university in each year since 1997. [315247]

**Mr. Lammy:** Information is not available at electoral ward level. The numbers of enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions from Cleethorpes Constituency, North East Lincolnshire local authority and North Lincolnshire local authority are provided as an alternative in the following table.

Enrolments<sup>1</sup> from Cleethorpes constituency<sup>2</sup>, North East Lincolnshire local authority<sup>2</sup> and North Lincolnshire local authority<sup>2</sup>—UK Higher Education Institutions<sup>3</sup>

Academic year	Cleethorpes	North East Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire
1997/98	1,540	2,400	2,820
1998/99	1,655	2,590	3,010
1999/2000	1,670	2,565	3,140
2000/01	1,720	2,575	3,345
2001/02	1,655	2,515	3,370
2002/03	1,705	2,540	3,415
2003/04	1,795	2,665	3,355
2004/05	1,830	2,750	3,095
2005/06	1,735	2,645	2,990
2006/07	1,730	2,640	3,095
2007/08	1,695	2,565	3,040
2008/09	1,705	2,560	3,050

<sup>1</sup> Covers undergraduate and postgraduate students of all ages enrolled on full-time and part-time courses.

<sup>2</sup> The table does not include enrolments where the constituency or local authority of the student cannot be established due to missing or invalid postcode information.

<sup>3</sup> Excludes the Open university due to inconsistencies in their coding of students across the time series.

Note:

Figures are on a snapshot basis as at 1 December and are rounded to the nearest five.

Source:

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record

### Higher Education: Student Numbers

**Annette Brooke:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many residents of each constituency in England attended university in the most recent academic year for which figures are available. [314921]

**Mr. Lammy:** A copy of a table showing the numbers of enrolments at UK higher education institutions from each constituency in England, in the 2008/09 academic year, will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

### Snow and Ice: Milton Keynes

**Mr. Lancaster:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the cost to business in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) the UK of the adverse weather conditions of December 2009 and January 2010. [313951]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** There are no official estimates at this early stage of local or regional cost to business as a result of the adverse weather but there are indications that some businesses lost trade due to customers being unable to travel or lost output due to staff being unable to attend work.

### Students: Finance

**Patrick Hall:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) how many students eligible for payments from the Student Loans Company are awaiting payment; [311295]

(2) many applications for student loans there were in the 2009-10 academic year; and how many such applications have been approved with full assessment to date; [311297]

(3) how many applications to the Student Loans Company there were in the academic year 2008-09 for student loans. [311362]

**Mr. Lammy:** In the 2008-09 academic year, there were a total of 956,000 applications for student support for those studying in England.

I am advised by the Student Loans Company (SLC) that the number of applications received as at 31 January 2010 for 2009-10 academic year was 1,026,000. New applications are still being received. Not all applications result in payments as some applicants decide not to proceed for a number of reasons.

Figures on the status of applications for maintenance support and numbers of payments were given in the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Andrew Stunell) on 1 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 140-42w.

Further information is available on the Student Loans Company (SLC) website:

<http://www.slc.co.uk/statistics/facts%20and%20%20figures/index.html>

**Mr. Sanders:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many students in higher education have received payments in respect of (a) tuition fee loans, (b)

maintenance loans, (c) grants for living costs, (d) bursaries and scholarships and (e) extra help for students with children or adult dependants from his Department in (i) Torbay constituency, (ii) the South West and (iii) England in each of the last three years; and what the total monetary value was of each such type of payment in each area in each such year. [314214]

**Mr. Lammy:** The information is as follows:

*Student support—Torbay local authority*

	Academic year					
	2006/07		2007/08		2008/09	
	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)
Tuition Fee Loans	0.9	1.8	1.2	3.0	1.6	4.3
Maintenance Loans	1.7	6.4	1.8	6.3	1.8	6.4
HE Maintenance Grant	0.5	1.1	0.8	1.8	1.3	2.8
HE Grant	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1
Extra help for students with children or adult dependents <sup>1</sup>	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.4

*Student support—South West*

	Academic year					
	2006/07		2007/08		2008/09	
	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)
Tuition Fee Loans	37.5	70.8	51.4	126.1	64.0	180.3
Maintenance Loans	72.2	259.5	73.2	259.0	74.9	263.5
HE Maintenance Grant	15.1	28.7	28.1	55.8	43.8	89.9
HE Grant	13.8	11.9	8.6	7.5	2.7	2.3
Extra help for students with children or adult dependents <sup>1</sup>	2.4	6.5	2.8	7.5	3.1	8.5

*Student support—England*

	Academic year					
	2006/07		2007/08		2008/09	
	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)	Students (thousand)	Value (£ million)
Tuition Fee Loans	397.3	807.7	553.5	1,388.6	696.9	1,981.1
Maintenance Loans	728.1	2,613.4	746.2	2,630.7	771.5	2,717.0
HE Maintenance Grant	166.2	334.3	301.4	629.6	466.1	998.6
HE Grant	154.7	136.9	93.8	83.6	29.6	26.3
Extra help for students with children or adult dependents <sup>1</sup>	28.1	78.6	31.8	90.5	36.2	106.7

<sup>1</sup> Childcare Grant, Parental Learning Allowance and Adult Dependents Grant

Source:

Student Loans Company

The information requested on bursaries and scholarships is not available centrally as they are the responsibility of higher education institutions.

**Students: Romford**

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what proportion of 18 to 22 year-olds exclusively resident in Romford were studying at university (a) in 1997 and (b) on the latest date for which figures are available; [315909]

(2) what proportion of 18 year-olds participated in higher education in Romford in 2008-09. [315934]

**Mr. Lammy:** It is not possible to identify residents of Romford who did not attend higher education, which would be needed to provide a proportion. Therefore the

number of 18 to 22-year-old enrolments at UK higher education institutions from Romford parliamentary constituency has been provided as an alternative. Figures for the 2009/10 academic year will be available in January 2011.

*18 to 22-year-old enrolments<sup>1</sup> from Romford parliamentary constituency<sup>2</sup> UK higher education institutions—academic years 1997/98 and 2008/09*

Age	1997/98	2008/09
18	135	230
19	170	275
20	185	295
21	115	175
22	60	85

18 to 22-year-old enrolments<sup>1</sup> from Romford parliamentary constituency<sup>2</sup> UK higher education institutions—academic years 1997/98 and 2008/09

Age	1997/98	2008/09
Total 18-22	665	1,060

<sup>1</sup> Covers enrolments to both full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes students who could not be assigned to a parliamentary constituency due to missing or invalid postcode information.

Note:

Figures are based on snapshot as at 1 December to maintain consistency across academic years and have been rounded to the nearest five.

Source:

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

## WOMEN AND EQUALITY

### Burqas

**Mr. Bone:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality what recent representation she has received on the wearing of burqas in public. [313814]

**Michael Jabez Foster:** The Government Equalities Office has not had any recent representations on the wearing of burqas in public, however it was raised with the Deputy Minister for Woman (Maria Eagle) at the Communities and Local Government Select Committee on 25 January 2010.

### Departmental Communication

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality pursuant to the answer of Lord Bates of 3 December 2009, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column WA68, on Government departments: annual reports, and with reference to the Government Response to the House of Lords Communications Committee's report into Government Communications, whether the Government Equalities Office publishes an annual report on departmental communications. [315607]

**Michael Jabez Foster:** The Government Equalities Office produces an annual report which includes a paragraph on the departmental communications. This can be found on page 24 of the Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2008-09.

### Departmental Conferences

**Mr. Baron:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality which conferences held overseas have been attended by civil servants based in her Department since its inception; and what the cost to the public purse was of such attendance at each conference. [305853]

**Michael Jabez Foster:** Since its creation on 12 October 2007 the following conferences have been attended by civil servants in the Government Equality Office.

Conference description	2009-10	Total cost (£)
Swedish EU presidency		1,091.60
International Lesbian and Gay European conference		463.10

### Departmental Publications

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality if she will place in the Library a copy of the

advice issued to Government Equalities Office staff on stress recognition and management. [313946]

**Michael Jabez Foster:** Staff working in the Government Equalities Office can access advice on stress recognition and management via the GEO Staff Handbook, which is an internal document. We will therefore not be placing a copy in the Library.

### Departmental Training

**Mr. Graham Stuart:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality how many (a) away days and (b) conferences that took place outside the Government Equalities Office's buildings attended by civil servants in the that Office there have been since its inception; and what the cost was of each. [307468]

**Michael Jabez Foster:** The Government Equalities Office has held seven away days attended by civil servants outside the Government Equalities Office's buildings since its inception.

Costs for the five away days for all GEO staff were:

Date	Cost (£)
16 November 2007	4,898
28 April 2008	3,413
6 November 2008	8,242
15 May 2009	6,744
16 October 2009	6,740

Costs for the two away days for the GEO Board were:

Date	Cost (£)
27 November 2008	1,413
26 November 2009	1,267

The GEO does not hold information on the total number of conferences attended by its staff nor the amount that these would have cost.

### Departmental Written Questions

**David Simpson:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality what average time the Government Equalities Office took to answer questions for (a) ordinary written answer and (b) written answer on a named day in the last 12 months. [313649]

**Michael Jabez Foster:** The information is not available in the form requested.

46 named day questions were tabled to the Government Equalities Office between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2009. Of these 52 per cent. received substantive answers on the day. 248 ordinary written questions were tabled to the Government Equalities Office between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2009. Of these 45 per cent. received substantive answers within five parliamentary sitting days.

## CABINET OFFICE

### 10 Downing Street: Shops

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many sales there have been of each item of stock in the Downing Street gift shop in the last 12 months. [312355]

**Angela E. Smith:** A small selection of unsubsidised gifts are available for staff to purchase on a not-for-profit basis.

#### Central Office of Information: Marketing

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the Central Office of Information press release of 11 December 2009, on the merchandising and promotional items framework, what the estimated monetary value is of each label within each lot. [315224]

**Tessa Jowell:** I have asked the chief executive of the Central Office of Information to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Mark Lund, dated 2 February 2010:*

As Chief Executive of the Central Office of Information (COI), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question [315224] regarding the Merchandising and Promotional Framework.

There is no monetary value for each label within each lot estimated on the merchandising and promotional items framework.

#### Departmental Accountancy

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether any written instructions have been provided to her Department's Accounting Officer in accordance with paragraph 5.5 of the Ministerial Code since 1997. [315323]

**Tessa Jowell:** The Cabinet Office holds no record of any written instruction since 1997 to the Cabinet Office Accounting Officer under paragraph 5.5 of the Ministerial Code.

#### Departmental Correspondence

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the policy of (a) her Department and (b) the Prime Minister's Office is on the maximum time that should be taken to respond to correspondence from members of the public. [315206]

**Tessa Jowell:** The Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr. Maude) on 29 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 1140-41W.

#### Disclosure of Information: Home Office

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if she will place in the Library a copy of the letter from the Cabinet Office's Director of Security and Intelligence (a) dated 8 October 2008 sent to SO15 Counter Terrorism Command requesting the assistance of the police into the investigation of Home Office leaks and (b) of 29 October 2008 sent to Deputy Assistant Commissioner Cressida Dick calling for a scoping exercise to be undertaken. [312354]

**Tessa Jowell:** A copy of the letter dated 8 October was part of the evidence submitted to PASC on 10 December by the Cabinet Secretary and later published on their website. The text was also included in the PASC Report Leaks and Whistleblowing in Whitehall (HC 83).

I will place a redacted copy of the letter of 29 October sent to Deputy Commissioner Cressida Dick in the Libraries of the House. This letter has been seen and discussed by the Committee on Issue of Privilege (Police Searches on Parliamentary Estate), during their evidence sessions.

