

**Debate Pack**

CDP-0106 (2021)

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25 June 2021

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# Estimates Day debate: Official Development Assistance and the British Council

<b>1</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Reducing the UK's aid spending in 2021</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>British Council</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Press and media articles</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>PQs</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Debates</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Early Day Motions</b>	<b>38</b>

# 1

## Background

On 30 June 2021 there will be an Estimates Day debate on the spending of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) and the British Council.

These subjects were selected by the Backbench Business Committee. They were proposed by the Chair of the International Development Committee, Sarah Champion MP (ODA spending) and the Chair of the APPG on the British Council, John Baron MP (British Council).

This paper briefly sets out FCDO spending on ODA and the British Council in 2021, and the policy background to such changes.

The Library's [Reducing the UK's aid spending in 2021](#) and the [0.7 percent aid target](#) provide policy and statistical briefings on UK ODA. The briefing [Integrated Review: International Development](#) also describes the UK Government's foreign policy direction and its impact on development policy.

## 2 Reducing the UK's aid spending in 2021

### 2.1 Announcement of reduction

In the November 2020 Spending Review, the Chancellor [announced a reduction in UK ODA spending in 2021 from 0.7 percent to 0.5 percent](#) of Gross National Income (GNI). The Spending Review allocated £10 billion for ODA in 2021/22.<sup>1</sup>

The Government [cited the economic impact of the pandemic](#) on the UK economy and public finances to explain the spending reduction.<sup>2</sup>

During a debate on the aid target in June, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury [described particular Government concern for the growth in government borrowing](#) in order to fund the UK's response to the pandemic. He forecasted borrowing would total £643 billion between 2020 and 2023, which he said was “unsustainable” and made the UK vulnerable to any future rise in inflation or interest rates.<sup>3</sup>

The Government has said the [reduction is temporary](#) and that it will return to the 0.7 percent target when the “fiscal situation permits.”<sup>4</sup> The Government has not set out what these conditions are.

#### Is legislation required to amend the target?

Under the [International Development \(Official Development Assistance Target\) Act 2015](#), the Government must ensure the target of spending 0.7 percent of GNI is met in every calendar year.

There has been disagreement on whether legislation is required to amend the target. The Government has argued that [because the decision is temporary, there is no requirement for amending the legislation](#).<sup>5</sup> However, Parliamentarians such as the former Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell MP, and former Solicitor General, Lord Garnier, have argued the Government cannot decide in advance not to meet the target set out in the Act.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> HM Treasury, [Spending Review to fight virus, deliver promises and invest in UK's recovery](#), 25 November 2020

<sup>2</sup> HC Deb, [26 November 2020](#), c 1019

<sup>3</sup> HC Deb, [8 June 2021](#), c 863

<sup>4</sup> HC Deb, [8 June 2021](#), c 865 HC Deb, [16 March 2021](#), c165

<sup>5</sup> HC Deb, [16 March 2021](#), c 171

<sup>6</sup> The Times, [Tories back legal challenge to aid in poorest countries](#), 9 March 2021; HL Deb, [28 April 2021](#), c548GC

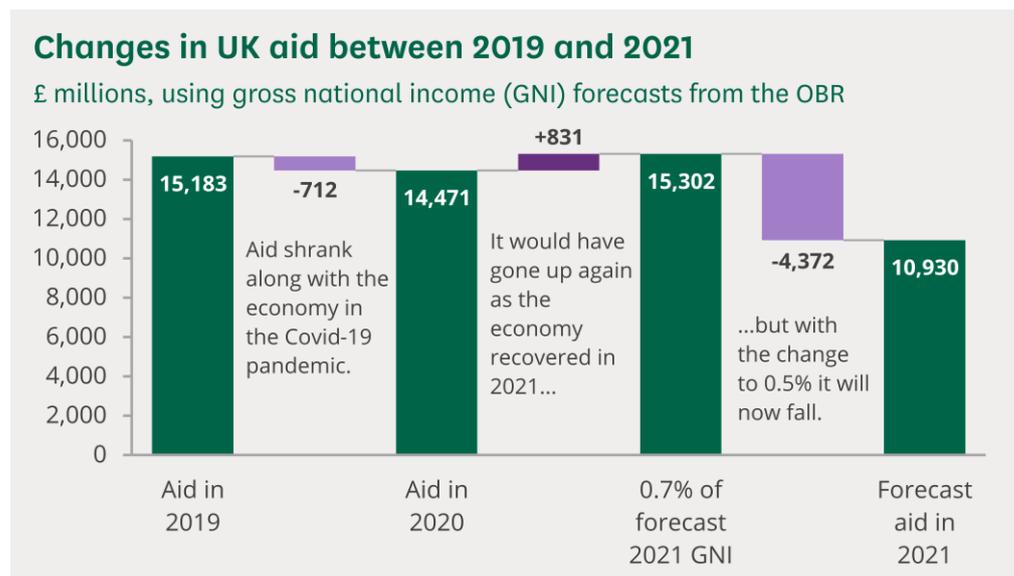
On 7 June 2021, the Speaker said that [he expects the House to have a “decisive vote”](#) on maintaining the 0.7 percent target, and for the Government to enable this.<sup>7</sup>

Further analysis of the Act’s requirements is set out in the Library paper [The 0.7 percent aid target](#).

## 2.2 Recent trends in UK ODA spending

The spending reduction means that for the first time since 2013, the UK will not meet the [UN target of spending 0.7 percent of Gross National Income](#) in 2021.

In 2020, the UK [had been one of seven countries](#) reporting ODA spending to the OECD that met the 0.7 percent target.<sup>8</sup> Provisional data suggests in 2020 that the UK ranked seventh in the world amongst those reporting data to the OECD for its aid spending as a proportion of GNI, and would have ranked tenth if it had instead spent 0.5 percent.<sup>9</sup>



Source: FCDO, [Statistics on International Development: Provisional UK Aid Spend 2020](#), 8 April 2021; GNI figures from OBR, [Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2021](#), 3 March 2021

Although we do not know exactly how much aid will be provided in 2021, the Government has met the 0.7% aid target exactly (to within 2 decimal places) in every year since 2013. Assuming that it will meet the 0.5% target with the same precision, we can use GNI forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility to estimate the amount of aid that will be provided.

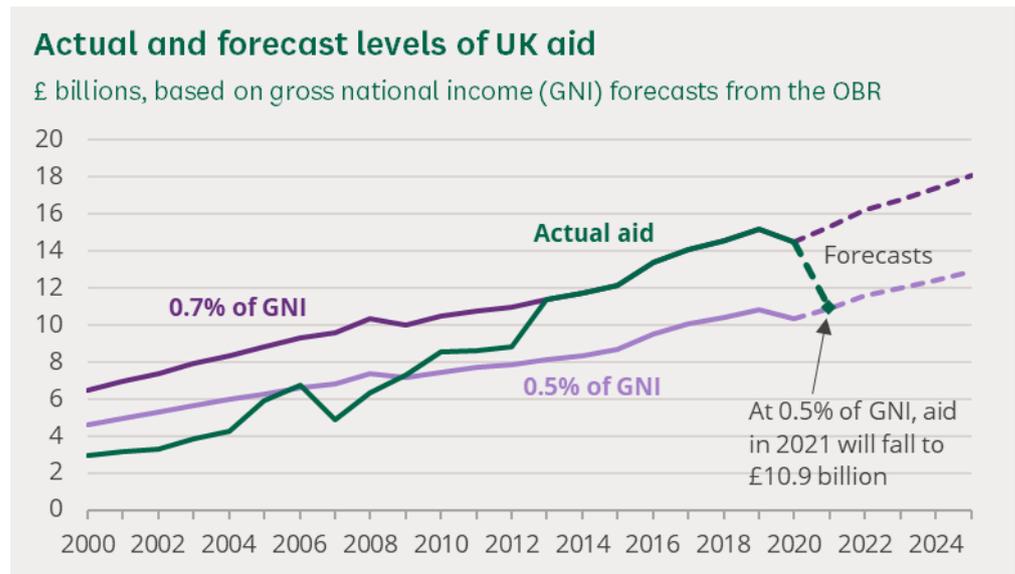
<sup>7</sup> HC Deb, [7 June 2021](#), c667

<sup>8</sup> OECD, [Covid-19 spending helped lift foreign aid to an all-time high in 2020](#), 13 April 2021

<sup>9</sup> OECD, [Total flows by donor \[DAC1\]](#), accessed 15 June 2021

The chart above shows that on this basis, we can expect UK aid to fall from £14.5 billion in 2020 to £10.9 billion in 2021. This is about £4.4 billion below the level of aid that we would expect if the target were still 0.7%.

