

Appendix B – 2021 Corpus

The dialogues were handpicked from the official House of Commons proceedings transcript known as the online Hansard. The original transcripts are available at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/>

PMQs 19 May 2021

Dialogue 1

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): There were no new measures in the Queen's Speech to tackle youth unemployment. There are over 500,000 unemployed young people in this country, yet the Government's flagship youth unemployment scheme is nowhere near sufficient, only helping around one in 25 young people. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Nick Smith) and I have already requested a meeting with the Minister to discuss local concerns from training providers and businesses. What exactly will the Prime Minister do to address that and to safeguard the future of a generation of young people in this country?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): We are putting £2 billion into the kickstart programme for 18 to 24-year-olds and investing massively in the restart programme for those who have been longer out of work. I can also tell the hon. Gentleman that the businesses I talk to are currently facing shortages of workers in many sectors, and we will work flat out to ensure that we get those who want jobs to those who need workers.

PMQs 26 May 2021

Dialogue 2

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance) [V]: The EU settlement scheme closes on 30 June. While the Home Office has finally published guidance on late applications the Government are failing to provide clarity. What will happen to those who miss the deadline and then fall under the remit of illegal working legislation? Can the Prime Minister assure the House that EU citizens or non-EU family members who miss the deadline will not face potential criminal liability if they continue to go into work?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): I am sure the law will be extremely merciful to anybody who finds themselves in a difficult position, but I would just remind the hon. Gentleman that so far 5.4 million EU nationals have applied successfully for the EU settlement scheme, which as far as I remember is about 2 million more EU nationals than we thought we were in the country in the first place.

PMQs 16 June 2021

Dialogue 3

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): Keith, a hotel manager in Oxford, contacted me last week because he is worried. Even if this country does open up in the next few weeks, he will not be able to run at full capacity due to chronic staff shortages. Local staff are leaving the industry because of the uncertainty caused by this Government's bungled handling of the pandemic. The EU staff have already left because of the botched handling of Brexit and he cannot recruit from abroad because of the damaging new immigration policy. This is the Prime Minister's wake-up call. Oxfordshire's economy alone relies on the hospitality industry to the tune of £2.5 billion. Will the Government introduce a covid recovery visa to help Keith to recruit the staff he desperately needs?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): It is absolutely true that as we open up our economy there are more vacancies, which is great. We also have large numbers of young people in this country who need jobs and large numbers of people who are still furloughed. What we want to see is those people coming forward to get those jobs. Of course, we will retain an open and flexible approach towards allowing talent to come in from overseas.

PMQs 30 June 2021

Dialogue 4

Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con): After yesterday's game, many of our German friends are heading home, but, does my right hon. Friend agree that, as the song goes, if they want to stay here drinking all our beer, they need to join the 5.6 million people who have already successfully applied for the EU settlement scheme forthwith, before today's deadline?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): Yes. I thank my hon. Friend, who is absolutely right. I am thrilled that an astonishing 5.6 million EU nationals have already applied for this wonderful scheme. I encourage anybody who is still eligible to submit their applications today.

Dialogue 5

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I join you, Mr Speaker, in wishing Ian Davis all the best for his retirement and thank him for the service that he has given to the Scots Guards and in this House. He has truly been a friend and a sane voice to give guidance to those of us on these Benches when we have needed it, and I thank him very much for that. Can I congratulate England on their victory last night and wish them all the best in the tournament ahead? Of course, they have done well: they have won most of their matches, with the exception of the game against Scotland, where they failed to even score a goal —nae luck.

In July 2019, the Prime Minister gave an unequivocal guarantee to EU nationals living in the UK. He said that they "will have the absolute certainty of the right to live and remain." Less than two years later, hundreds of thousands of EU nationals have been left in limbo, including thousands of children. While the settlement scheme deadline falls today, we know there are hundreds of thousands of unprocessed cases. It is simply unacceptable that their rights will be diminished by the failures of this Government. Will the Prime Minister honour his word, give certainty, and scrap the disastrous settled status deadline before we face another Tory Windrush?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): I thank the right hon. Gentleman, and I just repeat what I said earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher): I think it is fantastic that 5.6 million people have applied. We are processing all the applications as fast as we possibly can, and clearly the most important thing is for anybody who still has not applied to get their application in today.