#### Electoral Register: British Nationals Abroad

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many UK citizens resident abroad are registered to vote in each parliamentary constituency, ranked from highest to lowest in respect of the number in each constituency. [314900]

**Angela E. Smith:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated February 2010:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your question asking how many UK citizens resident overseas are registered to vote in each Parliamentary constituency, ranked from highest to lowest in respect of the number in each constituency. (314900)

Table 1 shows the number of overseas electors registered to vote by Parliamentary constituency in the UK in 2008, in descending order. 2008 is the latest year for which data are available. A copy has been placed in the libraries of the house.

#### Government Communications

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to the answer of 1 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 702W, on Government communications, what substantive documents have been published for members of the Government Communication Network in the last 12 months. [315277]

**Tessa Jowell:** The Government Communications Network (GCN) is a virtual, online network and resource open to Civil Servants who have a role or interest in Government communications.

The Government Communications Network does not publish formal reports, best practice material is available on the GCN website and updated on a regular basis.

#### Government Communications: Public Relations

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if she will place in the Library a copy of the speech, presentation and speaking notes made by the Permanent Secretary for Government Communications, Mr. Matt Tee, at the briefing held by Hanover in November 2009. [315208]

**Tessa Jowell:** On this occasion Mr. Tee spoke without notes or presentation materials.

#### Government Departments: Private Detectives

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the answer of 15 January 2009, *Official Report*, column 873W, on private detectives, whether other Government Departments have hired or commissioned individuals from the panel of independent investigators. [312257]

**Tessa Jowell:** Yes. Government Departments have hired individuals from the panel to undertake internal investigations. Investigations are commissioned following consultation with my Department.

#### Government Departments: Public Relations

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the answer of 20 April 2009, *Official Report*, column 351W, on central government: public relations, in what month of 1997 the framework was established; and which public relations companies have been included in that framework in each year since it was established. [315222]

**Tessa Jowell:** I have asked the chief executive of the Central Office of Information to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Mark Lund, dated 2 February 2010:*

As Chief Executive of the Central Office of Information (COI), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question [315222] regarding the PR Framework.

The COI only hold the details of companies included on the current framework and a copy has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

The current Public Relations Companies that are included on the COI framework are also listed on the COI website

[www.coi.gov.uk](http://www.coi.gov.uk)

Information on companies from previous frameworks is not held centrally.

#### Public Expenditure

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what measures are used by (a) her Department and (b) the Office for National Statistics of the level of cost inflation within the public sector. [312261]

**Mr. Byrne:** I have been asked to reply.

The measure for price inflation that the Government use when expressing spending allocations in real terms is the GDP deflator, which measures changes in the overall level of prices for the goods and services in GDP. The latest projections can be found on p.169 of the pre-Budget report 2009:

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/prebud\\_pbr09\\_index.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/prebud_pbr09_index.htm)

The Office for National Statistics also publishes the GDP deflator for past years, details of which can be found in "UK National Accounts: The Blue Book 2009".

#### Unemployment: Inverness

**Danny Alexander:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the average length of time was for which claimants aged between 18 and 24 years resident in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey constituency were in receipt of jobseeker's allowance in (a) each of the last 12 months and (b) each of the last five years. [315683]

**Ms Butler:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated 4 February 2010:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what the average length of time was for which claimants aged between 18 and 24 years resident in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey constituency were in receipt of jobseeker's allowance in (a) each of the last 12 months and (b) each of the last five years. (315683)

The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is taken from the Jobcentre Plus administrative system. The length of a claim has been defined as the time between the start of an individual's claim and the count date in each reference month. Table 1 shows the median length of live claims for claimants aged between 18-24 years during the last 12 months up to the latest available period in December 2009, and for December of each of the last 5 years.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

*Table 1: Median length of claims of jobseeker's allowance of persons<sup>1</sup> aged 18 to 24 years resident in the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey constituency*

	<i>Median length of claim (months)</i>
December 2004	5.7
December 2005	6.1
December 2006	7.4
December 2007	6.2
December 2008	7.2
January 2009	7.3
February 2009	5.7
March 2009	7.9
April 2009	9.1
May 2009	9.2
June 2009	8.9
July 2009	8.4
August 2009	9.4
September 2009	10.3
October 2009	9.6
November 2009	8.4
December 2009	7.8

<sup>1</sup> Length of claim data is only available for computerised claims, which account for 99.7 per cent. of all claims.

Source:

Jobcentre Plus Administrative System

## CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

### Families: Government Assistance

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how much his Department has allocated to Family Nurse Partnerships in 2010-11. [315749]

**Ann Keen:** I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Health took over financial responsibility for the Family Nurse Partnership programme from 2008-09. Budget allocations for 2010-11 will be finalised shortly.

### Higher Education: Admissions

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many pupils

eligible for free school meals took up a university place to study each subject (a) group and (b) line in the latest year for which figures are available. [315526]

**Mr. Lammy:** I have been asked to reply.

The figures in the table show pupils who were in receipt of free school meals who were in English maintained schools and aged 15 at the start of the 2002/03 academic year who progressed to HE by the age of 19 (in 2006/07) by subject group. Figures are not available by subject line.

These figures have been estimated using matched data from the National Pupil Database, the Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record and the Learning and Skills Council Individualised Learner Record. 2005/06 is the earliest year for which these figures are available. Figures for 2007/08 will be available later in 2010.

*Estimates of the number of free school meal pupils aged 15 in 2002/03 academic year, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2006/07, by subject group*

<i>Subject of study</i>	<i>FSM pupils</i>
Medicine and Dentistry	140
Subjects allied to Medicine	920
Biological Sciences	910
Veterinary Sciences, Agriculture and related subjects	30
Combination of Science	170
Physical Sciences	270
Mathematical and Computer Sciences	920
Engineering	365
Combination with Science	560
Technologies	60
Architecture, Building and Planning	200
Social studies	740
Law	775
Business and Administrative studies	1,580
Non-Science Combination	750
Mass Communications and Documentation	330
Linguistics, Classics and related subjects	215
European Languages, Literature and related subjects	55
Eastern, Asiatic, African, American and Australasian Languages, Literature and related subjects	20
Historical and Philosophical studies	230
Creative Arts and Design	1,035
Education	315
Generic Combined	135

*Notes:*

1. All figures are estimates and have been rounded to the nearest five, figures less than 5 are shown as '-', zero counts are shown as '0'.
2. The figures for FSM pupils are based on those recorded as such on Pupil Level Census 2003/04. As this is a snapshot of pupils in one year, this will exclude pupils who claimed free school meals in previous years. Also some parents may choose not to apply for FSM.
3. Children from these families who progress to HE institutions would not be included in the table.

*Source:*

Matched data from the National Pupil Database, the Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record and the Learning and Skills Council Individualised Learner Record.

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many pupils eligible for free school meals took up a place at each university in the latest year for which figures are available. [315527]

**Mr. Lammy:** I have been asked to reply.

The figures in the table show pupils who were in receipt of free school meals who were in English maintained schools and aged 15 at the start of the 2002/03 academic year who progressed to HE by the age of 19 (in 2006/07) by higher education institution.

These figures have been estimated using matched data from the National Pupil Database, the Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record and the Learning and Skills Council Individualised Learner Record. 2005/06 is the earliest year for which these figures are available. Figures for 2007/08 will be available later in 2010.

*Estimates of the number of free school meal pupils aged 15 in 2002/03 academic year, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2006/07, by higher education institution*

<i>Higher education institution</i>	<i>FSM pupils</i>
The Open University	125
Bishop Grosseteste University College	—
Lincoln	10
Buckinghamshire New University	70
Central School of Speech and Drama	—
University of Chester	75
Canterbury Christ Church University	50
York St John University	20
University College Plymouth St Mark and St John	10
Dartington College of Arts	5
Edge Hill University	110
University College Falmouth	10
Harper Adams University College	—
The University of Winchester	25
Liverpool Hope University	95
University of the Arts, London	90
University of Bedfordshire	120
The University of Northampton	50
Newman College of Higher Education	35
Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication	20
Roehampton University	125
Rose Bruford College	—
Royal Academy of Music	0
Royal College of Music	0
Royal Northern College of Music	-
Southampton Solent University	75
St Martin's College	45
St Mary's University College, Twickenham	30
Leeds Trinity and All Saints	35
Trinity Laban	0
The University of Worcester	25
Anglia Ruskin University	70
Bath Spa University	25
The University of Bolton	55
Bournemouth University	60
The University of Brighton	85
Birmingham City University	250
The University of Central Lancashire	215

*Estimates of the number of free school meal pupils aged 15 in 2002/03 academic year, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2006/07, by higher education institution*

<i>Higher education institution</i>	<i>FSM pupils</i>
University of Gloucestershire	35
Coventry University	170
University of Derby	105
The University of East London	235
The University of Greenwich	275
University of Hertfordshire	280
The University of Huddersfield	185
The University of Lincoln	55
Kingston University	350
Leeds Metropolitan University	190
Liverpool John Moores University	275
The Manchester Metropolitan University	415
Middlesex University	290
De Montfort University	215
The University of Northumbria at Newcastle	110
The Nottingham Trent University	135
Oxford Brookes University	30
The University of Plymouth	105
The University of Portsmouth	85
Sheffield Hallam University	195
London South Bank University	185
Staffordshire University	50
The University of Sunderland	100
The University of Teesside	130
Thames Valley University	120
University of the West of England, Bristol	85
The University of Chichester	25
The University of Westminster	420
The University of Wolverhampton	295
The University of Wales, Newport	10
The North-East Wales Institute of Higher Education	10
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	5
University of Glamorgan	15
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	5
Trinity College, Carmarthen	—
University of Abertay Dundee	0
Edinburgh College of Art	—
Glasgow School of Art	—
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh	—
The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama	0
The Robert Gordon University	—
The University of Paisley	0
Glasgow Caledonian University	—
Napier University	—
Aston University	95
The University of Bath	15
The University of Birmingham	100
The University of Bradford	220
The University of Bristol	20
Brunel University	190

*Estimates of the number of free school meal pupils aged 15 in 2002/03 academic year, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2006/07, by higher education institution*

<i>Higher education institution</i>	<i>FSM pupils</i>
The University of Cambridge	20
The City University	160
University of Durham	30
The University of East Anglia	35
The University of Essex	70
The University of Exeter	15
The University of Hull	75
The University of Keele	50
The University of Kent	75
The University of Lancaster	40
The University of Leeds	105
The University of Leicester	55
The University of Liverpool	90
Birkbeck College	10
Goldsmiths College	100
Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	45
Institute of Education	0
King's College London	120
London School of Economics and Political Science	30
Queen Mary and Westfield College	250
Royal Holloway and Bedford New College	35
The Royal Veterinary College	—
St George's Hospital Medical School	25
The School of Oriental and African Studies	35
The School of Pharmacy	15
University College London	50
University of London (Institutes and activities)	0
Loughborough University	50
The University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	35
The University of Nottingham	55
The University of Oxford	25
The University of Reading	40
The University of Salford	155
The University of Sheffield	55
The University of Southampton	45
The University of Surrey	35
The University of Sussex	35
The University of Warwick	30
The University of York	15
The University of Edinburgh	—
The University of Glasgow	—
The University of Strathclyde	—
The University of Aberdeen	10
Heriot-Watt University	5
The University of Dundee	5
The University of St Andrews	5
The University of Stirling	10
Scottish Agricultural College	0
The University of Wales, Lampeter	5
Aberystwyth University	30
Bangor University	20
Cardiff University	20
Swansea University	15

Estimates of the number of free school meal pupils aged 15 in 2002/03 academic year, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2006/07, by higher education institution

Higher education institution	FSM pupils
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	—
The Queen's University of Belfast	—
University of Ulster	5
Writtle College	5
Norwich School of Art and Design	5
Cumbria Institute of the Arts	10
St. Mary's University College	0
Royal Agricultural College	0
UHI Millennium Institute	—
The Arts Institute at Bournemouth	5
Bell College	—
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama	—
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies	55
Courtauld Institute of Art	0
London Metropolitan University	315
The University of Buckingham	—
The University of Manchester	145
Heythrop College	—
The University College for the Creative Arts	40
Leeds College of Music	0
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	0

Estimates of the number of free school meal pupils aged 15 in 2002/03 academic year, in English maintained schools, who progressed to HE by the age of 19 in 2006/07, by higher education institution

Higher education institution	FSM pupils
The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	5

**Notes:**

1. All figures are estimates and have been rounded to the nearest five, figures less than five are shown as '—', zero counts are shown as '0'.
2. The figures for FSM pupils are based on those recorded as such on Pupil Level Census 2003/04. As this is a snapshot of pupils in one year, this will exclude pupils who claimed free school meals in previous years. Also some parents may choose not to apply for FSM.
3. Children from these families who progress to HE institutions would not be included in the table.