Because the economy is expected to return to growth in 2021, aid levels will continue to increase in absolute terms even if they remain at 0.5% of GNI. However, as the chart below shows, they will be about £4-5 billion lower than if the target had stayed at 0.7%.



Source: FCDO, [Statistics on International Development: Provisional UK Aid Spend 2020](#), 8 April 2021; GNI figures from OBR, [Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2021](#), 3 March 2021

## 2.3

### UK ODA spending in 2021/22

In January 2021, the Foreign Secretary [set out Departmental allocations on ODA spending](#) for 2021/22.<sup>10</sup> The largest amount will be spent by the FCDO, at £8,115 million.

In April, a Ministerial Statement set out [allocations for the FCDO’s ODA](#).<sup>11</sup> As new thematic categories have been used to describe the allocations in line with the FCDO’s seven priorities for UK ODA, it is not possible to make direct comparisons with spending in previous years.

<sup>10</sup> [Written Statement HCWS735](#), 26 January 2021

<sup>11</sup> FCDO, [UK ODA allocations 2021 to 2022](#), 21 April 2021

**FCDO's thematic allocations 2021/22**

In £ millions

Other spending (e.g. subscriptions, fixed costs)	2,082
Programmes with cross cutting themes	1,940
Covid-19 & global health	1,305
Humanitarian preparedness & response <sup>12</sup>	906
Climate change & biodiversity	534
Trade & economic development	491
Open societies & conflict	419
Girls' education	400
Science, Research & technology	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,115</b>

Note: "Other spending" also includes international subscriptions, fixed costs, financial transactions and arm's length bodies. The FCDO is responsible for 80 percent of ODA.

Source: FCDO, [UK ODA allocations 2021 to 2022](#), 21 April 2021

The £400 million allocated for girls' education does not include the [£430 million of ODA funding to the Global Partnership for Education over five years](#), announced at the G7 summit in June 2021.<sup>12</sup>

The costs of donating [100 million vaccine doses over the next year](#) to low- and middle-income economies will be in addition to the £10 billion allocated for ODA in 2021.<sup>13</sup>

The International Development Committee has said the Government has "[consistently refused to be transparent](#)" with the Committee on when and where the spending reductions will fall, and how [spending compares with previous years](#).<sup>14</sup>

More information on each of these priorities can be found in section 1 of the Library's [Integrated Review: International Development](#).

## 2.4

## Strategy for UK aid spending

Part of the reasoning the Government gave for the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with the Department for International Development in

<sup>12</sup> Number Ten, [PM calls on G7 to help educate every child in the world](#), 11 June 2021;

<sup>13</sup> Number Ten, [UK to donate 100 million coronavirus vaccine doses](#), 15 June 2021

<sup>14</sup> International Development Committee, [MPs oppose aid cuts and seek transparency](#), 8 June 2021, [MPs condemn cuts to girls' education and "hiding" of other aid reductions](#), 19 May 2021; [Chair comments on the written ministerial statement on ODA allocations](#), 21 April 2021

2020 was that it [would support the integration of UK aid spending with the UK's diplomatic, trade and security efforts](#).<sup>15</sup>

In March 2021, the Government published an [integrated review of foreign, defence, security, trade and development policy](#). The review identified Africa and the Indo-Pacific as priorities for UK foreign policy, citing the need to reduce poverty in two regions, respond to climate change, and act in support of open societies.

Whilst the [review](#) and [FCDO](#) cite poverty reduction and “human suffering” as reasons for the UK’s ODA spend in Africa, wider factors such as trade and diplomacy have been more prominent in the UK’s reasoning for greater engagement in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>16</sup>

The [review](#) also identified tackling climate change and biodiversity loss as the UK’s “number one” international priority.<sup>17</sup>

In line with the review, in 2021/22 the FCDO will spend 50 percent of its bilateral ODA in Africa and 32 percent in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia.<sup>18</sup>

NGOs have [criticised the Government's integrated review](#) as being focused on security and trading interests, at the expense of poverty reduction.<sup>19</sup> NGOs have also said country and programme reductions [threaten the UK's climate leadership](#) ahead of the COP 26 Climate Conference in November.<sup>20</sup> The Action for Global Health Network also argues the spending reduction will [hinder the global response to Covid-19 and the delivery of health services more generally](#).<sup>21</sup>

A separate development strategy is expected by 2022.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Number Ten, [PM announces merger of Department for International Development and Foreign Office](#), updated 17 June 2020

<sup>16</sup> HCWS935, [FCDO update](#), 21 April 2021; Cabinet Office, [Global Britain in a competitive age](#), March 2021, p26

<sup>17</sup> Cabinet Office, [Global Britain in a competitive age](#), March 2021, p4

<sup>18</sup> International Development Committee, [The future of UK aid](#), HC 1141, 22 April 2021, Q94

<sup>19</sup> Devex, [Advocates: UK integrated review spells end of “development superpower status.”](#) 16 March 2021

<sup>20</sup> Bond, [Climate change and development organisations warn aid cuts risks undermining UK's credibility \[...\]](#), 28 March 2021

<sup>21</sup> Action for Global Health, [UK aid health cuts: 195 organisations call for reinstating of aid \[...\]](#), 13 May 2021

<sup>22</sup> Commons Library, [Integrated Review: International Development](#), April 2021

## 2.5 Impact on countries and programmes

The FCDO is currently working through what the reduction in spending means for most programmes and countries.<sup>23</sup>

The Library briefing [Reducing the UK's aid spending 2021](#) sets out what spending commitments have been announced to date for specific countries and programmes.

In summary, the FCDO has confirmed a [focus on Africa and the Indo-Pacific](#) and said it will [prioritise its humanitarian aid](#) on countries most affected by risk of famine. This includes Yemen, Syria, Somalia, and South Sudan.<sup>24</sup> However, both [Yemen](#) and [Syria](#) have seen reduced pledges from the UK for 2021.<sup>25</sup>

For individual programmes, the Government has announced increases to several multilateral bodies. These include an increase in contributions to the [World Health Organization, with funding totalling £340 million to 2024](#).<sup>26</sup> The Government will also double its [International Climate Finance](#) to at least £11.6 billion between 2021 and 2025.<sup>27</sup>

Several UN agencies have confirmed reductions in UK contributions, including in areas of health. These include the [UN Population Fund](#), which will see funding for its supply programme reduced 85 percent, to £23 million.<sup>28</sup>

The WHO has been [critical of spending reductions on neglected topical diseases](#) and their control in 19 countries. In June, the WHO said that there is no obvious alternative funding source to fill the funding gap and that this is likely to lead to the incineration of 276.8 million donated tablets. It says “as a consequence of the aid cuts, 20,000-30,000 individuals are likely to die” from visceral leishmaniasis.<sup>29</sup>

One [programme to prevent deforestation in Indonesia](#), which had been due to run until 2022, is also amongst those to see its funding end.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> [Foreign Secretary to Chair of IRDC](#), 29 April 2021; IDC, [Oral evidence: The future of UK aid](#), HC 1141, 22 April 2021, Q84; PQ 185835 [[Overseas aid](#)], 27 April 2021

<sup>24</sup> HCWS935, [FCDO update](#), 21 April 2021

<sup>25</sup> Commons Library, [Yemen: UK Government's aid reduction](#), March 2021; PQ 185992 [[Syria: Overseas aid](#)], 27 April 2021

<sup>26</sup> [Prime Minister's speech to the UN General Assembly](#), 26 September 2020

<sup>27</sup> UK Government, [Integrated Review](#), March 2021, p104

<sup>28</sup> UN, [UK's 85 percent family planning aid cut will be devastating \[...\]](#), 29 April 2021

<sup>29</sup> [WHO written evidence the International Development Committee. FUA0058](#), 15 June 2021

<sup>30</sup> Devex, [UK cancels "highly effective" green programme in Indonesia](#), 15 June 2021

## 2.6

# Main Estimates 2021/22

One of Parliament's longest standing functions is the consideration and authorisation of the government's spending plans, requiring the government to obtain parliamentary consent before spending public money.

