

The government is unable to say why it did not put basi...

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Further to my [blog post yesterday](#), quoting Lord Prem Sikka, who I have worked with for twenty years on tax justice issues, I note this exchange in which he was involved on the matter of tackling fraud within Covid loan and furlough applications [yesterday in the Lords](#):

Lord Sikka >

(Lab)

My Lords, two 30-second checks would have saved the Government billions of pounds. First, no one can open an ISA account without providing a national insurance number, but the Government did not require that information from anyone seeking furlough support. Secondly, all applicants for Covid loans should have been required to provide an HMRC reference number. That would have killed off all dormant companies and offshore tax haven companies. Will the Minister please explain why these two 30-second checks were not applied?

Viscount Younger of Leckie >

(Con)

That is a very fair question and of course the sort of detailed question that I cannot answer. In terms of the fraud that we are looking to identify as part of the loan book, as of 17 December 2021 some £67 million worth of claims had been settled for the loan scheme. Of those, £13 million for 337 facilities had been flagged by lenders as suspected fraud. That is the sort of detail that we want to get into.

Prem's questions make complete sense. I have not a clue what the answer means, and I am sure Prem has not either. It is gibberish, beyond the admission that the Viscount was unable to answer.