**Source:**

Matched data from the National Pupil Database, the Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record and the Learning and Skills Council Individualised Learner Record.

**Pupil Exclusions: Gloucestershire**

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many pupils from (a) primary, (b) secondary and (c) special schools were (i) temporarily and (ii) permanently excluded in (A) Stroud constituency and (B) Gloucestershire in academic year 2008-09. [312751]

**Mr. Coaker:** Exclusions data for 2008/09 is not yet available. A Statistical First Release including national and local authority level data is due to be published in July showing this information.

Information on exclusions for the 2007/08 school year are provided in the following table.

Maintained primary schools, state-funded secondary schools and special schools<sup>1,2,3</sup> number of pupil enrolments<sup>4</sup> with fixed period and permanent exclusions 2007/08

	Stroud parliamentary constituency		Gloucestershire local authority	
	Fixed period exclusions	Permanent exclusions <sup>5</sup>	Fixed period exclusions	Permanent exclusions <sup>6</sup>
Primary	30	0	200	20
All Secondary	420	20	2,010	110
Special	50	*	110	*
Total	500	20	2,320	140

\*\*\* = Less than 5.

<sup>1</sup> Includes middle schools as deemed.

<sup>2</sup> Includes city technology colleges and academies (including all through academies).

<sup>3</sup> Includes maintained and non-maintained special schools. Excludes general hospital schools.

<sup>4</sup> Pupils may be counted more than once if they were registered at more than one school or moved schools during the school year.

<sup>5</sup> Figures are reported by schools and are known to be incomplete.

<sup>6</sup> Estimates based on confirmed local authority figures.

**Note:**

Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

**Source:**

School Census

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Departmental Manpower

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employees in (a) his Department and (b) each of its agencies are in transition prior to being managed out; how long on average the transition window between notification and exit has been in (i) his Department and (ii) each of its agencies in each of the last five years; what estimate he has made of the salary costs of staff in transition in each such year; and what proportion of employees in transition were classed as being so for more than six months in each year. [313236]

**Paul Goggins:** The following information relates to surplus staff.

(a) No Northern Ireland Office (NIO) staff have been "managed out" in the last five years.

(b) In 2009, sixteen staff were "in transition" prior to being managed out to the Youth Justice Agency. The transition window between notification and exit was eight months. Salary costs were approximately £350,000. Five per cent. of these staff were "in transition" for more than six months.

### Driving Offences: Sentencing

**David Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland pursuant to the answer of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 511-2W, on driving

offences, how many custodial sentences were handed down for causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly (a) when unfit and (b) with excess alcohol; and what the (i) average, (ii) longest and (iii) shortest custodial sentence was in each of those years. [314517]

**Paul Goggins:** The following table documents the number convicted, the number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, the shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for each of the offences 'cause grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly when unfit' and 'causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly with excess alcohol'.

Data cover the calendar years 2005 and 2006 and are collated on the principal offence rule; so only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

*'Cause grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly when unfit' and 'causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly with excess alcohol'—number convicted, number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given, 2005 and 2006*

	Sentence length (in months) <sup>1</sup>				
	Number convicted	Number given immediate custody	Average	Shortest	Longest
<b>2005</b>					
Cause grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly when unfit	1	1	6	6	6
Causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly with excess alcohol	4	3	26	14	42
<b>2006</b>					
Cause grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly when unfit	3	3	14	6	24
Causing grievous bodily injury by driving carelessly with excess alcohol	4	3	11	6	18

<sup>1</sup> Sentence lengths have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

**David Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland pursuant to the answer of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 511-2W, on driving offences, what the (a) average, (b) longest and (c) shortest custodial sentence handed down for a motoring offence causing death was in (i) 2005 and (ii) 2006; and how many custodial sentences were handed down in each of those years. [314518]

**Paul Goggins:** The following table documents the number convicted, the number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, the shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for motoring offences causing death for each of the requested years.

Data are collated on the principal offence rule; so only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

*Number convicted, number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for motoring offences causing death*

	Sentence length (in months)				
	Number convicted	Number given immediate custody	Average	Shortest	Longest
2005	9	8	32	9	72
2006	13	12	42	3	108

<sup>1</sup> Sentence lengths have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### Newspaper Licensing Agency

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what payments were made by his Department and each of its agencies to the Newspaper Licensing Agency in each of the last 10 years. [315615]

**Paul Goggins:** The following table shows the expenditure to the Newspaper Licensing Agency by the Northern Ireland Office including its agencies, but excluding NDPBs and the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland. Figures cover the last seven years for which records are available.

	£
2003-04	65,215.22
2004-05	62,720.95
2005-06	42,944.26
2006-07	50,318.56
2007-08	40,337.07
2008-09	44,798.56
2009-10	40,585.63

### Sexual Offences: Sentencing

**David Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland pursuant to the answer of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 512-14, on sexual offences, in respect of each category of offence, (a) what the average length of custodial sentence was, (b) how many custodial sentences were handed down and (c) what the (i) longest and (ii) shortest custodial sentence for each category of offence was. [314678]

**Paul Goggins:** The following tables document the number convicted, the number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, the shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for serious sexual assault offences broken down by offence.

Data cover the calendar years 2004 to 2006 and are collated on the principal offence rule; so only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

*Number convicted, number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for serious sexual assault offences by offence*

Offence	2004				
	Number convicted	Number given immediate custody	Average	Shortest	Longest
Rape <sup>2</sup>	15	15	119	48	Life
Attempted rape	3	3	104	48	144
Gross indecency with child	3	3	17	12	20

Number convicted, number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for serious sexual assault offences by offence

Offence	2004				
	Number convicted	Number given immediate custody	Sentence length (in months) <sup>1</sup>		
			Average	Shortest	Longest
Buggery with male person, 16 years or over without consent	0	0	—	—	—
Buggery with boy under 16 years of age	6	4	113	60	168
Buggery with a woman	1	1	72	72	72
Buggery with a girl	1	1	24	24	24
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under 14 years	4	3	20	6	30
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under 17 years	2	0	—	—	—
Incest by man on female	0	0	—	—	—
Forcibly abducting a female with intent to carnally know her	0	0	—	—	—
Indecent assault on female <sup>3</sup>	57	19	21	2	60
Indecent assault on male	17	9	15	3	36
Indecent assault on female child	3	2	18	12	24
Indecent assault on male child <sup>4</sup>	4	2	48	48	48

<sup>1</sup>. Sentence lengths have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

<sup>2</sup>. The average sentence length excludes the one offender sentenced to life imprisonment.

<sup>3</sup>. Sentence length information excludes one offender sentenced to a juvenile justice centre order.

<sup>4</sup>. Sentence length information excludes one offender sentenced to a juvenile justice centre order.

Number convicted, number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for serious sexual assault offences by offence

Offence	2005				
	Number convicted	Number given immediate custody	Sentence length (in months) <sup>1</sup>		
			Average	Shortest	Longest
Rape	4	4	105	48	144
Attempted rape	4	4	81	60	120
Gross indecency with child	6	3	14	8	24
Buggery with male person, 16 years or over without consent	0	0	—	—	—
Buggery with boy under 16 years of age	1	1	96	96	96
Buggery with a woman	0	0	—	—	—
Buggery with a girl	0	0	—	—	—
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under 14 years	3	3	17	14	18
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under 17 years	4	0	—	—	—
Incest by man on female	1	1	36	36	36
Forcibly abducting a female with intent to carnally know her	0	0	—	—	—
Indecent assault on female	51	21	29	3	84
Indecent assault on male	11	4	38	9	96

Number convicted, number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for serious sexual assault offences by offence

Offence	2005				
	Number convicted	Number given immediate custody	Sentence length (in months) <sup>1</sup>		
			Average	Shortest	Longest
Indecent assault on female child	18	13	27	6	66
Indecent assault on male child	5	3	45	8	78

<sup>1</sup>. Sentence lengths have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Number convicted, number sentenced to immediate custody and the average, shortest and longest custodial sentence length (in months) given for serious sexual assault offences by offence

Offence	2006				
	Number convicted	Number given immediate custody	Sentence length (in months) <sup>1</sup>		
			Average	Shortest	Longest
Rape	11	11	125	48	180
Attempted rape	0	0	—	—	—
Gross indecency with child	5	3	32	18	54
Buggery with male person, 16 years or over without consent	0	0	—	—	—
Buggery with boy under 16 years of age	3	3	125	108	144
Buggery with a woman	0	0	—	—	—
Buggery with a girl	0	0	—	—	—
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under 14 years	3	2	42	36	48
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under 17 years	5	4	13	8	24
Incest by man on female	1	0	—	—	—
Forcibly abducting a female with intent to carnally know her	0	0	—	—	—
Indecent assault on female <sup>2</sup>	73	41	29	2	96
Indecent assault on male	8	4	31	6	72
Indecent assault on female child	2	1	12	12	12
Indecent assault on male child	0	0	—	—	—

<sup>1</sup>. Sentence lengths have been rounded to the nearest whole number

<sup>2</sup> Sentence length information excludes one offender sentenced to a juvenile justice centre order

## ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### Carbon Emissions

**Anne Milton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps he is taking to encourage retailers to reduce their carbon emissions; what representations he has received on campaigns organised by not-for-profit organisations to encourage retailers to conserve energy; and if he will make a statement. [314486]

**Joan Ruddock:** The Government have in place a number of measures to encourage retailers to reduce carbon emissions. These include the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme, which will enter into force this year; advice and

support, including through the Carbon Trust and Business Link; and a range of financial incentives to encourage energy efficient investment, including Enhanced Capital Allowances and interest free energy efficiency loans for small and medium enterprises. DECC also works closely with DEFRA in efforts to help retailers reduce carbon emissions from products and services.

In addition, the retail sector and the Government are working together to develop a low carbon action plan for retail. BIS, DEFRA and DECC are currently working in partnership with the British Retail Consortium and the Association of Convenience Stores to identify key priorities and actions to improve the environmental performance of the retail sector.

I am aware of representations on this subject from the 10:10 campaign; these are being considered as part of the work outlined above.

### Electricity Generation

**Dr. Pugh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the price per megawatt hour of electricity generated over the life cycle of proposed new (a) coal, (b) gas, (c) oil, (d) hydroelectric, (e) nuclear and (f) tidal power generating facilities. [314344]

**Mr. Kidney:** The Government have carried out analysis on generation costs in recent years to inform policy decisions. Some of these estimates were published as part of the Energy Review (2006)

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file32014.pdf>

More recently the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) have published estimated levelised costs (£/MWh, in 2008 prices) associated with 1 MWh of electricity generated from some technologies, for their December 2008 report

<http://www.theccc.org.uk/pdf/TSO-ClimateChange.pdf>

as set out in the following table and include construction, operation and maintenance costs and where applicable the cost of carbon allowances (EU ETS). Moreover, for nuclear, they also include the costs of decommissioning and waste.