Main Estimates are the documents that contain the detail of those spending plans for a particular year. There is a separate Estimate for each Government Department. Changes are presented at the end of each year through Supplementary Estimates. Each of the Estimates must be authorised by Parliament before they take effect.

Within each Estimate, spending is divided into a number of distinct budgetary limits for each department, covering spending of a specific type determined by HM Treasury. Changes to the categorisation of spending between categories require prior consultation with Parliament. Departmental Expenditure Limits (DELs) cover net spending which is subject to limits set in Spending Reviews and which it is assumed government departments can control:

- Resource DEL (also referred to as 'day-to-day spending') covers costs of running and purchasing goods and services; staff costs; current grants; rent; and maintenance costs. It also includes profit or loss on the sale of assets; depreciation; and some impairments; and
- Capital DEL (also referred to as 'investment spending') covers the purchase, disposal and major improvement of assets; capital grants (i.e. grants to purchase or enhance assets) and loans.

Annually Managed Expenditure covers net spending which is more difficult to control and forecast:

- Resource AME covers benefits and state pensions; some impairments; and provisions for liabilities; and
- Capital AME covers student loans and some financial transactions, mainly relating to the post 2008 financial crisis.

The [2021-22 Main Estimates](#) were published on 13 May 2021. Departments also produce an explanatory memorandum, which is published and scrutinised by the relevant House of Commons Select Committee and the [House of Commons Scrutiny Unit](#). This memorandum should compare spending plans to previous years and explain the reasons for changes proposed. Select committees currently publish memoranda on their webpages and the Scrutiny Unit uses the memoranda to prepare briefings for select committees and other Members.

Following publication of Estimates, the relevant committee will approve publication of the associated memorandum. Memoranda which have been

published will appear on the relevant committee and Scrutiny Unit webpages of the Parliament website.

## The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Main Estimate 2021-22

The Foreign, Commonwealth published its spending plans in the [HM Treasury Main Estimate](#),<sup>31</sup> and provided additional detail in an [explanatory memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Committee and International Development Committee](#).<sup>32</sup>

The FCDO plans a Resource DEL budget in 2021/22 of £7,432.2 million, 25% below last year's final budget of £9,941.2 million and 28% below last year's initial budget for DFID and the FCO combined. This reduction mainly reflects significant reductions in Overseas Development Assistance expenditure.

The main components of the FCDO's day-to-day spending are:

- Strategic priorities and other programme spend: £3,963.9 million;
- Operating costs, frontline diplomacy and overseas network: £1,651.7 million;
- Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: £720.6 million;
- European Union attributed aid: £608 million;
- International subscriptions, scholarships and BBC World Service: £258.7 million;
- British Council: £189 million; and
- Funding for Non-Departmental Public Bodies: £40.2 million.

FCDO plans a Capital DEL budget of £1,938.1 million for 2021/22, 34.9% below last year's final budget of £2,977.3 million and 29% below last year's combined initial budgets of DFID and the FCO. The main components of this funding are:

- Operating costs, frontline diplomacy and overseas network: £108.5 million;
- British Council: £70 million;
- Strategic priorities and other programme spend: £1,759.5 million; and
- Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: £0.1 million.

The FCDO's capital programme includes planned refurbishments to the overseas estate (embassies and consulates), including Washington DC,

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<sup>31</sup> HM Treasury, [Main Supply Estimates 2021 to 2022](#), 13 May 2021

<sup>32</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Main Estimates Memorandum 2021-22](#), published 18 May 2021

Ottawa, Paris and Mexico City. This is dependent on the proceeds of asset sales such as the past sale of the Bangkok embassy.

FCDO's Capital Annually Managed Expenditure, which reflects investments in the wholly owned [CDC Group](#) company, is set to decrease by £4 million (-0.6%), from £650 million to £646 million. The CDC is the UK Government's finance development institution, which aims to support business growth that lifts people out of poverty, and to make a financial return to be re-invested.

## Changes to the FCDO Estimates

The FCDO was created as a result of the merger of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in September 2020.<sup>33</sup>

The merger has been reflected in the 2021/22 Estimates by including both former FCO and former DFID spending within a new combined Main Estimate. At the 2020/21 Supplementary Estimates, not long after the departments were merged, previous budget sub-heads for the separate departments were retained as before.<sup>34</sup>

The financial year 2021/22 will be the first full financial year for the FCDO as a new department, and for the 2021/22 Main Estimates new budget sub-heads have been created for the newly merged department. Notably, the majority of what had previously been DFID's main ODA spending budget sub-heads have been combined into a single line – “strategic priorities and other programme spending”.

The Chair of the International Development Committee, Sarah Champion MP, criticised the move to reduce the level of detail and transparency in the FCDO's explanatory memorandum. In [correspondence](#) with the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Philip Barton KCME OBE, she wrote that “the lack of detail falls short of what the International Development Committee would expect to see – particularly during a time of unprecedented reductions in UK expenditure on overseas aid”.<sup>35</sup> She also argued that the Committee should have been consulted on such changes.

[HM Treasury Estimates Guidance](#) states that “Departments should consult HM Treasury (through the relevant Spending Team) before making any significant changes to their Estimate. They may also need to consult their relevant departmental select committee in the House of Commons.”<sup>36</sup> [In his response](#)

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<sup>33</sup> Number Ten, [PM announces merger of Department for International Development and Foreign Office](#), updated 17 June 2020

<sup>34</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [Memorandum on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Supplementary Estimates 2020-21](#), published 2 March 2021

<sup>35</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [Letter to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office regarding FCDO Main Estimates 2021-22](#), 17 May 2021

<sup>36</sup> HM Treasury, [Supply Estimates: a guidance manual](#), July 2011, p14

[to Sarah Champion's letter](#), Sir Philip argued that the changes were a “technical rationalisation”, and as such did not consult the Committee.<sup>37</sup> [In further correspondence](#), dated 22 June 2021. Sarah Champion argued that the Committee regards the changes as more than just a technical rationalisation, and that the changes were sufficiently material and substantive as to have merited consultation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [Letter from the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office regarding FCDO Main Estimates 2021-22](#), 8 June 2021

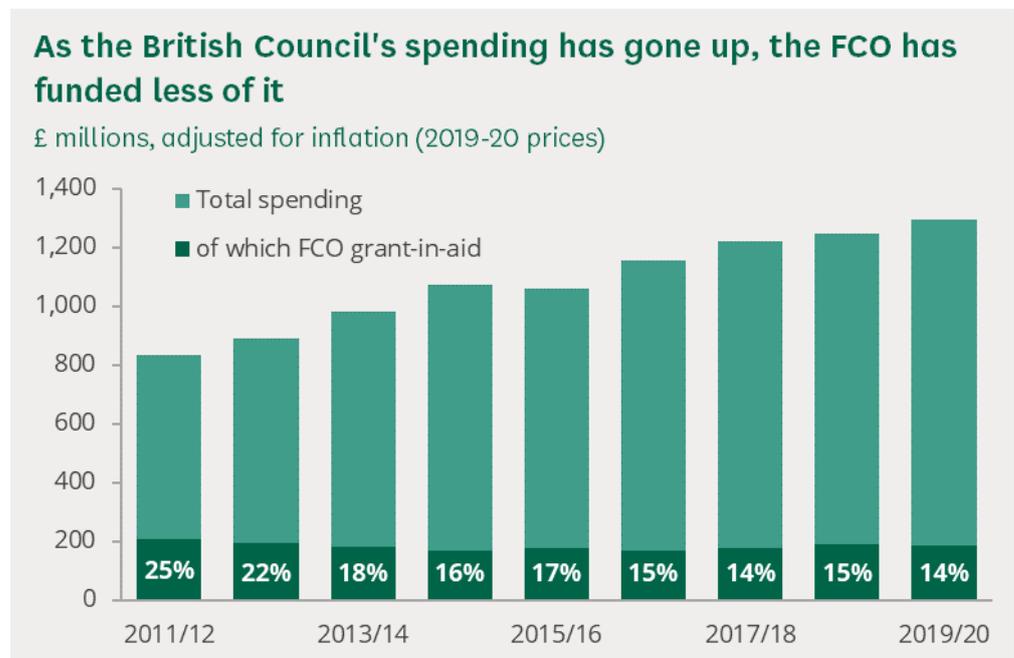
<sup>38</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [Letter to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office regarding FCDO Main Estimates 2021-22](#), 22 June 2021

## 3 British Council

### 3.1 Funding of the British Council in recent years

The British Council's total spending has increased significantly in recent years. In 2019/20, it spent a total of £1.3 billion, about 55% more in real terms than it had spent in 2011/12.

