



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Universities: Antisemitism

Hilary Benn (Labour) [161675] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many English universities have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism; and if he will list the universities that have not yet done so.

Michelle Donelan: The government has asked all English higher education (HE) providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) to adopt the working definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The IHRA definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting this widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that HE providers take these issues seriously. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to HE leaders most recently in October 2020 to reiterate the importance of the definition and to urge all providers to consider adopting it.

The government is pleased to report that at least 91 providers have now adopted the definition, with many more preparing to adopt it. We know that other providers are in the process of considering adoption.

The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers, but the government will continue to urge them to adopt the definition and ensure that HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

I am proud that so many providers have taken a positive step towards eradicating antisemitism by adopting the definition since the Secretary of State for Education's letter, but further progress is still needed to stamp it out. This is why, in the Secretary of State for Education's most recent strategic guidance letter, the government asked the OfS to undertake a scoping exercise, to identify providers which are reluctant to adopt the definition. The letter asked them to consider introducing mandatory reporting of antisemitic incident numbers by providers, with the aim of ensuring a robust evidence base, which the OfS can then use to effectively regulate in this area.

The Secretary of State for Education also asked the OfS to ensure that, if antisemitic incidents do occur at a provider, they should consider if it is relevant in a particular case whether the provider has adopted the IHRA definition when considering what

sanctions, including monetary penalties, would be appropriate to apply. We will continue to work across the government to ensure that racism and religious hatred of any kind is not tolerated anywhere, including in our world-leading universities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-02/161675>

Funerals: Coronavirus

John Hayes (Conservative) [161671] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what notice period will be given to the funeral and death care sector for guidance on the relaxation of rules limiting the number of attendees at funeral services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse: The Government's [guidance for those managing funerals](#) is available through the Deceased Management Advisory Group website. This guidance details the actions funeral directors and others managing funerals should take to ensure funerals take place in a COVID-19 safe and secure way. This includes ensuring a COVID-19 risk assessment is in place and that all reasonable steps are taken to limit the risk of transmission, taking into account the risk assessment and relevant legislation including around attendance.

Ahead of Step 4 of the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' roadmap (no earlier than 21 June), the Government will launch the Events Research Programme, to consider how and when restrictions can be lifted from large events including funerals and wakes. Subject to the outcomes of the review at each stage, the forward plan will be included in the Roadmap for when limits on funeral attendance might be lifted and the relevant guidance will be updated accordingly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-02/161671>

The roadmap referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>

House of Commons Delegated Legislation Committee

Draft Registration of Marriages Regulations 2021

col 3 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): ... The regulations enable the introduction of a schedule system for the registration of marriages in England and Wales ... For background, a schedule system is already in place in Scotland and in Northern Ireland. ...

For clarity, couples will sign a marriage schedule at their marriage ceremony instead of a paper marriage register, and all marriages will be registered by registration officers in a single electronic marriage register. That will remove the requirement for the 84,000 paper registers currently used in registry offices and around 30,000 religious buildings across England and Wales.

The regulations provide the opportunity to modernise not only the registration process from a technical point of view, but the marriage entry itself to allow for the details of both parents of the couple to be recorded instead of just the father's name and occupation, as is currently the case. ...

col 6 Tim Loughton (Conservative): ... In regulation 7, new section 53B of the 1949 Act ... states: "Before the marriage document is signed, the clergyman by whom the marriage is to be or has been solemnized"—Will the Minister give a definition of "clergyman"? Again, I could not find it in the regulations. Who exactly is a "clergyman", or a clergywoman ...? We need a definition of exactly who is covered by that definition.

col 7 New section 53C contains the first of many references to "according to the usages of

the Jews”. I am sure it is my inexperience, but can the Minister explain that term? Does it apply to all traditional Jewish ceremonies or only some? I assume it is regularly used for proceedings in synagogues, but can we have some clarification, because it is not clear? ... In terms of obligations on the church, place or body performing the solemnisation of the marriage, new section 53E(3) refers to the “relevant church official” on whom there are obligations to ensure that registration is made and notified. Who is the relevant church official? In most cases, people who are involved in churches other than the vicar are volunteers. ... Does the relevant church official have to have a certain status? How are they nominated? What happens if they mess up? Who is responsible? ...

col 9 Meg Hillier (Labour Co-op): ... The explanatory notes say that there has not been a formal consultation, but that the General Register Office has consulted the established churches across the UK and other religious groups. Could the Minister advise which other religious groups that applies to? Just to be clear, at the moment only certain churches—simply put, those with a hierarchy—allow their celebrants to be registrars. I assume that that has not changed; ... Can the Minister confirm that point? ...

col 10 Kevin Foster: ... The concept of a church or a religious building continuing to hold a physical register will disappear. They may well keep their historical records and parish registers, but they will no longer be getting someone to fill out a physical certificate. ... People will not see a particular difference on their wedding day, but they will not sign paper certificates on the day. That is where we need to be clear in our own minds. It is no longer about the paper being the record of the marriage. To be clear, this is about recording the event. The moment of marriage is not when it is entered on to the register; sometimes people can be confused and think that signing the register is the moment that they become married. It is not. ...

col 11 ... one reason we are moving to a digital system, away from paper, is that paper is far easier to forge or produce copies of ... although it has to be said that the register is actually a public document. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-10/debates/6dbf2da6-4608-40be-a88e-e6aaf901017f/DraftRegistrationOfMarriagesRegulations2021>

The Draft Regulations debated above can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2021/9780348220308/data.pdf>

and the Draft Explanatory Memorandum can be read at

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2021/9780348220308/pdfs/ukdsiem_9780348220308_en.pdf

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2622>

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

**** Domestic Abuse Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2709>

Report Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-03-10/debates/5A6B3EBE-EE46-453F-AAC8-5391793E3923/DomesticAbuseBill>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

Freedom of Speech (Universities) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2820>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

Marriage (Approved Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2795>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

Scottish Parliament

Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/domestic-abuse-protection-scotland-bill>

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

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

Stage 3 consideration of amendments

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13188&i=119416#ScotParlOR>

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

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

The future of the [Welsh Government] Equality and Inclusion Funding Programme
(closing date 30 March 2021)

<https://gov.wales/future-equality-and-inclusion-funding-programme>

Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS): Documenting the Lives of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in a Time of Crisis (closing date 11 May 2021)

bit.ly/evensurvey

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19

(closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

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