Technology	Levelised cost (£/MWh) 2010
<i>Coal fired plant</i>	
Coal—central fuel	54
<i>Gas fired plant</i>	
CCGT—central fuel	53
<i>Nuclear plant</i>	
Nuclear	51

*Source:*

The Committee on Climate Change (2008) "Building a low-carbon economy" p189

Government estimates for the cost of electricity generated from hydroelectric plant were published in the DTI report "Impact of banding the Renewables Obligation—Costs of electricity production" (2007)

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/Files/file39038.pdf>

Technology—Hydroelectric	Levelised cost (£/MWh) 2010
Small scale (<1.25 MW)—central cost	71
Mid scale (1.25-20 MW)—central cost	63

*Source:*

DTI (2006) "Impact of banding the Renewables Obligation—Costs of electricity production" p32-34

The estimated costs of tidal generation were estimated as part of the response to the consultation on the Renewable Energy Strategy. These are set out as follows:

Technology	Capital cost (£/kW)2008	Operating cost (£/kW/year)	Availability (percentage)
Tidal stream	2,800-3,800	75-80	30-40

*Source:*

Redpoint Trilemma (2008) "Implementation of EU 2020 Renewable Target in the UK Electricity Sector: Renewable Support Schemes."

[http://decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/cons\\_res/rescon\\_support/rescon\\_support.aspx](http://decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/cons_res/rescon_support/rescon_support.aspx)

Government do not have a recent cost estimate for the price per megawatt hour of electricity generated from oil-fired plant.

It should be noted that the estimates of levelised costs for different types of electricity generation are highly sensitive to the assumptions used for capital costs, fuel and EU ETS allowance prices, operating costs, load factor, and other drivers. In reality, there are large uncertainties and ranges around these figures.

### Energy: Conservation

**Greg Mulholland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many households in (a) England and (b) Leeds North West constituency have received assistance from the Community Energy Saving Programme in the latest period for which figures are available. [315577]

**Joan Ruddock:** The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) went live on 1 September 2009. There is currently one CESP scheme that has commenced which is in Walsall where work began in January. This scheme will deliver energy efficiency benefits to up to 136 households; work has been completed in a few of these households to date.

Figures will be available from 1 May 2010 when Ofgem is required to provide its first report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

### Heating

**Mr. Mark Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what progress he has made in taking forward the connection of the Pimlico and Whitehall district heating schemes as announced in the Budget 2009; and how much his Department is planning to spend on this project. [315187]

**Joan Ruddock:** Working closely with the London Development Agency we have made good progress identifying the route for the pipe work, location of the interconnector and with resolving certain technical issues involved with this complicated project. DECC has earmarked £1.75 million for the project, subject to match funding by the London Development Agency.

### Nuclear Power

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the answer of 2 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 187W, on nuclear power: regulation, what cost recovery has been applied to the Nuclear Industry Association, as originator of the nuclear justification document which was the subject of discussion at the public consultation

meeting; and whether he plans to apply cost recovery to applicants for any future meetings held on nuclear justification. [316515]

**Mr. Kidney:** The Nuclear Industry Association met the cost of making its application for a Regulatory Justification decision. The public engagement event on 19 January was part of the Government's public consultation on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's proposed decisions. It is therefore proper that the Government meet the cost of the event.

#### Nuclear Power Stations: Leukaemia

**Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment his Department has made of the incidence of leukaemia in children aged under five years living within a five kilometre radius of a nuclear site. [314904]

**Mr. Kidney [holding answer 2 February 2010]:** We are currently consulting on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's proposed decisions that two new nuclear power station designs, the API000 and EPR, are justified under the terms of the Justification of Practices Involving Ionising Radiation Regulations 2004.

Chapter 3 of the proposed decision documents sets out what account my right hon. Friend has taken of recent studies on the impact of radiation on human health in coming to his proposed decisions.

Copies of the consultation documents have been placed in the Library of the House and are available at:

[http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/reg\\_just\\_cons/reg\\_just\\_cons.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/reg_just_cons/reg_just_cons.aspx)

#### Oil: Overseas Trade

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the (a) volume and (b) monetary value of refined oil and petroleum products (i) exported and (ii) imported in each of the last five years. [315578]

**Mr. Kidney:** The information requested is in the following tables.

<i>Crude oil and petroleum products</i>		
	<i>Value (£ million)</i>	
	<i>Exported</i>	<i>Imported</i>
2004	16,470	13,820
2005	19,595	19,415
2006	22,135	23,390
2007	22,725	22,495
2008	31,790	35,070

<i>Crude oil and petroleum products</i>		
	<i>Thousand tonnes of oil equivalent</i>	
	<i>Exported</i>	<i>Imported</i>
2004	103,621	88,394
2005	91,498	88,832
2006	86,349	94,207
2007	88,464	90,112
2008	84,325	91,683

These data are published in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (Tables 1.1 to 1.6).

#### Power Stations: EU Law

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment has been made of the effect on (a) the size of energy bills and (b) the number of jobs in the energy sector of implementation of the provisions of the EU Large Combustion Plant Directive. [313756]

**Mr. Kidney:** The impact of the implementation of the large combustion plants directive is taken into account within all projections of future energy prices published by the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

The impact of the large combustion plants directive specifically on energy bills and jobs in isolation from other policies has not been assessed.

#### Radioactive Materials: Waste Management

**Annette Brooke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what evidence his Department is using to decide on the minimum burial depth for each grade of nuclear waste. [314721]

**Mr. Kidney [holding answer 1 February 2010]:** The depth of the facilities for the disposal of radioactive waste are considered on a facility by facility basis by the operator, who will need to satisfy the independent safety and environmental regulators that people and the environment will be protected.

The White Paper *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: A Framework for Implementing Geological Disposal* states that the 'depth at which the underground vaults and disposal tunnels will be located is likely to be somewhere between 200 and 1000 metres, but this will depend on the geology at the site in question'. This statement is drawn directly from recommendations of the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management released in 2006

**Annette Brooke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what account was taken of scientific predictions of future rising sea levels in the process of deciding upon nuclear waste storage sites; and if he will make a statement. [314723]

**Mr. Kidney [holding answer 1 February 2010]:** The bulk storage of nuclear fuel or nuclear matter (including waste) is a Licensable Activity under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965. The holder of a nuclear site licence to undertake such activities is required to make and implement adequate arrangements for the production and assessment of safety cases consisting of documentation to justify safety of the installation throughout its life.

This requirement includes demonstrating the safety of any storage facilities from a range of external hazards including sea flooding whatever the cause. These assessments take account of anticipated changes in the nature of external hazards including those as a result of climate change. These assessments are maintained under periodic review to demonstrate the continuing safety of the site.

**Annette Brooke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps have been taken to ensure that geological disposal of nuclear waste is safe in relation to the possibility of a seismic event in the future. [314724]

**Mr. Kidney** [*holding answer 1 February 2010*]: The White Paper 'Managing Radioactive Waste Safely: A Framework for Implementing Geological Disposal' (Cmd. 7386) sets out the process to select a site for geological disposal. As part of that process geological stability will be considered in the site specific assessments to be undertaken during desk based studies and site investigations before a site is finally selected.

Before a disposal facility can begin to operate, the developer will have to demonstrate to the independent safety and environment regulators that it will be safe during operation and following closure, including considerations of geological stability. No facility will be built unless it can meet the demanding safety case requirements of the independent statutory regulators.

### Renewable Energy

**Lindsay Roy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps his Department is taking to increase the diversity of energy sources in the UK; and if he will make a statement. [314481]

**Mr. Kidney:** Diversity of energy sources is very important for our energy security of supply objectives as it means that we are not overly reliant on any one technology, fuel or supplier.

On electricity for example, the Government are taking steps to increase the diversity of energy sources in the UK by creating a supportive policy framework for investments in new energy infrastructure. This mix comprises low carbon technologies such as renewables, nuclear, coal carbon capture and storage and gas.

### Uranium: Mining

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what submissions were received on uranium mining, milling and processing in the consultation his Department held on nuclear justification in 2009; what account was taken of those submissions in preparation of the current nuclear justification consultation; what technical advice his Department has obtained on the radiological impact of uranium mining in the nuclear fuel production and use cycle compared to other stages; and what his latest information is on the radiological detriment contributed by uranium mining in his Department's comparative sustainability analysis of nuclear new build. [315993]

**Mr. Kidney:** The consultation on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's proposed decisions that the API000 and EPR nuclear power station designs are Justified under the terms of the Justification of Practices Involving Ionising Radiation Regulations 2004 states that several of those who responded to the previous consultation on the Nuclear Industry Association's application for Regulatory Justification of new nuclear power station designs raised the impact of uranium mining. My right hon. Friend took account of all responses received in coming to the proposed decisions on which we are consulting. The decision documents set out my right hon. Friend's view that he is not bound to take practices outside the UK into account in making his proposed decisions, but that in view of respondents'

concerns he has sought further information on the safety regime for uranium mining, and set out the information he has taken into account, including technical advice from Integrated Decision Management.

The Appraisal of Sustainability published as part of the consultation on the draft Nuclear National Policy Statement is intended to assess the environmental and sustainability impacts of the draft Nuclear National Policy Statement and therefore focuses on those impacts which arise from the draft Nuclear National Policy Statement itself. The draft Nuclear National Policy Statement provides guidance to the Infrastructure Planning Commission on the construction and operation of new nuclear power stations. It does not cover mining or milling of uranium. Copies of the Regulatory Justification consultation documents have been placed in the Library of the House and are available at:

[http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/regJust\\_cons/reg\\_just\\_cons.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/regJust_cons/reg_just_cons.aspx)

Copies of the consultation documents on a draft Nuclear National Policy Statement, have been placed in the Library of the House and are available at:

<https://www.energynpsconsultation.decc.gov.uk/home/>

We will consider any new and relevant information that is submitted as part of these current consultations.

### Warm Front Scheme

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much his Department paid to eaga plc for their administration of the warm front scheme in (a) 2006-07, (b) 2007-08 and (c) 2008-09; and how much it is estimated will be paid for 2009-10. [313742]

**Mr. Kidney:** The following table shows the administration fee paid to eaga plc for their administration of the warm front scheme in (a) 2006-07, (b) 2007-08 and (c) 2008-09; and how much it is estimated will be paid for 2009-10.

	<i>Fee (£)</i>
2006-07	28,551,000
2007-08	31,464,000
2008-09	28,923,000
2009-10 (forecast)	28,024,000

*Note:*

The administration fee given for the 2006-07 scheme year differs from that previously released on 27 Feb 2009, *Official Report*, column 1139W, following the identification of a data entry error in that response.

### Wind Power: Noise

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent representations he has received on limits on noise from onshore wind farms. [314414]

**Mr. Kidney:** Our records show that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a small number of representations on noise limits from onshore wind farms in the last six months. This includes correspondence and meetings with interested parties.

## TREASURY

### Civil Servants: Location

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which (a) executive agencies, (b) ministerial departments, (c) non-ministerial departments and (d) non-departmental public bodies have been relocated out of London since the Gershon review reported. [312280]

**Mr. Byrne:** The 2009 Pre-Budget report announced that by June 2009 nearly 21,000 civil service post had been relocated out of London and the South East.

The Office of Government Commerce website provides information on departmental contributions towards this total at the address below:

[http://www.ogc.gov.uk/government\\_relocation\\_relocation\\_programme\\_progress\\_8176.asp](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/government_relocation_relocation_programme_progress_8176.asp)

This information on OGC's website is summarised in the following table.