Ian Blackford: The issue is that there is a backlog of hundreds of thousands of cases because of delays on decisions. Overnight, thousands of our friends and neighbours could become illegal immigrants. They are living in fear for their jobs, their families and their livelihoods, all because this Prime Minister will not keep his word. We know all too well the experience of this Government's Home Office: dawn raids, vulnerable people deported, and a hostile environment for the Windrush generation. Scotland's message to EU citizens is: you are welcome here, we want you to stay, this is your home, but this UK Government are causing EU citizens untold stress. One woman who has been in the UK for 44 years says she feels suicidal. Another says she feels like a third-rate citizen. This is shameful. Will the Government now do the right thing and scrap the deadline and introduce automatically granted settled status, or will the Prime Minister's legacy be the ridiculous removal of NHS staff, our local community workers, our teachers and many more who have made their homes here?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): It is obvious from the statistics I have already quoted that this is an outstanding success, because we have had huge numbers of people applying. There may be people who still have to apply—there have been several extensions; it is five years now since the Brexit referendum—but we have funded 72 organisations to help vulnerable EU citizens understand what their rights are and make the applications. Anybody applying within the deadline will of course have their case dealt with, and I urge them to get on with it.

Dialogue 6

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): On Friday, I visited David McCutcheon, the chief executive of Bullet Express, which is a haulage firm in the Baillieston area of my Constituency. Everybody in this House knows that there have been huge problems with the shortage of HGV drivers in this country, and that has only been compounded further by Brexit. So I have a simple question for the Prime Minister: why can we not add HGV drivers to the UK shortage occupation list?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): I will certainly look at what the hon. Member is proposing, but I think the most important thing is to get our entire workforce back at work. There are currently millions of people still on furlough, and of course there are labour shortages at the moment, but we need to get people back into work, and that is why we have to continue to roll out the vaccines in the way that we are.

PMQs 21 July 2021

Dialogue 7

Cherilyn Mackrory (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): Last week, I met one of Truro's daffodil farmers. There is real concern in the industry that they will not be able to have their daffodil pickers in the fields this January. I know that the DWP is working with the Duchy College and is hoping to run a local sector-based work academy, but this is a complex issue requiring a long-term solution. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend would meet me and other Cornish MPs to see how we could resolve this in the long term.

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): I am only too happy to meet my hon. Friend at any time. I can assure her that we want to find the workforce to pick the flowers—the beautiful Cornish daffodils—that should not be “born to blush unseen”, if I remember the quote right. They should be properly picked. In addition to developing the local labour force, and making sure that we line up younger people and people across Cornwall with the opportunities that there are, she must not forget that, thanks to the EU settlement scheme, there are 6 million EU nationals still entitled to live and work in this country, who have taken advantage of that scheme. Never let it be said that we have done an injustice to that group.

PMQs 8 September 2021

Dialogue 8

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC): At a time of widespread concern about the HGV driver crisis, I have been contacted by a number of drivers from Ceredigion who believe that the decision to increase their hours will fail to solve the problem. It is clear to them that a long-term solution requires improved working conditions, action on the 2018 Government report on parking spaces and driver facilities, and measures to reduce waiting times at distribution centres. Will the Prime Minister consider those proposals, and to what timescale are his Government working to fix the crisis?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his question. We are working with industry to get more people into HGV driving, which is a great and well-remunerated profession, by, for instance, ramping up vocational test capacity and funding

apprenticeships for people training to be lorry drivers. As the House heard earlier, the career structure of HGV drivers is affecting countries throughout the European Union. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman take up his proposals directly with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Dialogue 9

Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD): Funding for organisations helping vulnerable or hard-to-reach citizens with the EU resettlement scheme is due to end at the end of this month. My own constituent tried to get assistance from the local citizens advice bureau in March, but the funding cuts meant that it could not help him. He has been unable to get support from the resolution centre either, and has now been refused settled status. Can I ask the Prime Minister what practical support will be provided to EU citizens still navigating this system, and what he would advise my constituent to do to ensure that he has the right to stay in his home of 47 years?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): I am of course sorry to hear about the troubles that the hon. Lady's constituent is experiencing, but I remind her that under the EU settlement scheme we have helped almost 6 million people to settle in this country, which is double the number that was expected at the time of the Brexit referendum. That is a tribute to the compassion of this country and its willingness to help those who come here and make their lives here.