Over the same time period, its funding grant from the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) decreased by about 11% in real terms. This meant, as the chart below shows, that a much smaller proportion of the British Council's spending was funded by central Government grant (known as 'grant-in-aid'). In 2019/20, total funding from the FCO to the British Council was £187 million.



Source: [British Council annual reports](#), multiple years; real-terms figures calculated using GDP deflators from OBR, [Public finances databank](#), 27 May 2021

The majority of the British Council's income is derived from its activities, particularly teaching and exams (see the chart below). Its programmes developing knowledge of the English language accounted for about 59% of all its income in 2019/20. Its educational activities brought in a further 20%, with grants from the FCO and other donations accounting for 14%.

These proportions also reflect the areas where the British Council spends its money. In 2019/20, it spent £759 million on its English language activities, £319 million on education, £101 million on cultural, scientific and technological co-operation, and £104 million on building capacity for social change.

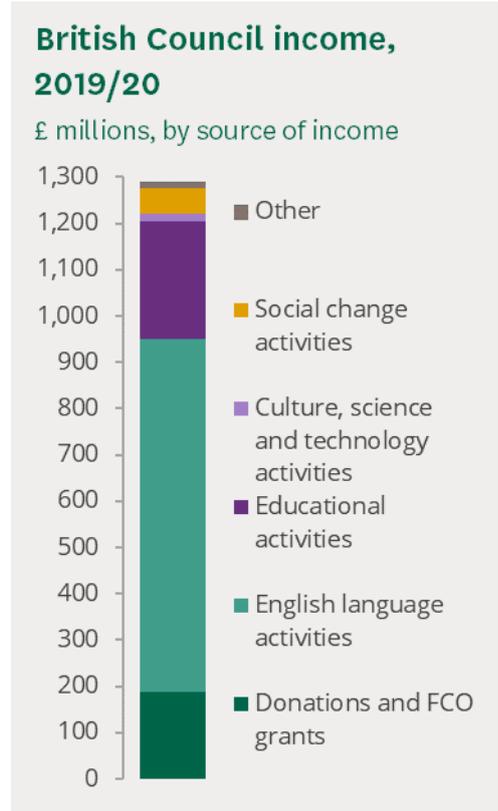
Some of the British Council’s spending is in countries that are eligible to receive ODA. This means, in turn, that some of the grant-in-aid coming from the FCO is also counted as aid spending. In 2019/20, £161 million of the FCO grant was counted as ODA, with the remaining £26 million going to non-ODA-eligible countries.

### Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on the British Council’s activities. For example, in-person teaching became far harder due to pandemic restrictions in a number of countries, which in turn caused a reduction in income.

In response, the Government increased the level of funding it provided. In the 2020/21

Supplementary Estimates, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office requested a total of £283 million in funding for the British Council, much higher than its initial allocation that year of £176 million.



Source: [British Council annual report](#), 2019-20

## 3.2

### British Council in the FCDO’s Main Estimate

For background on the Estimates in general, please see section 2.6 above.

As set out above, the British Council receives a relatively small proportion of its funding from the UK Government. In government funding terms, the FCDO’s funding to the British Council, [as detailed in its explanatory memorandum](#), is split between Resource DEL (grants) and Capital DEL (loan funding).

In 2021/22, the FCDO’s initial budget for grant funding to the British Council is £189 million. This is broadly consistent with funding provided in recent years.

However, unusually, in both 2020/21 and 2021/22 the British Council received loan funding from the FCDO. The 2021/22 Main Estimate explanatory memorandum states that the UK Government “has committed to provide the British Council with up to £145m loan funding to help support their short-term cash flow. Of this, £70m has been provided”. It is possible that further loan funding may be drawn down at the Supplementary Estimate later in the financial year.

In the previous financial year, the [FCDO's 2020/21 supplementary estimate memorandum](#) states that the Department provided a loan of £130 million to the British Council.

These loans are to provide the British Council to meet their financial obligations through the pandemic and undertake necessary restructuring. The FCDO has also issued a letter of comfort stating that it will provide further loans as necessary to allow the British Council to settle obligations incurred up until March 2022.<sup>39</sup>

It is not clear when or if the British Council could generate sufficient income to repay the funding being provided by the FCDO.

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<sup>39</sup> [Correspondence between Tom Tugendhat MP and Dominic Raab, 11 May 2021](#)

## 4 Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

### 4.1 Official Development Assistance

#### [Tracking the UK's controversial aid cuts](#)

Devex

William Worley

A regularly updated timeline

#### [House of Commons International Development Committee: Government has “pattern of trying to hide foreign aid cuts” – MPs](#)

Relief Web

23 June 2021

#### [19 million more people in need of humanitarian aid as funding drops, world's most comprehensive study reveals](#)

Relief Web

22 June 2021

#### ['Car crash': Politicians release damning trove of UK aid cuts evidence](#)

Devex

William Worley

16 June 2021

#### [Foreign aid: How the UK's spending on overseas development compares to other countries'](#)

Sky News

Philip Whiteside

8 June 2021

#### [Foreign aid cuts: 'Far more' than 100,000 people will die, leading rebel MP warns](#)

Sky News

6 June 2021

[John Major urges Boris Johnson to ‘keep our word’ on foreign aid spending](#)

Daily Telegraph

Danielle Sheridan and Catherine Neilan

4 June 2021

[Britain has proven itself to be a remarkably generous country](#)

Daily Telegraph

4 June 2021

[Exclusive: UK to charge Special Drawing Rights to aid budget — sources](#)

Devex

William Worley and Adva Saldinger

4 June 2021

[UK aid watchdog ICAI's funding cut by 15%, MPs say](#)

Devex

William Worley

28 May 2021

[If the government is serious about ‘global Britain’, why is it cutting research funding?](#)

The Guardian

Fiona Tomley

13 May 2021

[Dominic Raab is challenged to admit 40% cuts to foreign aid for girls’ education](#)

The Guardian

Patrick Wintour

27 April 2021

[UK aid cut seen as unforced error in ‘year of British leadership’](#)

The Guardian

Patrick Wintour

23 April 2021

[UK aid cuts: ‘tragic blow’ as opaque numbers signal big reductions](#)

The Guardian

Patrick Wintour and Karen McVeigh

22 April 2021

[If you want to make permanent cuts to the aid budget, be honest about it](#)

The Times

Paul Johnson

12 April 2021

[Focus aid to help poorest countries, says World Bank boss](#)

The Times  
Philip Aldrick  
7 April 2021

[UK research into malaria set to be halted after government cuts vital funding](#)

The Independent  
Samuel Lovett  
30 March 2021

['This happens in Brazil, not Britain': academics in despair as global research funds pulled](#)

The Guardian  
Anna Fazackerley  
19 March 2021

[Backlash as UK cuts funding for global health research in half](#)

Daily Telegraph  
Sarah Newey  
12 March 2021

## 4.2

## British Council

[Closing British Council offices is a huge mistake](#)

The Times  
John Baron MP  
8 June 2021

[Exclusive: British Council outposts face closure despite Boris Johnson's 'Global Britain pledge'](#)

Sunday Telegraph  
Edward Malnick  
5 June 2021

[British Council appoints Oliver Wyman boss as new chief executive](#)

City AM  
Damian Shepherd  
2 June 2021

[Tailored Review of the British Council](#)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office corporate report  
12 March 2019

## 5

## PQs

### 5.1

## Official Development Assistance

### South Sudan: Humanitarian Situation

24 Jun 2021 | HL1008

#### **Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the humanitarian situation in South Sudan; by how much UK aid to South Sudan will be cut as part of the reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget; how any such cut will represent value to UK taxpayers; and whether the details of any such cuts have been provided to the government of South Sudan.