Department	Number of posts
Education and Skills	1,052
Health	1,070
Home Office	3,140
Ministry of Justice (formerly DCA)	772
Defence	3,940
Culture, Media and Sport	894
Work and Pensions	4,377
Chancellor's Departments	3,723
Cabinet Office <sup>1</sup>	92
Communities and Local Government (formerly ODPM)	255
Crown Prosecution Service <sup>2</sup>	43
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	478
Foreign and Commonwealth Office <sup>3</sup>	30
International Development	88
Northern Ireland Office	8
Trade and Industry <sup>4</sup>	632
Transport <sup>5</sup>	38
Total	20,632

<sup>1</sup> Includes 25 Charity Commission relocations.

<sup>2</sup> The Crown Prosecution Service had no relocation target at the start of SR04, but later agreed a target of relocating 20 posts out of London and the South East by 31 March 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Does not include relocations out of London to Hanslope Park.

<sup>4</sup> Includes three OFT relocations.

<sup>5</sup> Does not include relocations out of London to Hastings.

### Hotels

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many separate bookings for stays at five star or above hotels were made through the Expotel contract by (a) his Department, (b) HM Revenue and Customs, (c) the Valuation Office Agency and (d) his Department's agencies in the last 12 months; and at what cost. [315252]

**Ian Pearson:** The Treasury and its agencies do not hold a central record of bookings through Expotel with regard to the star rating of hotels and the information could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Neither HM Revenue and Customs nor the Valuation Office Agency book accommodation through an Expotel contract.

## Land: Valuation

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate the Valuation Office Agency made of the average value of a hectare of land in each of the last 20 quarters. [315656]

**Ian Pearson:** The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) publishes the Property Market Report (PMR). This report provides valuation opinions on land, dwellings and commercial property across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The PMR, available on the VOA's website at

[www.voa.gov.uk/publications](http://www.voa.gov.uk/publications)

is published twice yearly reporting on the property market as at 1 January and 1 July.

### Public Sector: Consultants

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which companies have been appointed to each of the lots to provide services referred to in the OGC Buying Solutions Contract Notice 2009/S 60-086533 on general management consultancy services. [315259]

**Ian Pearson:** A list of suppliers awarded to each of the 13 lots of the Management Consultancy and Accounting Services Framework is available on the Buying Solutions website

[www.buyingsolutions.gov.uk/frameworks/](http://www.buyingsolutions.gov.uk/frameworks/)

### Revenue and Customs

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much HM Revenue and Customs has spent on the Employee Share Scheme project; what the running costs of the project are estimated to be in 2010-11; and how many transactions have been processed under the scheme. [315257]

**Ian Pearson:** HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has spent £9.6 million on the Employee Share Schemes (ESS) project. The estimated running costs for this project for 2010-11 is £796,000. HMRC has processed over 91,000 annual share scheme returns since the project went live in April 2007.

### Stamp Duty Land Tax

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the stamp duty and stamp duty land tax (a) threshold and (b) rate was in each relevant year since 1996. [316067]

**Ian Pearson:** Stamp duty reserve tax rates are given at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/sdrt/intro/sdrtrates.htm>  
Rates for stamp duty are the same as for stamp duty reserve tax.

Stamp duty land tax threshold and rates are given at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/sdlt/rates-thresholds.htm#4>

### Tax Allowances

**Stephen Hammond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether HM Revenue and Customs will continue to provide exemption from taxation for existing free travel to work benefits; [313684]

(2) how much revenue has been raised by the change to HM Revenue and Customs' rules on travel to work benefits; [313626]

(3) which travel to work schemes will be regarded as a taxable benefit by HM Revenue and Customs in 2010-11; [313625]

(4) whether recent guidance issued by HM Revenue and Customs will (a) restrict and (b) remove the exemption from taxation in respect of free travel-to-work benefits; [315341]

**Mr. David Anderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment he has made of the effects on those who participate in the Salary Sacrifice Travel scheme of his Department's recent revisions to its guidance on the scheme. [315667]

**Mr. Timms:** There have been no changes to the employment related travel expenses' rules since 1998 or to benefits related to travel to work since 2002.

As a general rule, tax relief is not given for the cost of travelling between home and the workplace. Legislation (sections 243 and 244 of the Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003) sets out the conditions under which relief for a benefit received as a consequence of an employer's support for local bus transport and for Cycle to Work schemes apply.

In December 2009, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) updated its guidance relating to these schemes to clarify the conditions that need to be met in order for relief to be available. The revised guidance is available at:

[http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/specialist/cycles\\_bus\\_passes.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/specialist/cycles_bus_passes.pdf)

The changes to HMRC's guidance do not widen or restrict the scope of the legislation.

Information on the revenue implications and the effects on users of these schemes as a result of the change in guidance is not available, as HMRC does not hold the detailed data necessary to produce this analysis.

### Tax Avoidance

**Stephen Hammond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the contribution of the then Paymaster General of 3 May 2000, *Official Report*, column 217, what the evidential basis was for the £900 million figure; and how much has been raised through IR35 in each year since 2000-01. [315308]

**Ian Pearson:** Estimates of the yield from the Intermediaries legislation (also known as IR35) were informed by a survey of accounts held at Inland Revenue tax offices of small companies with taxable profits that were less than £500,000, conducted in 1999-2000.

With respect to how much has been raised through IR35 in each year since 2000-01, I would refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr. Hammond) on 5 May 2009, *Official Report*, column 64W.

## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Audit Commission

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether board members of the Audit Commission are required to

disclose membership of a political party when making a declaration of political activity. [315513]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This is an operational matter for the Audit Commission and I have asked the chief executive of the Audit Commission to write to the hon. Member direct.

*Letter from Steve Bundred, dated 5 February 2010:*

Your Parliamentary Question outlined above has been passed to me to reply.

There is no requirement for Board Members of the Audit Commission to disclose membership of a political party when making a declaration of political activity. The Commission follows the guidance of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, which does not require details of party membership.

A copy of this letter will be placed in Hansard.

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many employment disputes involving staff of the Audit Commission have been taken to an employment tribunal in the last four years; what the outcome was of each; and what the grounds of the dispute were in each case, anonymised where necessary. [315549]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This is an operational matter for the Audit Commission, and I will ask the Chief Executive of the Audit Commission to write to the hon. Member direct.

*Letter from Steve Bundred, dated 5 February 2010:*

Your Parliamentary Question outlined above has been passed to me to reply.

Seven employment tribunal claims have been brought against the Commission by members of staff or former staff in the last four years. The grounds of dispute and outcome in each case are outlined below.

1. A former employee argued that dismissal on grounds of redundancy was unfair. The matter was settled on cost efficiency grounds.

2. A former employee disputed the amount of holiday pay owed by the Commission on termination of employment. The Tribunal dismissed the claim.

3. A former employee alleged breach of contract relating to an agreement to make payment in lieu of notice (PILON). The claim was settled for a nominal amount.

4. A former employee brought a claim against the Commission for failure to make an ill-health retirement recommendation to the Commission's Pension Scheme Trustees. The claim was withdrawn.

5. A former employee argued that dismissal on grounds of redundancy was unfair. The claim was withdrawn.

6. Nine members of staff brought a claim against the Commission for equal pay. The claim was upheld by the Employment Tribunal and is the subject to an appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

7. A former employee has brought claims against the Commission for unfair dismissal, race discrimination, disability discrimination and other related claims. The claims are yet to be heard and are fully contested by the Commission.

A copy of this letter will be placed in Hansard.

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what (a) declaration of interests and (b) record of gifts and hospitality has been made by each board member and Commissioner of the Audit Commission; and what benefits in kind are provided to the board members of the Audit Commission. [315550]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This is an operational matter for the Audit Commission and I have asked the Chief Executive of the Audit Commission to write to the hon. Member direct.

*Letter from Steve Bundred, dated 5 February 2010:*

Your Parliamentary Question has been passed to me to reply.  
Board Member Declarations of Interest

Audit Commission Board members are required to declare any interests that are relevant and material to the Commission, and which they might reasonably be expected to know about. Commissioners must also declare any perceived or actual interest at Board meetings, where the interest relates specifically to a particular issue under consideration. Interests that should be regarded as 'relevant and material' are circumstances in which there is a real possibility of bias, including those in which a Board member or his/her close family or any nominee of his/hers is:

a paid employee, partner, Director or proprietor of a company or other body with which the Commission has, is entering into or is proposing to enter into a contract;

is a trustee or on the Committee of Management or other controlling body of a non-profit making organisation, for example a charity or a Housing Association, with which the Commission has significant dealings;

has a controlling interest or has shares or securities with a nominal value of more than £25,000 or one-hundredth of the total issued share capital in a company or organisation with which the Commission has, is entering into or proposing to enter into a contract;

has a direct interest in any land or property that is used by the Commission; and/or

any other general declarations they might wish to make.

Below is a table of all such declarations made by current Board members. This information is published on the Audit Commission website at:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/aboutus/howwearerun/pages/commissioners.aspx>

<i>Commissioner</i>	<i>Interest declared</i>
Michael O'Higgins (Chair)	Chair, Centrepoint Trustee, NatCen Non-executive Chair, Alexander Mann Solutions Non-executive Director and Chair, HM Treasury Group Audit Committee
Steve Bundred (Chief Executive)	His wife is normally employed by, or contracted with local authorities as an interim manager of children's social services
Bharat Shah (Deputy Chair)	(from January 2010) Non-executive Director, Places for People Group
Victor Adebawale	CEO/Company Secretary, Turning Point Co-Chair, Mental Health Delivery, Race Equality Strategy Commissioner, UK Employment and Training Commission (Until October 2007) Member, National Employment Panel National School of Government Fellow, Sunningdale Institute Director, Leadership in Mind Non-Exec Director, St. Vincent's Healthcare Consulting
Cllr Merrick Cockell	Elected Member, Royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea Chairman, London Councils Chairman, Conservative Councillors' Association
Jim Coulter	Chair, Bridging Newcastle Gateshead (December 2008 to November 2011) Board Member, Tenant Services Authority (October 2008 to September 2012)
Dr. Jennifer Dixon	Director, Nuffield Trust Editorial Board Member, Office for Health Economics (Until March 2009) Board Member, Healthcare Commission
Sheila Drew Smith	Non-executive Board Member, Tenant Services Authority (from October 2008) Chair, Action for Bow Charity Non-executive Board Member, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (from February 2009) Independent Public Appointments Assessor, Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments
Cllr Steve Houghton	Leader, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Barnsley Miller Partnership Peer, Improvement and Development Agency Local Government Association Strategy and Finance Policy Review Group
Sir Thomas Legg	Non-executive Director, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust Currently acting as consultant to the Ministry of Justice
Dame Denise Piatt	NSPCC University of Bedfordshire FPA National Aids Trust Adventure Capital Fund Trustee Independent Review Board, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Services

<i>Commissioner</i>	<i>Interest declared</i>
	Committee for Standards in Public Life
	Governing Board of the new School for Social Care Research (National Institute for Health Research) (Until March 2009) Commission for Social Care Inspection
Dr. Raj Rajagopal	No declarations
Jenny Watson	Electoral Commission WRAP
Cllr Chris White	Hertfordshire county council St. Albans City and district council Board Chair and Executive Member, Local Government Association Member, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales A family Member is an employee of Ernst and Young

### Board Member Gifts and Hospitality

The following table summarises the detail of gifts and hospitality declared by Audit Commission Board members:

<i>Notification received</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Nature of gift / hospitality (date)</i>	<i>Accepted</i>
23 July 2006	Deloitte	Jim Coulter	2 x concert tickets for event at Alnwick Castle (July 26)	Yes
24 July 2008	Sir Christopher and Lady Kelly	Dame Denise Piatt	Glyndebourne concert ticket (July 27)	Yes
7 May 2009	PWC partners (Paul Woolston and Janet Eilbeck)	Sheila Drew Smith	lunch at Connaught Hotel (6 May)	Yes
18 August 2009	PWC partner (Paul Woolston)	Bharat Shah	Building Public Trust Annual Dinner 2009 at The Dorchester (30 September)	Yes
4 September 2009	David Fielding, Tribal	Bharat Shah	Tribal late summer reception (17 September)	Yes
1 February 2010	City Inn Westminster	Jim Coulter	2 x bottles wine (donated to Audit Commission staff social committee to raffle at staff event) (21 January)	Yes

A record of gifts and hospitality received by the Chairman and Chief Executive is available on our website at:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/legal/freedomofinformation/Pages/hospitalityregister.aspx>

#### Benefits in Kind

Audit Commission Board Members receive no benefits in kind, but are entitled to claim travel and subsistence expenses incurred on business, in accordance with the arrangements made for the senior staff of the Audit Commission.