PMQs 15 September 2021

Dialogue 10

Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): Be it farm workers or lorry drivers, my employers are saying that they want more staff. What more can the Prime Minister do to increase the training and mobility of jobseekers to help them into the jobs they need?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out the problem of lorry driver shortages, which is affecting the whole world, from Europe to North America. What we are doing immediately is working to get out more licences. We are taking advantage of our post-Brexit freedom so that all the young thrusters on the Conservative Benches with a post-1997 driver's licence can now drive a vehicle with a trailer as well— everybody can drive a vehicle with a trailer as well. But after a long period of stagnation in wages for those in the road haulage industry, we are also seeing a long-overdue increase in wages. That is part of the same phenomenon that this Government are introducing and the Labour party is opposing.

Dialogue 11

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): By the time my wonderful friend Lynda went to the doctor, the cancer was already so advanced that she had only a few weeks to live. Many hon. Members have been through cancer and they know well that early detection saves lives. Unfortunately, of course, long waiting lists will make it more difficult to save lives. The real problem we have is a massive shortage, in the thousands, in the number of pathologists and radiologists to catch the cancers in the first place, and a massive shortage of oncologists and dermatologists to do the treatment. So regardless of the money, how are we going to make sure that we have the personnel, not in five or seven years' time, but now, to be able to save lives?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): First, I want to say how sad I am to hear about the hon. Gentleman's constituent Lynda. I think her experiences have been shared by literally millions of people in this country during the pandemic, because they have not been willing or able to get the oncology treatment that they need because of the pressure of covid on the system. The system is now coming back, trying to help everybody as fast as possible to fix the backlogs. So yes, it is

necessary to hire more nurses and doctors, and there about 10,000 more nurses now and about 6,000 more doctors—

Chris Bryant: Pathologists and radiologists.

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): The hon. Gentleman is totally right in what he says about radiologists and pathologists, but may I respectfully say to him that that must be done by means of the big powerful package that we put forward last week to raise the funding necessary? I believe his party should have supported that and it is incredible that it did not.

Dialogue 12

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): I know that my right hon. Friend wants to see the United Kingdom growing more crops. We are not going to blaze a trail to self-sufficiency by building over our finest agricultural land. That has to stop, now. On this, Back British Farming Day, we are in harvest time, and all is not safely gathered in. In three weeks, Thanet Earth in my constituency, which is one of the largest glasshouse companies in the country and grows tomatoes, has had to trash £320,000-worth of produce because there are no pickers and no drivers. Because of the lack of labour force, the crops are rotting in the fields and on trees. Will my right hon. Friend seek to introduce immediately a covid-recovery visa, so that this year's crops are not lost?

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): My right hon. Friend is absolutely right in what he says about the importance of buying British and eating British. Our food is the best in the world. He is also right to address the problems that we are currently seeing in the supply chain, but we are taking steps. Of course, it has been a problem for a long time, but we will use the seasonal agricultural workers scheme to ensure that British farms get the labour that they need.

PMQs 22 September 2021

Dialogue 13

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): All hon. Members enjoy the opportunity to eat British food, drink British drink and enjoy British flowers. I am joined by all of Cornwall's MPs in pressing the Home Secretary to renew the seasonal agricultural workers scheme for next year—that is 30,000 people—and also to allow them to pick daffodils. Will the Deputy Prime Minister please speak to the Home Secretary, to remind her of the urgency of getting that scheme renewed?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend is a powerful champion for his constituency and the region. I will of course pass on his suggestion and advice to the Home Secretary. I believe that she has been lobbied from various other quarters. We are very mindful of the impact on seasonal workers, and we will make sure we get the right balance.