#### **Answering member: Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

According to figures released by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 8.3 million people in South Sudan are in need of humanitarian assistance. An estimated 7.2 million face high levels of acute food insecurity (including over 100,000 in famine-like conditions), and 1.4 million children are expected to be acutely malnourished in 2021. The Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, witnessed the dire humanitarian situation first hand when he visited South Sudan with the UK Special Envoy for Famine and Humanitarian Affairs in October 2020.

We remain in regular contact with the Government of South Sudan and implementing partners on our assistance programme and any impacts of reductions in ODA. While we are still working through what the reduction to UK ODA means for individual programmes, our aid budget will be allocated according to the UK's strategic ODA priorities: global health security, girls' education, humanitarian preparedness and response, open societies, and conflict resolution.

### Overseas Aid: Children and Mothers

22 Jun 2021 | 17726

#### **Asked by: Yasmin Qureshi**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much ODA his Department allocated to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children; and what the definition of spending on that commitment was in each year between 2015 and 2019.

**Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The most up to date UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) were published in the British Medical Journal with data analysis provided by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), using the internationally accepted Muskoka2 methodology. These are found here:

<https://gh.bmj.com/content/6/6/e006089.full>

The LSHTM Muskoka2 estimates show FCDO spend, adjusted for inflation, as:

- £1,084 million on RMNCH in 2015
- £1,025 million on RMNCH in 2016
- £1,138 million on RMNCH in 2017
- £1,130 million on RMNCH in 2018
- £1,116 million on RMNCH in 2019

We previously stated FCDO spent approximately £1 billion per year on RMNCH between 2013 - 2017. These figures were based on the preceding Muskoka1 methodology and were not adjusted for inflation.

**Ethiopia: Humanitarian Aid**

**10 Jun 2021 | 8684**

**Asked by: Helen Hayes**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the potential effect of reductions to British Overseas Development Assistance on the number of people living in Ethiopia who will receive humanitarian assistance in 2021 and 2022.

**Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The Government has had to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on overseas development assistance (ODA). The FCDO Ethiopia Country Plan and Official Development Assistance allocations are still under review. We are committed to ensuring that UK aid is spent helping the poorest and most vulnerable people in Ethiopia. In 2020/21, the UK spent over £116 million bilaterally in response to the humanitarian impacts of the conflict in Tigray, Covid-19, locusts and climate change in Ethiopia. We continue to be committed to ensuring that UK aid is spent as effectively as possible to help the poorest and most vulnerable people in Ethiopia.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo: Overseas Aid**

**07 Jun 2021 | 7262**

**Asked by: Layla Moran**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the value of Official Development Assistance funding spent in (a) the Democratic Republic of Congo and (b) Goma in each of the last five years.

**Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK is a longstanding donor to the DRC. Since 2013 the UK has spent over £1.1 billion GBP in bilateral ODA in the DRC. Over the last 5 years this is broken down as follows: 2016/17 - £129.5 million, 2017/18 - £166.2 million, 2018/19 - £203.7 million, 2019/20 - £184.6 million, 2020/21 - £132.4 million.

Through this funding, UK aid is:

- improving health services for up to 10 million people
- helping 4.7 million children under 5, women and adolescent girls to have better nutrition
- 4.6 million people will get sustainable access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene services
- helping 400,000 children get a decent education
- increased the income of over 800 thousand people, including 240,000 women.

Whilst we do not have disaggregated figures by province, a large part of our focus has been in the East, including in North and South Kivu.

### **Overseas Aid**

**29 Apr 2021 | 188114**

**Asked by: Sarah Champion**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the reductions in Official Development Assistance funding to programmes specifically addressing (a) water, sanitation and hygiene, (b) global LGBT rights, (c) gender equality and (d) violence against women and girls in (a) 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23.

**Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The decision to reduce the overall amount we spend on ODA is temporary, the Government will return to 0.7% once the fiscal situation allows and this is confirmed in the Integrated Review. On this specific issues highlighted in the question, the UK remains committed to advancing gender equality with the

Gender Equality Act 2014 legally requiring all overseas development funding to meaningfully consider the impact of how it will contribute to reducing gender inequality. The UK also remains committed to tackling all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and we are combining our aid programming, policy leadership and diplomatic strength to take full advantage of the opportunities that 2021 offers to drive more concerted global action, including co-leading a global 'Action Coalition' on gender based violence as part of Generation Equality. We remain a leading global voice on LGBT rights and continue to fund projects in support of this aim. Our support to global health - which embraces many aspects of WASH, also remains a top priority for the UK Aid budget.

Final audited spend for 2020/21 will be published in the Annual Report and Accounts. Final 2020 spend will be published in Statistics on International Development in the autumn this year and will contain detailed breakdowns of the UK's ODA spend for 2020.

### **Overseas Aid**

**27 Apr 2021 | 185988**

#### **Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 April 2021, HCWS935 on FCDO Update, which countries his Department includes as part of (a) East Africa, (b) the Indo-Pacific and (c) South Asia; and how much Official Development Assistance was allocated to each of those regions in (i) 2019-20 and (ii) 2020-21.

#### **Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

In reference to the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS), the following countries were included: East Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda.

Indo-Pacific and South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, China, Indonesia and Myanmar.

The Statistics on International Development (SID) National Statistics, published on GOV.UK, provides an overview of all UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

ODA is an international measure and is collected and reported on a calendar year basis. UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021, via Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020. As such we present ODA spend below for 2019 only.

Using the WMS definition of countries included in the East Africa region, the FCDO provided £1,375 million of bilateral ODA to East Africa in 2019.

In the WMS, countries in South Asia are included within the term of the 'Indo-Pacific'. Using the WMS definition of countries included in the Indo-Pacific region, the FCDO provided £537 million of bilateral ODA (not including Afghanistan and Pakistan), and £501 million of bilateral ODA to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

These regions will also receive aid from multilaterals, to which the UK contributes. The UK imputed multilateral estimates are published in SID table "Table A10":

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/967844/Table\\_A10.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/967844/Table_A10.ods)

### **Overseas Aid**

**22 Apr 2021 | 183108**

#### **Asked by: Yasmin Qureshi**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the Official Development Assistance his Department disbursed to fragile and conflict affected states for the financial years (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018, (e) 2019 and (f) 2020.

#### **Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

All ODA spending is published in the Statistics on International Development (SID). The SID National Statistics report, published on the gov.uk website, provides an overview of all official UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA). This includes breakdowns by country and sector. UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021, via Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020.

The SID publishes a country total for each of the Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS) states, but does not produce a total figure for FCAS states. Historically, DFID has spent over 50% of its ODA in fragile states. The most up to date published data on DFID ODA spend in fragile and conflict affected states is available on the government page for DFID results (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-results-estimates-2015-to-2020>). Supporting the development of fragile states will remain a priority for FCDO.

### Overseas Aid: Gender Based Violence

03 Mar 2021 | 157302

**Asked by: Anthony Mangnall**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the UK's Official Development Assistance was spent on projects tackling gender-based violence in 2019.

**Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We estimate that in 2019, the UK spent roughly 0.4% of its ODA budget on projects dedicated to tackling gender-based violence and violence against women and girls. To break down further, UK bilateral spend on such projects in 2019 was at least £47.1 million, and UK imputed multilateral share of spend was £12.4 million for 2018. We estimate that in 2018, roughly 0.31% of the UK's ODA budget was spent on tackling gender-based violence and violence against women and girls (£32.6 million bilateral and £12.4 million multilateral). Figures are likely to be underestimations due to programme recording under additional codes, such as humanitarian. Figures for the UK Imputed Multilateral Share 2019 will be published shortly.