A copy of this letter will be placed in Hansard.

**Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what declaration of political activity has been made by each board member and Commissioner of the Audit Commission.

[315554]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This is an operational matter for the Audit Commission and I have asked the chief executive of the Audit Commission to write to the hon. Member direct.

*Letter from Steve Bundred, dated 5 February 2010:*

Your Parliamentary Question outlined above has been passed to me to reply.

Three of the Audit Commission Board's members are local government Councillors and represent the three main political parties:

Cllr Merrick Cockell (Conservative), elected Member for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea;

Cllr Stephen Houghton (Labour), elected Member for Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council;

Cllr Chris White (Liberal Democrat), elected Member for St Albans City and District Council and Hertfordshire County Council.

On appointment by the Secretary of State, Board members receive Cabinet Office guidance on Codes of Practice for Board Members. The guidance covering political activities, sections (a)-(c), states:

(a) Members of Boards, whether whole-time or part-time, should not serve as officers carrying out executive duties in any political party.

(b) Full-time members should abstain from controversial political activity.

(c) Subject to (a) above, part-time members are free to engage in any political activities, provided that they are conscious of their general public responsibility and exercise proper discretion, particularly in regard to the work of the Boards of which they are members. On matters affecting that work, they should not normally make political speeches or engage in other political activities.

Beyond the political activities carried out by the Commissioners named above in their role as elected Members, there have been no declarations of political activity made by any member of the Audit Commission Board.

A copy of this letter will be placed in Hansard.

### Building Alterations

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many people were on local authority waiting lists for independent living adaptations and equipment in (a) the latest period for which figures are available and (b) each of the last five years.

[315461]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

by each district council in East Sussex in each year since 1997. [315761]

### Council Housing: East Sussex

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much has been spent on improving social housing stock owned

**Mr. Ian Austin:** Expenditure allowances within the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy system for each authority in East Sussex with housing stock are given in the following tables. Information on actual expenditure by year on improving council owned social housing is not available.

#### Major repairs allowance (MRA)<sup>1</sup>

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Brighton and Hove	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7,917,463	8,195,442	8,426,205
Eastbourne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,363,484	2,427,564	2,471,834
Lewes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,000,557	2,052,619	2,099,581
Wealden	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,948,349	2,002,043	2,024,789

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Brighton and Hove	8,736,125	8,985,484	8,971,719	9,095,425	9,066,687	9,352,152	9,506,261
Eastbourne	2,533,226	2,583,664	2,579,098	2,615,680	2,617,231	2,711,808	2,754,288
Lewes	2,167,984	2,224,098	2,226,199	2,258,561	2,259,986	2,337,548	2,373,536
Wealden	2,094,978	2,214,481	2,215,602	2,253,976	2,251,531	2,301,688	2,323,582

<sup>1</sup> MRA was not introduced until 1 April 2001

#### Management and maintenance allowances (M and M)

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Brighton and Hove	15,220,265	14,980,773	14,931,470	15,262,050	15,980,533	17,480,012	18,708,004
Eastbourne	4,093,118	3,970,916	3,873,781	3,893,232	3,970,364	4,164,987	4,373,127
Lewes	3,212,815	3,130,108	3,124,602	3,169,084	3,168,280	3,296,800	3,467,499
Wealden	4,013,082	3,920,763	3,811,434	3,694,580	3,572,902	3,584,830	3,425,284

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Brighton and Hove	18,920,816	20,215,688	21,857,677	22,305,590	22,164,072	22,910,049	23,471,525
Eastbourne	5,194,968	5,453,505	5,835,339	6,138,943	6,356,221	6,469,761	6,551,787
Lewes	4,117,387	4,398,131	4,730,086	4,900,999	4,982,217	5,098,344	5,262,638
Wealden	4,174,174	4,495,280	4,721,722	4,838,213	4,819,353	4,913,283	4,912,150

Note:

Rother transferred its housing stock in 1998-99.

### Council Housing: Rents

**Mr. Oaten:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent discussions he has had on the system of council rent receipt payments to local authorities. [315946]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** In his consultation paper in July, we proposed to end the central pooling of housing capital receipts, so that councils can reinvest these as part of our proposals to move to a self-financing system. Since then we have met with a number of interested stakeholders including local authorities and tenant associations. We plan to make a further announcement in the next few weeks which will describe the progress we have made on self-financing, set-out more details on the proposals and provide a summary of responses to the consultation.

### Council Tax

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department has issued guidance to local authorities on the use of charging orders to collect unpaid council tax. [314969]

**Barbara Follett:** In 1993 the Department of the Environment published a number of Practice Notes to assist local authorities in implementing council tax. Practice Note No. 9 provided non-statutory guidance on the recovery and enforcement of council tax, including the use of charging orders.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister jointly published, with the Government Operational Research Service, a Council Tax Collection Good Practice Report in 2004. The report looked at ways of sharing good

practice among practitioners, in order to promote continuous improvement in service delivery and collection. Annex D of the report covers the use of charging orders.

### Councillors

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance (a) his Department, (b) the Audit Commission and (c) the Standards Board for England has issued on whether the whistleblowing protection provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 apply to councillors in their capacity as a member of the local authority in which they wish to disclose confidential information in the public interest. [314975]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Neither this Department, the Audit Commission, nor the Standards Board have issued specific guidance for local authority members about the whistleblowing protection provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

### Councillors: Isle of Wight

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the cost was of the investigation of the Standards Board for England relating to six councillors on the Isle of Wight in respect of (a) the tribunal hearing and (b) all other costs. [315800]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Following the transfer of the administration of the First-tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England) to the Tribunals Service last year, costs related to tribunal proceedings are a matter for the Ministry of Justice.

The cost to the Standards Board of the investigation into the six cases and presentation of four of the cases at tribunal, which led to all four councillors being found in breach of the councillors' code of conduct and the tribunal imposing sanctions ranging from censure to a two year suspension, is estimated at £328,000.

### Departmental Billing

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate he has made of the average length of time taken by (a) his Department and (b) its agencies to pay invoices from (i) small and medium-sized enterprises and (ii) all creditors in the last 12 months. [315065]

**Barbara Follett:** The Prime Minister announced in October 2008 that all central Government Departments will aim to pay invoices within 10 days. Communities and Local Government commenced reporting of 10 day payment performance in November 2008.

In November 2008, 77.89 per cent. of invoices were paid within 10 days. The latest available data is for December 2009, when 92.91 per cent. of invoices were paid within 10 days. This means that payment performance has increased by 15.02 per cent. points over this period.

We do not differentiate payments by supplier size as we have determined to pay all suppliers within 10 days.

### Departmental Information Officers

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many staff in his Department and its agencies (a) have the status of embedded communicators and (b) are members of the Government Communications Network but are not listed in the Central Office of Information White Book. [315167]

**Barbara Follett:** Embedded communicator is not an officially designated term in the Department so there is no clear definition of who would meet the criteria. However I can confirm that eight members of staff at the Department are members of the Government Communications Network working full-time on communications outside of the Communications Directorate and not listed in the Central Office of Information White Book.

Information about any communications staff employed by the Department's agencies is not held centrally.

### Departmental Ministerial Policy Advisers

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to his Department's press release of 6 January 2010, on new faith advisers, what declaration of political activity was made by each adviser he has appointed; and how many advisers have declared membership of a political party. [311796]

**Mr. Malik:** Applicants for the unpaid advisor roles were not required to declare political activity or membership of a political party.

### Departmental Public Consultation

**Margaret Moran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much (a) his Department and (b) local authorities has paid to each external consultant contracted to undertake public consultations in each of the last five years. [315088]

**Barbara Follett:** This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much area-based grant was allocated in respect of waste collection and waste disposal in the most recent year for which figures are available; what proportion of the total area-based grant this represented; and what targets and performance indicators there are for local authorities in respect of such funding. [314989]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Area Based Grant (ABG) is an unringfenced grant and there are no separate allocations for specific purposes. Government funding for local authorities' responsibilities for waste collection and disposal is, in the main, provided through Formula Grant which comprises Revenue Support Grant and National Non

Domestic Rates. Formula Grant is also unhypothecated, and the use of this funding is, like ABG, for local authorities to determine.

There are no targets and performance indicators relevant to waste collection and disposal with respect to ABG.

#### Empty Property: Sussex

**Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate he has made of the number of empty (a) residential and (b) commercial properties in (i) Mid Sussex constituency and (ii) Mid Sussex local authority area in the last five years. [314782]

**Barbara Follett:** The number of empty residential properties in the Mid Sussex local authority area in 2005 to 2009 is shown in the following table.

<i>Mid Sussex</i>	
	<i>Number</i>
2005	1,661
2006	1,720
2007	1,534
2008	1,547
2009	1,565

The data are both short-term and long-term empty dwellings as reported annually by all billing authorities in England in October of the year. Data are not available at a constituency level.

The Department is planning to publish experimental official statistics in February on the number of hereditaments benefiting from small business rate relief and the number of empty hereditaments. This statistical release will provide a national estimate for the number of empty non-domestic properties in England.

#### Fire Services

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities on whether reductions in the number of (a) fire stations, (b) fire appliances and (c) fire-fighters may be classified as efficiency savings for the purposes of (i) annual efficiency statements to his Department and (ii) calculating the value of efficiency savings on council tax bills. [315038]

**Mr. Malik:** The Department has issued efficiency guidance to fire and rescue authorities and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House. In order to be considered an efficiency gain, all savings must be sustainable and subject to a quality cross-check measure to ensure services to communities are as, or more, effective following implementation of the efficiency measure. A sustainable efficiency gain is "an efficiency gain which exists for the current year and at least two subsequent financial years afterwards". Efficiency savings are reported by fire and rescue authorities in their annual efficiency statements. Since 2008-09 local authority and fire and rescue authority efficiency savings have been published on the billing authorities council tax demand.

#### Fire Services: Yorkshire and the Humber

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) how many combined aerial rescue pump vehicles have been purchased by the fire and rescue service in (a) South Yorkshire and (b) East Yorkshire and Humberside in the last five years; at what cost those purchases were made; and who authorised those purchases; [314835]

(2) how many combined aerial rescue pump vehicles in (a) South Yorkshire and (b) East Yorkshire and Humberside are not in use by fire and rescue services; and for what reasons those vehicles are not in use. [314836]

**Mr. Malik [holding answer 4 February 2010]:** The procurement of equipment is a matter for individual fire and rescue authorities to decide on and authorise. The Department does not maintain information on individual FRS procurements.

