



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

4 April 2023

THE PRIME MINISTER

*Dear Sir Denzil,*

During my appearance before the Liaison Committee on 28 March, I said that I would write on a number of issues that were raised with me.

**Questions 31 and 32 (HS2)**

You asked about the Government's recent announcement on HS2.

HS2 is a significant investment in our national infrastructure, levelling up communities across the country, providing a net-zero alternative to cars and domestic flights, and training a skilled workforce for the UK's future construction industry.

We remain committed to delivering HS2 from Euston to Manchester in a way that delivers the best value for money to the taxpayer and we will deliver Euston alongside high-speed infrastructure to Manchester. That is why we recently announced we will rephase the Euston section of the project to manage inflationary pressures and work on the affordability of the station's design. We are taking the time this gives us to look again at the Euston station design to ensure it delivers for passengers, the local community and is affordable for taxpayers.

We will carefully consider the recommendations set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). The Department for Transport will formally respond to the NAO report and will provide an update on Euston in due course.

**Questions 40 to 42 (childcare)**

Catherine McKinnell asked about the Government's plans to expand childcare provision in England.

We have some of the highest quality childcare provision in the world, with 96 per cent of early years settings rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding. In January 2022, nearly 350,000 children were registered for a 30 hours free childcare place under our support scheme, helping to save working families up to £6,000 a child per year.

But childcare is still one of the biggest costs facing working families today. That is why, as part of our package in the Budget, we announced an expanded package of new 30 free hours entitlement for eligible working parents of around 640,000 children aged between nine and 36 months. We are also introducing start-up grants for new childminders, including for those who choose to register with Ofsted or a childminder agency, to support the costs of set-up and to grow the childminder market.

As a result of this expansion, by 2027-28 we expect around 60,000 more people to enter employment, and 1.5 million mothers to increase the hours they work. As I told the Committee, the OBR have said this policy has by far the largest impact on potential output in this Budget. Introducing this package will drive up the generosity of our childcare offer, helping more mothers enter the labour force and will mean that we have one of the most generous childcare offers for working parents by international standards.

On 4 July 2022 the Department for Education announced that it would support more people to become childminders, including by reducing the upfront costs of becoming a childminder via financial support.

As with other stakeholders, the Department for Education and other relevant Departments meet Childminder Agencies to discuss shared opportunities and barriers. This has included gathering views and having high level conversations about the policy intent and timing of the grants scheme. Childminder Agencies have been established in law to register, quality assure and support childminders as an alternative to Ofsted. The cost of registering with a Childminder Agency, and first year post-registration, is more expensive than the Ofsted equivalent. They provide additional support and services to their childminders that Ofsted is not required to offer. For example, Childminder Agencies can support providers through registration and look after invoicing and other paperwork; they have ready-made professional networks that they support and promote to providers; and they are required by law to provide at least 20 hours of practice development a year to their early years childminders and can offer more than that. The grant allocations reflect this fee difference.

I note that there has been some media coverage relating to the minority stake my wife has in relation to the company Koru Kids. I was being asked questions by the Committee in my capacity as Prime Minister. I would like to clarify for the Parliamentary record that this interest has rightly been declared to the Cabinet Office. The latest List of Ministerial Interests will be published shortly by the Independent Adviser, Sir Laurie Magnus. This regime ensures that steps are taken to avoid or mitigate any potential conflict of interest, and that the interests of Ministers' spouses or partners are not something that would influence their actions either as Ministers or as Members of Parliament. I shall arrange for a copy of the List to be placed in the Library of the House.

### **Question 63 (Home Office's adults at risk policy)**

Caroline Nokes asked whether people over the age of 70 would be excluded from the provisions of the Illegal Migration Bill.

The United Kingdom is a generous and compassionate country. We will continue to offer sanctuary and refuge to those fleeing persecution and conflict. But we will not accept mass illegal migration orchestrated by people smugglers. That is why we have introduced the Illegal Migration Bill, to address this challenge once and for all.

There is no exemption from immigration detention in the Bill for any particular group. The existing Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention policy enables caseworkers to identify people who may be particularly vulnerable to harm in immigration detention and provides a framework for making decisions on whether or not detention in that individual case is appropriate. Individuals who engage the policy will only be detained where immigration factors (including timescales for removal, compliance issues and public protection concerns) outweigh the evidence of vulnerability in their particular case. The policy will be updated through secondary legislation to work with the provisions in the Bill.

**Questions 65 and 89 (individual immigration cases)**

Finally Caroline Nokes and Angus Brendan MacNeil raised immigration cases involving Afghan citizens. As I explained, I am unable to comment on individual cases but if they wish to provide the Home Office with the relevant details, I know that they will be considered in the normal way. What I can say is that to date we have relocated nearly 24,500 vulnerable people to the United Kingdom from Afghanistan. As a country, we can be proud of our record in supporting those fleeing persecution or who have served the United Kingdom to come here through our bespoke safe and legal routes.

*Yours sincerely,*