### Overseas Aid: Research

08 Feb 2021 | 148780

**Asked by: Chi Onwurah**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of research projects that will be cancelled or paused as a result of reductions in the Official Development Assistance funded R&D budget.

**Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The economic impact of the COVID pandemic has forced the government to take the difficult decision to temporarily reduce ODA to 0.5% of GNI. The Foreign Secretary has set out a strategic approach to ensure maximum impact for our aid spend. This includes the use of ODA to support research that can provide new solutions to critical challenges in development.

In January the Foreign Secretary laid a Written Ministerial Statement in Parliament summarising the overall departmental cross-government allocations of ODA spend for 2021. Individual departments will now work through the implications of their spending allocation for the research programmes and activities they manage.

Difficult decisions will be necessary. Ministers will be engaged during February and March on spending plans for financial year 2021/22. I am not yet able to comment on implications for specific research programmes.

### Overseas Aid

11 Jan 2021 | 133004

#### **Asked by: Patrick Grady**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the amount of funding that will become available to his Department to spend as Official Development Assistance once the UK has met all outstanding commitments to the European Development Fund.

#### **Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK's contribution to the European Development Fund (EDF) for 2021 onwards will gradually reduce on an annual basis as programmes are finalised. In 2019, the contribution to the EDF was £852,683,097 and for 2020 it was £371,142,678. In late 2020, the Commission estimated that the UK's share of the EDF will be EURO 1,527,732,926 (approx. £1,374,107,687) for the four year period 2021-2024. The UK ODA that the FCDO will have available to spend once the UK has met all outstanding commitments to the EDF will be calculated, audited and officially reported on once all EDF programmes are implemented and finalised and the total UK commitments fulfilled.

### Overseas Aid

04 Dec 2020 | 121159

#### **Asked by: Jon Trickett**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the revenue that will accrue to the public purse from reducing overseas aid expenditure from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of gross national income in each year up to 2025.

#### **Answering member: Steve Barclay | Department: Treasury**

The Spending Review 2020 allocated £10bn for Official Development Assistance to spend in the financial year 21/22.

On 25 November the Office for Budget Responsibility published its Economic and Fiscal Outlook. This forecasts Gross National Income (GNI) for the 2021 calendar year to be £2138.6bn. 0.7% of this GNI estimate is £14.97bn and 0.5% of this GNI estimate is £10.69bn.

Financial year allocations for subsequent years will be decided at future Spending Reviews. The Government intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows.

## 5.2

## British Council

### **British Council: Coronavirus**

**30 Jun 2020 | 63338**

**Asked by: Chi Onwurah**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) amount of revenue lost by the British Council in English teaching abroad programmes as a result of the covid-19 pandemic and (b) length of time it will take the British Council to return to pre-covid-19 revenue levels.

**Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The British Council's commercial income has been heavily hit by Covid-19. We are currently finalising the terms of a £60m loan which will stabilize the Council's financial situation until mid-August 2020, while we conduct a strategic review of the Council's future strategy, operations and long-term sustainable funding models. Discussions are ongoing about the recommendations of this review.

## 6 Debates

### 6.1 Official Development Assistance

#### 0.7% Official Development Assistance Target

08 Jun 2021 | Emergency debates | House of Commons | 696 cc855-903  
Motion that this House has considered the matter of the 0.7% official development assistance target.

#### Official Development Assistance

07 Jun 2021 | Debates | House of Commons | 696 cc703-4  
Motion under Standing Order No 24. Allowed by Speaker.

#### Official Development Assistance

09 Jul 2020 | Estimates days | House of Commons | 678 cc1222-1201  
Main estimates (2019-21). Second estimates day (part one).

#### Official Development Assistance Target

13 Jan 2020 | Adjournment debates | House of Commons | 669 cc855-864  
Agreed to on question.

### 6.2 British Council

#### British Council and the Integrated Review

04 Mar 2021 | Adjournment debates | House of Commons | 690 cc495-500  
Agreed to on question.

## 7

## Statements

### 7.1

## Official Development Assistance

### Treasury update

13 May 2021 | HCWS25

**Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay):** I would like to update the House on the Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocation by department, 2020-21.

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's provisional Statistics on International Development confirmed that the UK met the target to spend 0.7% of gross national income on Official Development Assistance in the 2020 calendar year (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-provisional-uk-aid-spend-2020>).

Following the end of the 2020/21 financial year, we are now publishing the total ODA allocations to departments and cross-government funds for 2020/21, as set by HM Treasury at the 2019 Spending Round and subsequently adjusted through supplementary estimates 2020/21.

The below allocations show the revised financial year budget for 2020/21 compared to SR19 allocations. As set out in the Official Development Assistance spending for 2020: First Secretary of State's letter published on 22 July, last summer the Government identified a package of possible reductions in its planned ODA spend for the calendar year 2020, which included arrangements to tailor spending further during the remaining months to enable the Government to manage ODA spend against an uncertain 0.7% position. That package included underspends, delaying activity and stopping some spend (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/official-development-assistance-oda-spending-for-2020-first-secretary-of-states-letter/official-development-assistance-oda-spending-for-2020-first-secretary-of-states-letter>).

The Foreign Secretary led a cross-government review of how ODA is allocated for 2021/22 against the Government's priorities after the 2020 Spending Review. The final allocations were provided in a Written Ministerial Statement on the 26 January 2021 (HCWS735).

**Departmental ODA allocations, 2020/21**

ODA allocation by department (£m)	2020-21 allocations made at the 2019 Spending Review	Revised 2020-21 allocations
FCDO	11,865	11,075
BEIS	1,406	1,281
CSSF	687	644
HO	482	482
DHSC	301	273
Prosperity Fund	295	237
DEFRA	95	95
Other	58	54

[1] The FCDO total for SR19 is constructed using the original DFID (accounting for reclassified R&D confirmed at SB20) and FCO SR19 allocations.

[2] These figures do not account for budget exchanges or transfers that are agreed and occur between departments at mains and supplementary estimates.

[3] Departmental ODA outturn figures may differ from allocations due to transfers undertaken and agreed between departments, budget exchanges, and any financial year underspend that may occur.

[4] ODA allocations are adjusted as needed at fiscal events in line with OBR projections.

[5] ODA in cross-government funds (CSSF and Prosperity Fund) is spent by several government departments.

[6] "Other" includes DfE, DCMS, DWP, MOD, HMRC, HMT, ONS and Barnett given to the devolved administrations as a result of UK Government spend on ODA.

**FCDO Update**

21 Apr 2021 | HCWS935

**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab)****UK Official Development Assistance departmental allocations 2021-22**

The FCDO has responsibility for delivering £8,115m of Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend this year, approximately 80% of total UK ODA. I have recently concluded the FCDO's internal business planning process to allocate this budget for 2021/22 in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate as a result of COVID. This statement updates the House on the conclusions of that process.

Throughout the business planning process, we strived to ensure that every penny of the FCDO's ODA spend brings maximum strategic coherence, impact and value for taxpayers' money.

The resulting portfolio marks a strategic shift, putting our aid budget to work alongside our diplomatic network, our science and technology expertise and our economic partnerships in tackling global challenges. We will focus on core HMG priorities for poverty reduction, including getting more girls into school, providing urgent humanitarian support to those who need it most, and tackling global threats like climate change, COVID recovery and other international health priorities. Based on OECD data for 2020, the UK will be the third largest donor within the G7 as a percentage of GNI.