#### Government Offices for the Regions: Procurement

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst of 15 June 2009, *Official Report*, column 18W, on departmental procurement, if he will place in the Library a copy of the list of the names and addresses of each organisation that supplied goods or services to the Government Office for (a) the South West, (b) the South East, (c) London, (d) the West Midlands, (e) the East Midlands, (f) the East of England, (g) the North East, (h) the North West and (i) Yorkshire and the Humber in 2008-09. [314983]

**Barbara Follett:** The information requested has been deposited in the Library of the House.

#### Holocaust Memorial Day

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps the Government have taken to mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2010; and if he will make a statement. [313933]

**Mr. Malik:** The Government fund the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, a registered charity, to co-ordinate a national event to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day every year. The Trust also supports and co-ordinates local events across England, Wales and Scotland.

This year was a significant milestone, representing the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day was "The Legacy of Hope"—people learning from the past, to give hope for the future. Several hundred people, including many survivors, gathered at the national event in London, to listen to the testimonies of victims and survivors alike. Tens of thousands of people gathered at hundreds of local events drawing on the same theme.

I was also pleased to open a Topical Debate on the subject of Holocaust Memorial Day in the House on 28 January this year, in which many hon. and right hon. Members from all sides participated.

### Housing: Coventry

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what discussions the Government has had with (a) Coventry City Council, (b) Warwick District Council and (c) others on the allocation of 33,500 new homes as part of the regional housing strategy in Coventry. [314695]

**Mr. Malik** [*holding answer 2 February 2010*]: The draft regional spatial strategy (RSS) submitted to Government by the West Midlands regional assembly in December 2007 included an allocation of 33,500 new homes for Coventry and indicated that some of the allocation could be made within Nuneaton and Bedworth and Warwick districts. This had been subject to consultation and was agreed by the local councils. Officials have regularly met and discussed the delivery of these homes with the councils as they prepare their core strategies, which provide a district level plan for the distribution of future housing development. Officials have also participated in discussions on the issue at the examinations of the RSS revision (April-June 2009) and the Coventry core strategy (November-December 2009). A wide range of parties was involved in those discussions.

### Housing: South West

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many (a) social and (b) affordable homes there were in each planning authority area in the South West in each year since 2005. [316053]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** The term "social homes" has been interpreted as being local authority and registered social landlords social rented dwelling stock. This information is collected centrally by local authority area rather than planning authority area.

Information on local authority dwelling stock by local authority for each year since 1994 is shown in live table 116 on the Communities and Local Government website at the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/xls/140882.xls>

Information on registered social landlord dwelling stock by local authority for each year since 1997 is shown in live table 115 on the Communities and Local Government website at the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/xls/140879.xls>

### Local Government Finance

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent estimate he has made of the cost to local authorities of undertaking local economic area assessments. [314971]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The Department published a full impact assessment for the local authority economic assessment duty in December 2008. This informed our consideration of the additional burdens likely to fall on local authorities resulting from the new duty. The

Government are committed to ensuring that all new burdens falling on local authorities are fully and properly funded so that there is no upward pressure on council tax bills. Additional funding for the local authority economic assessment has been provided through Area Based Grant.

A copy of the impact assessment will be deposited in the Library of the House.

### Local Government: Cornwall

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what cost savings have been made in local government in Cornwall since the date of its reorganisation; what estimate (a) his Department and (b) the Boundary Committee made of such savings prior to reorganisation; and if he will make a statement. [314981]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave on 20 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 381W to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps). The Boundary Committee made no estimate of such savings prior to reorganisation in Cornwall.

### Local Government: Fixed Penalties

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many powers granting or augmenting the ability of local authorities to issue fixed penalty notices his Department has introduced since May 2005. [314945]

**Barbara Follett:** Since May 2005, we have provided local authorities with powers to issue fixed penalty notices in the following areas: breach of duties in relation to the provision of home information packs under Part 5 of the Housing Act 2004; and breach of duty in relation to Energy Performance Certificates, Display Energy Certificates or Air Conditioning Inspections or Reports under Regulations 40 and 43 of the Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007.

### Local Government: Norfolk

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what representations he has received from the Boundary Committee on the level of support in Norfolk for the creation of a single unitary authority in the last three months; and if he will make a statement. [314972]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The Boundary Committee's advice to the Secretary of State of 7 December 2009, which includes its advice on the likelihood of its alternative proposal for a unitary Norfolk delivering the outcomes specified by the broad cross section of support criterion, is available in the Library of the House or on the Committee's website at:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/boundary-reviews/all-reviews/eastern/norfolk/norfolk-structural-review>

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate (a) he and (b) the Boundary Committee has made of the level of savings made by (i) district councils and (ii) other local authorities in Norfolk since the financial year 2007-08. [314984]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Before taking his statutory decisions on the unitary proposals before him for Norfolk, the assessments which the Secretary of State will make will include an assessment of the likelihood of each proposal, were it to be implemented, delivering the outcomes specified by the affordability criterion. In making this assessment, he will have regard to financial data, including data on savings, provided by the councils concerned to the Boundary Committee and to him, and to any assessment of this data by the Committee's or his independent financial consultants.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment (a) he and (b) the Boundary Committee has made of support among residents for a new unitary authority for Norfolk. [314986]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is now carefully considering the Boundary Committee's advice, all the representations he has received, including those of Norfolk residents, and all other relevant information, before taking his statutory decisions about whether to implement any of the unitary proposals before him for Norfolk, with or without modification, or to take no action. In their advice to the Secretary of State of 7 December 2009 the Boundary Committee has noted that in Norfolk there was a strong level of support for retaining the current local government arrangements and where it received support for a county unitary authority this has come from across the county and from a variety of key stakeholders.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps his Department has taken to update the financial information on which the Boundary Committee based its advice for unitary status in Norfolk. [314991]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The independent financial consultants whom the Department have appointed have analysed the financial data available on each of the unitary proposals for Norfolk, including comparing data, provided originally by councils and modelled by the Boundary Committee, with 2008-09 accounts and 2009-10 budgets.

#### Local Government: Reorganisation

**Mr. Dhanda:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate he has made of the net effect on public expenditure of introducing unitary local authorities in England. [316002]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Our pre-Budget report makes clear that measures to reduce duplication and inefficiency between different tiers of local government will contribute to the £11 billion a year of savings which, as announced in that report, will be delivered by 2012-13. The nine new unitary councils established on 1 April 2009 show

the capacity for savings with estimated savings either directly attributable to the transition to unitary local government or facilitated by it totalling some £159 million included in their 2009-10 budgets.

However, we have no plans for further programmes of invitations under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to councils in two-tier areas to submit unitary proposals. We recognise that in some specific cases in the future there might be areas where circumstances are such as to warrant a focused and targeted invitation to councils concerned, and the 2007 Act allows for this.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what formula is applied to determine the number of councillors in a new unitary authority area established to replace a two-tier structure; what the recommended range for the number of electors per councillor in a non-metropolitan unitary authority is; and if he will make a statement. [314973]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Electoral arrangements, including the number of councillors in each local authority, are generally matters for the Boundary Committee for England and the Electoral Commission (from 1 April 2010 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England), and there are no recommended ranges for the number of electors per councillor. It is open to the Secretary of State to include in any structural change Order, implementing a unitary proposal, provision for electoral arrangements to apply pending any electoral review by the Boundary Committee. When including such provision the Secretary of State will have regard to the number of electors per councillor in other similar unitary councils and to any representations he receives on the matter.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with which (a) elected councillors and (b) council officials (i) he and (ii) officials of his Department have met since January 2009 to discuss proposals for local government reorganisation in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk. [314974]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Since January 2009, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my ministerial colleagues and I, and officials in Communities and Local Government, have had a range of meetings with councillors and council officers from Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk as part of our usual business, during which the issue of local government restructuring may have been raised.

Since 8 December 2009, when the period for representations to be made to the Secretary of State about the Boundary Committee's advice began, meetings with affected local councils have taken place for representations to be made on the unitary proposals or for discussions on possible transitional arrangements.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Stevenage (Barbara Follett) and I met the following councillors and officers during this time:

#### Devon

##### Devon County Council:

Councillor John Clatworthy (Deputy Leader),  
Councillor Brian Greenslade (Shadow Leader of the Council),  
Councillor Andrew Leadbetter, and  
a senior officer of the council

*East Devon District Council:*

Councillor Ray Franklin

*Exeter City Council:*

Councillor Peter Edwards,  
Councillor Jeff Coates and  
the chief executive

*Mid Devon District Council:*

Councillor Peter Hare-Scott (Leader)

*North Devon District Council:*

Councillor Des Brailey (Leader)

*South Hams District Council:*

Councillor Michael Hicks

*Torridge District Council:*

Councillor James Morrish (Leader)

*West Devon District Council:*

Councillor James McInnes (Leader)

*Norfolk***Norwich City Council:**

Councillor Stephen Morphew (Leader),  
the chief executive and  
another senior officer

**Breckland District Council:**

Councillor William Nunn (Leader) and  
the chief executive

**Broadland District Council:**

Councillor Roger Foulger and  
the chief executive

**Great Yarmouth BC:**

Councillor Barry Coleman (Leader),  
the chief executive and  
another senior officer

**King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council:**

Councillor Nick Daubney (Leader) and  
the chief executive

**North Norfolk District Council:**

Councillor Virginia Gay (Leader) and  
the chief executive

**South Norfolk District Council:**

Councillor John Fuller (Leader),  
the chief executive and  
another senior officer

*Suffolk***Forest Heath District Council:**

Councillor Geoffrey Jaggard (Leader) and  
the chief executive

**Ipswich Borough Council:**

Councillor Liz Harsant (Leader),  
the chief executive and  
another senior officer

**Mid Suffolk District Council:**

Councillor Tim Passmore (Leader) and  
the chief executive

**St Edmundsbury Borough Council:**

Councillor John Griffiths (Leader) and  
the chief executive

**Suffolk Coastal District Council:**

Councillor Ray Herring (Leader),

Councillor Andy Smith (Deputy Leader) and  
the chief executive

**Suffolk County Council:**

Councillor Jeremy Pembroke (Leader) and  
the chief executive

**Waveney District Council:**

Councillor Mark Bee (Leader),  
Councillor Colin Law (Deputy Leader),  
the chief executive and  
another senior officer

Officials also met:

*Devon*

Devon County Council: the chief executive and senior officers

Exeter City Council: the chief executive and senior officers

South Hams District Council: the chief executive

*Norfolk*

Broadland DC: the chief executive

Kings Lynn and West Norfolk BC: the chief executive and  
senior officers

Norfolk County Council: the chief executive and a senior  
officer

Norwich City Council: the chief executive and a senior officer

South Norfolk DC: Councillor Richard Kemp and a senior  
officer

*Suffolk*

Forest Heath District Council: the chief executive and a senior  
officer

Ipswich Borough Council: the chief executive and a senior  
officer

St Edmundsbury Borough Council: a senior officer

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils: the chief  
executive and senior officers

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will list each for each unitary authority created since 2007 the period of time which elapsed between the decision to implement the Boundary Committee's proposals for unitary status and the election of councillors to a shadow unitary authority. [314980]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** No unitary authority has been created since 2007 which involved implementing proposals of the Boundary Committee.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many posts in each of the unitary authorities created since 2007 have been abolished as a result of reorganisation; and how much in total has been paid in redundancy payments. [314987]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The establishment of nine new unitary councils on 1 April 2009 has led to a reduction of 330 senior management posts across those authorities, saving £23 million per annum and involving 44 chief executives leaving office through resignation, redundancy or retirement. There are also other staff reductions, on which information is not held centrally, contributing to the efficiency savings being made by the nine new unitary councils which are expected to total over £150 million this year.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for what reasons his Department's consultation on proposals for unitary local government draft structural change orders is shorter than the 12 weeks recommended in the Code of Practice on Consultation. [315039]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** We have sought by 3 February 2010 views from the councils potentially affected by any decision to implement unitary local government in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk on the main possible transitional arrangements, recognising the need to end uncertainty and to move forward as quickly as practicable.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what consideration he has given to redrawing (a) ward and (b) district boundaries in (i) Norfolk, (ii) Suffolk and (iii) Devon consequent on proposals for the reorganisation of local government in each in order to meet requirements for the equal distribution of councillors. [315156]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** We are considering the Boundary Committee's advice carefully as well as all the representations we have received in relation to the Committee's alternative proposals, all of which for the three county areas would involve changes to district boundaries.