The Integrated Review has helped guide the process, by setting out how an independent and sovereign global Britain will act as a force for good and use its influence to shape the future international order. To deliver that vision I have allocated resources to the seven priorities I set out to Parliament on 26 November:

- **Climate and biodiversity.** FCDO will maintain a strong climate and biodiversity portfolio of £534m as we host COP26. In total, the FCDO will deliver more than £941m of activities this year, across all themes, that count towards the UK's flagship £11.6bn International Climate Finance target
- **Global health security.** FCDO will spend £1,305m on global health. We will focus on the UK's position at the forefront of the international response to Covid-19, through our commitments to COVAX, GAVI and WHO, and through bilateral spend where the need is greatest in Africa.
- **Girls' education.** FCDO will spend £400m on girls' education. We will invest directly in over 25 countries, helping to achieve the global target to get 40 million girls into education and demonstrating our commitment at this year's Global Partnership for Education summit.
- **Humanitarian preparedness and response.** FCDO will spend £906m to maintain the UK's role as a force for good at times of crisis, focusing our work on those countries most affected by risk of famine, including Yemen, Syria, Somalia, and South Sudan. A £30m crisis reserve will enable us to respond rapidly to new crises.
- **Science & Technology.** FCDO will make £251m of R&D investments across all seven themes of this strategy, with £38m targeted directly at science and technology including new innovations to tackle development challenges, including innovations in satellite imagery and AI to support humanitarian responses.
- **Open societies and conflict resolution.** FCDO will spend £419m to harness the UK's unique strengths in conflict management and resolution, and to project our support for democratic values and institutions, human rights, and freedom of religious belief. We will further drive impact and

support democratic values and institutions through our diplomacy, including our new sanctions policy, which will shortly be extended to cover corruption. We have also protected Civil Society programmes, particularly Comic Relief, Commonwealth Veterans, Jo Cox Memorial grants within UK Aid Direct, UK Aid Match and VSO.

- **Economic development and trade.** FCDO will spend £491m to support new trade relationships with developing country partners, complementing our wider multilateral and capital investments to build the trade and investment partners of the future. We will use CDC and multilateral partners to drive mutually beneficial growth with strategic partners in circumstances where private sector investment is not practicable.

A further £3,159m will meet the government's cross-cutting contributions to multilateral partners and global funds, including our pledge to remain the largest donor to IDA19, the African Development Fund, and other multilateral development banks; support Arms-Length Bodies such as the British Council; and cover FCDO operating costs. This is complemented by the ODA spent by other government departments, which I set out in a Written Ministerial Statement on 26 January 2021.

Within this framework, I have also ensured that the UK is able to exert maximum influence as a force for good in Africa and strategically tilt towards the Indo-Pacific. FCDO will spend around half its bilateral ODA budget in Africa, where human suffering remains most acute, including a major shift to East Africa to reflect the UK's unique role and clear national strategic interest. One third of FCDO bilateral ODA will be spent in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia, in support of our deeper engagement in that region, promoting open societies, reinforcing trade links and promoting climate change collaboration.

In China, I have reduced FCDO's ODA for programme delivery by 95% to £0.9m (with additional ODA in this year only to meet the contractual exit costs of former programmes). The remaining £900,000 will fund programmes on open societies and human rights.

The UK remains a world leader in international development, not only through the impact of these financial allocations but also through the creation of the FCDO, integrating diplomacy and development to deliver greater impact. We will return to our commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income on ODA when the fiscal situation allows.

## Official Development Assistance

26 Nov 2020 | 684 cc1017-422

**Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I will make a statement to the House on official development assistance. The House will know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor updated the House yesterday on the economic challenges posed by covid-19. It is a truly sobering assessment. The UK is facing the worst economic contraction in almost 300 years and a budget deficit of close to £400 billion—double what we faced in the last financial crisis. Britain is responding to a health emergency, but also an economic emergency, and every penny of public spending will rightly come under intense scrutiny by our constituents.

Given the impact of the global pandemic on the economy and, as a result, the public finances, we have concluded after extensive consideration—and, I have to say, with regret—that we cannot for the moment meet our target of spending 0.7% of gross national income on ODA, and we will move to a target of 0.5% next year. Let me reassure the House that this is a temporary measure. It is a measure we have taken as a matter of necessity, and we will return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation permits.

The relevant legislation, the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015, envisages circumstances in which the 0.7% target may not be met, in particular in the context of economic pressures. The Act provides for accountability to Parliament in that event, and I will of course report to the House in the proper way. Equally, given the requirements of the Act, the fact that we cannot at this moment predict with certainty when the current fiscal circumstances will have sufficiently improved and our need to plan accordingly, we will need to bring forward legislation in due course.

We are not alone in facing these painful choices. All countries are reconciling themselves not just to the health impact of the pandemic, but the economic impact of covid-19. It is worth saying that on the 2019 OECD data, only one other G20 member allocated 0.5% or more of GNI to development spending, and that was before the pandemic. Many countries are reappraising their spending plans, as we have been forced to do. As a result, we nevertheless expect our development spending next year to total around £10 billion, maintaining our status as one of the leading countries in the world in ODA spend.

I can reassure the House that we will retain our position as a leader in the global fight against poverty. We will remain committed to following the rules set by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, and we will ensure the maximum impact from our aid through the strategic integration we are driving as a result of the merger at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the strategic thinking that is informed by the integrated

review, and the further changes we are now making on how we allocate ODA to support a more integrated and overarching approach.

Let me say a little more on that integrated approach. Our starting point is the integrated review, with which we are setting the long-term strategic aims of our international work, based on our values and grounded in the British national interest. To achieve this, we will be taking a far more joined-up approach right across the breadth of government. That is why the Prime Minister created the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, bringing diplomacy and development together, in lockstep with the work of our other Departments. ODA is a vital, central and absolutely indispensable element of that strategic approach, but to maximise its effectiveness it must be used in combination with our development policy expertise, our security deployments and support abroad, and the strengthened global co-operation that we drive through our diplomatic network. We make our aid go further by bringing it together with all these other elements, and by making sure that they are all aligned and pushing in the same direction.

Last week, the Prime Minister set out how we are strengthening our defence and security capabilities. That will boost our standing in the world, while also contributing to our development efforts, including our soft power abroad. The clearest illustration of that is the peacekeeping that we do. We have British troop deployments in Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, which work hand in hand with our development and diplomatic efforts. Indeed, we are demonstrating that with our latest deployment of 300 UK troops to Mali. Our security and defence budget also helps countries to deal with new, emerging and evolving threats, for example, in supporting Nigeria and Kenya to assess and strengthen their cyber-security resilience. We will set out the full detail of the integrated review early in the new year, as we launch our presidencies of the G7 and COP26, with 2021 a year of leadership for global Britain as a force for good in the world.

This new strategic approach will allow us to drive greater impact from our £10 billion of ODA spending next year, notwithstanding the very difficult financial pressures we face. I will prioritise that £10 billion of spending in five particular ways. First, we will prioritise measures to tackle climate change, protect biodiversity and finance low-carbon and climate-resilient technologies, such as solar and wind, in poor and emerging economies. I can reassure the House that we will maintain our commitment to double international climate finance, which is vital to maintain our ambitions in this area as we host COP26. We will leverage our aid support through our diplomatic network, to galvanise global action and to make sure that countries come forward with ambitious, game-changing commitments in the lead-up to November next year.

Secondly, we will prioritise measures to tackle covid, and promote wider international health security. We will maintain our position as a world leader, investing in Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, COVAX, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the International Finance Facility for Immunisation. We will continue to support and strengthen the World Health Organisation, as the second largest state donor; I spoke to Dr Tedros just yesterday about our efforts in that regard. We will also use all of our other levers to maximise British impact. For example, we have magnified our COVAX contribution through our diplomatic efforts, which helped to convince the board of the World Bank to announce additional funding last month of up to \$12 billion for covid vaccines, tests and treatments. Again, I spoke to World Bank president David Malpass just last night about our important collaboration in that area.

Thirdly, we continue to prioritise girls' education, because it is the right thing to do and because the fortunes of so many of the poorest countries depend on tapping the full potential of all their people, which must include women and girls in education. Our global target, working with our partners, is to get 40 million girls into education and have 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10. It is a major priority for global Britain as a leading supporter of the Global Partnership for Education, and just next year we will raise \$4 billion globally, including through our UK-Kenya summit.

Fourthly, we will focus ODA on resolving conflicts, alleviating humanitarian crises, defending open societies, and promoting trade and investment, including by increasing UK partnerships in science research and technology, because these are the building blocks of development and they require a long-term strategic commitment.