We have sought, by 3 February 2010, the views of the councils potentially affected by any decision to implement unitary local government in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk on the main possible transitional arrangements, including electoral arrangements for the first elections to any new unitary authority. We will have regard to these views when preparing any structural change orders.

#### Local Government: Standards

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will place in the Library the combined Comprehensive Area Assessment and Comprehensive Performance Assessment results for each local authority. [314968]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This is an operational matter for the Audit Commission and I have asked the Chief Executive of the Audit Commission to write to the hon. Member direct.

*Letter from Steve Bundred, dated 5 February 2010:*

Your Parliamentary Question outlined above has been passed to me to reply.

The full Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) results dataset for each local authority and local area is held on the Oneplace website:

<http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/Pages/default.aspx>

A list of the organisational assessment scores published on 9 December 2009 for each local authority (which form one element of the CAA results) is shown on the attached schedule. This can also be found on the Oneplace website:

[http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/oascores/2009\\_OA\\_scores\\_all\\_organisations.xls](http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/oascores/2009_OA_scores_all_organisations.xls)

Archived copies of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) results from 2002-2008 can be found on the Audit Commission website:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/audit/cpa/pages/default.aspx>

As the CAA and CPA frameworks measure things differently, the results arising from the different frameworks should not be combined.

A copy of this letter has been placed in Hansard and the attached schedule has been deposited in the Library of the House.

#### Local Government: Suffolk

**Mr. Ruffley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much expenditure each local authority in Suffolk had incurred in respect of the proposed reorganisation of local government in Suffolk on the latest date for which figures are available. [314865]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This information is not held centrally by this Department.

#### Multiple Occupation: Licensing

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department plans to publish its response to the Building Research Establishment report on licensing of houses in multiple occupation. [315799]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** Our response to the Building Research Establishment (BRE) Report on licensing of houses in multiple occupation was published as part of the written ministerial statement of 27 January 2009, *Official Report*, columns 54-56WS.

#### Muslim Council of Britain

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for what reasons he decided to resume contacts with the Muslim Council of Britain; whom he consulted on that decision; and if he will make a statement. [314041]

**Mr. Malik:** The Muslim Council of Britain has made a commitment to Government to examine their internal processes and ensure that the personal actions of all members, including senior leaders, remain true to the organisation's agreed policies.

The MCB has stated its categorical opposition to attacks on British defence interests and confirmed its unwavering support for British troops across the world. It has also made clear that it stands firmly against anti-Semitism and other forms of racism.

The significance of these actions on the part of the MCB has led to the Government lifting the suspension of their formal relationship with that organisation.

We have engaged in a variety of discussions with community stakeholders from a range of faiths on this issue since March and have been able to take the views expressed in those discussions into account in considering our response to the MCB. We also had an ongoing dialogue with other Government Departments on this issue.

The relevant correspondence is publicly available on the departmental website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/143827311.pdf>

### Non-Domestic Rates: Empty Property

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Meriden of 5 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 234W, on non-domestic rates: empty property, if he will place in the Library a copy of the representations made by the other groups listed. [314966]

**Barbara Follett:** The representations from the:

Association of Convenience Stores;

The Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire;

Weymouth and Portland Chamber of Commerce; and

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors,

have been placed in the Library of the House.

My answer of 5 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 234W incorrectly recorded the Weymouth and Portland Chamber of Commerce representation as being two representations, one from the Weymouth Chamber of Commerce and one from the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce.

On further investigation, the letter from the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation was in fact from an individual member writing in a private capacity and not a representation from the Institute itself. It has, therefore, not been placed in the Library of the House on data protection grounds.

Our reforms to empty property relief are principled and right for the long-term. They provide a strong incentive on owners to bring empty property back into use, helping to improve access to premises for businesses and so to exert a downward pressure on commercial rents.

However, we provided owners with real help to manage short-term pressures in a difficult property market by exempting all empty properties with rateable values up to £15,000 from business rates in 2009-10.

We have listened to the continued concerns of owners and are extending the temporary measure for a further 12 months—to cover the whole of 2010-11—and we are uprating the threshold to £18,000 in line with the general movement of property values at revaluation.

### Non-domestic Rates: Garages and Petrol Stations

**Sir Paul Beresford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) how many petrol retail outlets have had a reduction in their rateable value for the purpose of calculating the business rate to come into effect from 1 April 2010; [311046]

(2) how many petrol retail outlets have been notified that their rateable value (*a*) has been reduced, (*b*) remains unchanged and (*c*) has risen by over (i) 10 per cent., (ii) 50 per cent., (iii) 100 per cent., (iv) 150 per cent., (v) 200 per cent., (vi) 250 per cent., (vii) 300 per cent. and (viii) 350 per cent. for the purpose of calculating the business rate to come into effect on 14 April 2010. [311049]

**Barbara Follett:** All petrol retail outlets have been sent a summary valuation of their property from the Valuation Office Agency which explains and illustrates how their rateable value has been calculated. Ratepayers

have been invited to contact their local valuation officer if they think the information in the summary valuation is incorrect.

The following table is for petrol filling stations with a with a Special Category Valuation Office Agency (VOA SCAT) of 209 in England only. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

These figures include all property recorded as petrol filling stations using VOA SCAT Code 209. It is not possible to identify and include in the figures hypermarkets and other properties retailing petrol. These are recorded under other SCAT codes.

Percentage change	Number of hereditaments
Decrease	480
No change	0
Equal to or less than 10 per cent.	480
Increases of more than 10 per cent., less than or equal to 50 per cent.	1630
Increases of more than 50 per cent., less than or equal to 100 per cent.	1550
Increases of more than 100 per cent., less than or equal to 150 per cent.	720
Increases of more than 150 per cent., less than or equal to 200 per cent.	320
Increases of more than 200 per cent., less than or equal to 250 per cent.	180
Increases of more than 250 per cent., less than or equal to 300 per cent.	90
Increases of more than 300 per cent., less than or equal to 350 per cent.	70
Increases over 350 per cent.	130

*Note:*

The percentage change in a property's rateable value is not the same as the percentage change in its rates bill. Our £2 billion transitional relief scheme will ensure that in 2010-11 no business property sees its rates bill increase by more than 11 per cent. as a result of the revaluation, with maximum increases capped at just 3.5 per cent. for small properties.

These data are consistent with the statistical release entitled 'Non-domestic rateable values: 2010 Local Rating Lists—England and Wales', published on 18 December 2009. A copy of this statistical release is available at the following link:

[http://www.voa.gov.uk/publications/statistical\\_releases/VOA\\_Statistics\\_Release\\_Final.pdf](http://www.voa.gov.uk/publications/statistical_releases/VOA_Statistics_Release_Final.pdf)

The data excludes petrol retail outlets in hypermarkets/superstores.

In the last five years, alongside rising petrol prices and increasing turnover, the rents paid on many petrol filling stations has grown. It is only fair to all ratepayers this is reflected in rate bills.

The five-yearly business rates revaluations make sure each business pays its fair contribution and no more by ensuring the share of the national rates bill paid by any one business reflects changes over time in the value of their property relative to others. The 2010 revaluation will not raise a single extra penny for Government. Over a million properties will see their business rate liabilities come down as a result of revaluation.

The percentage increase in rateable value does not necessarily result in a similar increase in rates liability. As the total rateable value for the whole country is increasing by approximately 20 per cent., only businesses with an increase over this figure will see an increase in their bills.

The Government intend to put in place a £2 billion relief scheme to limit the impact on the minority with bill increases, which in 2010-11 will ensure no business property sees its rates bill increase by more than 11 per cent. as a result of the revaluation, with maximum increases capped at just 3.5 per cent. for small properties. That is on top of the wider support available to help ease business pressures including discounted rate bills for small businesses and deferring tax payments.

### Planning Permission: Appeals

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many appeals against planning appeal decisions were upheld in the High Court in each of the last five years; and in respect of which such appeals all legal proceedings have been completed. [316050]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** The numbers of High Court challenges to planning appeal decisions over the last five years were as follows:

2008-09: 97 challenges decided of which 31 were successful;  
 2007-08: 64 challenges decided of which 18 were successful;  
 2006-07: 69 challenges decided of which 37 were successful;  
 2005-06: 60 challenges decided of which 21 were successful;  
 and  
 2004-05: 74 challenges decided of which 29 were successful.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what monitoring his Department undertakes of the decisions taken by inspectors at planning appeals. [316051]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** The Department monitors the professional quality standards of the Planning Inspectorate through the Advisory Panel on Standards. The Panel prepares an annual report for the Secretary of State on matters affecting the maintenance of quality within the Inspectorate. In doing so panel members have access to inspectors' reports and decisions and to other relevant material associated with resolved complaints, High Court Challenges or Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman cases.

The target is that 99 per cent. of the Inspectorate's casework should be free from justified complaint.

### Property Development: Floods

**Mr. Dhanda:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what changes have been made to planning guidance as a result of the 2007 floods. [315989]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** Sir Michael Pitt's review of the summer 2007 floods found that the policy approach in Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25), "Development and Flood Risk", is sound and should be rigorously applied. In June 2008, Communities and Local Government published a Practice Guide to PPS25 which reflected the more detailed findings of Sir Michael Pitt's review and took account of responses to the earlier 'living draft' version of the guide, including responses made in the light of the 2007 floods. A further updated version of the guide was published on 7 December 2009.

In 2009 we carried out an initial review of the implementation of PPS25. This found that good progress was being made and the policy was working in helping to deliver sustainable development that is safe from flood risk. This view is supported by the Environment Agency. In August 2009 Communities and Local Government published consultation proposals to amend and clarify some limited aspects of PPS25. We will publish a revised version of PPS25 soon with refinements to further improve the policy's implementation and effectiveness.

### Regeneration and Housing: South East

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much funding his Department has provided for (a) regeneration and (b) housing projects in each local authority area in South East England in each year since 1997; and how much such funding his Department plans to provide in 2010-11. [315768]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** The data requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Regional Government

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will list the addresses of each overseas office of each (a) regional assembly and (b) regional leaders' board; how many staff are employed in each such office; and what the cost to the public purse was of each in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [315036]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** No regional assembly or regional leaders' board has a sole office overseas. However there are offices for each region in Brussels which are funded by a wide range of partners. The East of England and North West offices are managed by the respective assembly and leaders' board on behalf of a group of regional partners.

The costs of running these offices are drawn from a wide range of bodies. Records on these costs are not centrally held.

### Regional Planning and Development: South West

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent progress has been made on the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West. [316052]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** Following the judgment on the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), my Noble Friend Lord McKenzie announced in November that he had agreed that additional sustainability appraisal work should be carried out for the SW RSS. This is currently being undertaken and should be complete in the Spring. Ministers will then consider how to take forward the SW RSS.

### Tenancy Deposit Schemes

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate has been made of the number of tenancy agreements

covered by each tenancy deposit scheme licensed by his Department; and what the monetary value of deposits held in each scheme was at the latest date for which figures are available. [316178]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** At the end of September 2009, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 1,690,000 deposits were protected by the three Government approved tenancy deposit protection schemes. The total value of the deposits protected was £1.6 billion. I am unable to provide a breakdown for the individual schemes for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

### Tenants Service Authority

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's (a) management statement and (b) financial memorandum in respect of the (i) Tenants Service Authority and (ii) Homes and Communities Agency. [316179]

**John Healey:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs. Spelman) on 19 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 1305W.

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