Finally, at all times we will look to improve our delivery of aid in order to increase the impact that our policy interventions have on the ground, in the countries and the communities that they are designed to benefit and help. We will strengthen accountability and value for money, reducing reliance on expensive consultants for project management and strengthening our in-house capability to give us more direct oversight and control, including by removing the total operating cost limits that were introduced when the Department for International Development was established—a limit that applied only to DFID.

As a result of this spending review, the FCDO will take on a greater role in ensuring the coherence and co-ordination of development-related spending right across Whitehall. To maximise the strategic focus that I have talked about, I will run a short cross-Government process to review, appraise and finalise all the UK's ODA allocations for next year in the lead-up to Christmas.

This is a moment of unprecedented challenge. On all sides of the House, we are defined by our willingness to make the difficult choices, not just the easy

ones. With the approach that I have set out, we will maintain our international ambition. We will deliver greater impact from our aid budget at a time of unparalleled financial pressure.

Like many in the House, I am proud of our aid spend. I am proud of the big-hearted generosity of the British public, which we amplify with our diplomatic energy on the world stage. I am proud of the huge amount we do to support the poorest and the most vulnerable, right around the world. The United Kingdom is out there every single day—our people on the ground in the disaster zones, in the refugee camps, tackling famine and drought, helping lift people out of poverty, striving to resolve conflicts and striving to build a more hopeful future for the millions of people struggling and striving against the odds. Even in the toughest economic times, we will continue that mission. We will continue to lead. I commend this statement to the House.

## 7.2

## British Council

### British Council

09 Jun 2021 | 812 cc1437-1442

### **Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon):**

The following Answer to an Urgent Question was given in the House of Commons on Tuesday 8 June.

“The British Council is a crucial part of the UK’s presence overseas and a key soft power asset. It works in more than 100 countries to promote UK education, arts and culture, and the English language. The Government remain committed to the British Council. As the integrated review made clear, we value the influence of the British Council. We agreed a 2021-22 spending review settlement totalling £189 million, which is a 26% increase in funding from 2020-21. The British Council has not been cut. Although we have had to make difficult decisions to cut in other areas, we have increased the money we are providing to the British Council. Not only have we increased funding; we have provided a rescue package during the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes a loan facility of up to £145 million, with a further £100 million loan being finalised to support restructuring. We have also provided a letter of comfort to ensure that the council can meet its financial obligations.

We found this funding for the council in the context of an extremely challenging financial environment. As a result of the pandemic, the UK is facing the worst economic contraction in over 300 years and a budget deficit of close to £400 billion. This package is necessarily accompanied by changes

to the council's governance essential to modernise the council. These include measures to update the British Council's charitable objects, to focus the council on its core pillars, to streamline its governance structures and to agree new key performance indicators and targets to monitor council performance in key areas. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and British Council officials have worked together to ensure that the council will align even more closely with the Government's strategic priorities and can focus on doing what it does best.

Having worked closely with the British Council, we are reviewing physical council presence in-country as part of this modernisation process. These changes will be minimal, but it is a strategic mistake to judge the impact of the council in a digital age solely by the physical office in-country. Rather, it should be judged by its operational presence, by the digital services we are investing in and which have expanded rapidly as a result of Covid, and by its ability to operate through regional hubs and third parties. The Covid crisis has changed the way we all have to operate. We have also implemented a new evaluation mechanism, so that when Ministers travel, they can assess the value for money and the impact provided by the British Council on soft power. This is a strong rescue and reform package. The council will also shortly have a new chief executive officer, so it will have strong leadership and a governance structure to make it viable and to reinforce its role as a force for good."

### [British Council Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20](#)

03 Mar 2021 | HCWS817

**Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams):** Copies of the British Council's Annual Report and Accounts for the 2019-20 financial year have been placed in the libraries of both Houses.

The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. As the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, it makes a significant contribution to projecting British values overseas and generating soft power for the UK in return. In doing so it makes a lasting difference to the UK's security, prosperity and influence.

The British Council is the world's leading cultural relations organisation, with a reach in 2019-20 of 983 million people. This included 76 million direct interactions, through a presence in over 100 countries.

The Council received £187m grant-in-aid, including £161m ODA, from the FCO in 2019/20.

The Report can also be found at the British Council's website: [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org).

### **British Council**

11 Jun 2020 | HCWS285

**Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams):** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has sought an advance of £60 million from the Contingencies Fund in order to provide a loan of up to £60 million to the British Council, who are a key driver of UK soft power overseas. The British Council's commercial income has been heavily hit by Covid-19, leading to significant losses and the risk of insolvency. The British Council have taken measures to reduce their deficit and cut costs, and the FCO has supported the British Council in accessing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in line with the scheme's eligibility criteria for public sector employers, as well as similar schemes in other countries. This has helped them support many of their workforce, and those employed through its partners, funded through the commercial side of their business. The FCO is also working closely with the British Council on its future strategy, operations and long-term sustainable funding models.

However, without additional support from Government the British Council will shortly become insolvent. The FCO is therefore seeking a Contingencies Fund advance to provide an initial loan of up to £60m to the British Council, drawn down in tranches depending upon need and contingent on the approval of FCO and HM Treasury, to stabilise their financial situation until mid-August 2020. The terms of the loan will be agreed with HM Treasury.

Parliamentary approval for additional capital of £60,000,000 will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £60,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

## 8 Early Day Motions

### 8.1 Official Development Assistance

#### Official Development Assistance 0.7 per cent GNI commitment

**EDM 1285 (session 2019-21)**

**16 December 2020**

**Layla Moran**

That this House notes UK Official Development Assistance spending has helped millions and stands as a testament to the best of British values; observes that the Government's decision to cut development spending to 0.5 per cent of GNI breaks its manifesto promise to the British people and has serious consequences for the world's poorest people; notes that despite claims from the Government, primary legislation is not needed to temporarily cut the development budget, and that such legislation would only be needed were the cut to be permanent; calls on the Government to maintain the 0.7 per cent commitment set out in the International Development (Official Development Assistance) Act 2015; and further calls on the Government to retain an Independent Commission for Aid Impact, the International Development Committee and a Development Minister in Cabinet.

### 8.2 British Council

#### Pay of British Council workers

**EDM 1478 (session 2019-21)**

**9 February 2021**

**Paula Barker**

That this House appreciates the invaluable role played by the British Council in promoting arts and culture, education and the English language overseas and the benefits it brings to the UK; believes that workers employed by the British Council deserve to be remunerated accordingly; regrets the anxiety caused by the Government's delay in responding to requests for funding any pay settlement until December 2020 and subsequent refusal of even a token payment, which resulted in no pay award being made throughout the whole of 2020; believes that the British Council is alone among government bodies in failing to make any pay award whatsoever to staff in a year when the covid-19 pandemic has caused grave financial insecurity; and therefore supports members of the Public and Commercial Services Union in calling on the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to ensure that British

Council employees receive a fair pay settlement in recognition of their work and have parity and equal treatment with other civil service departments, non-departmental public bodies and organisations.

### **Future of the British Council**

**EDM 375 (session 2019-21)**

**23 April 2020**

**Chris Stephens**

That this House notes with concern the impact of the global Coronavirus crisis on the ability of the British Council to continue its work across the world; notes that the British Council was founded in 1934 and is a Non-Departmental Public Body which assists in the teaching of English in over 50 countries and employs 1175 staff, 938 of whom are employed within the UK; further notes that in the past year over 4 million people have taken an English exam with the council generating £125 million for UK exam bodies and that in the last financial year the income of the Council exceeded £1.25 billion; is concerned that necessary measures taken in relation to Covid-19 have resulted in the closure of 203 out of 221 schools run by the British Council as well as the closure of 26 out of 41 test centres; is aware that the closures have had a devastating impact on the financial reserves of the council with funding likely to run out by May; further notes that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has provided some additional funding however this is unlikely to enable the Council to survive post Covid-19 due to a continued funding gap which may lead to mass redundancies and pay cuts in the near future; and; calls on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to commit to immediate, long term funding to ensure the continuation of this vital British organisation.

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