



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 March 2018 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:32 P.M., 16 March 2018). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Conditions of Employment

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[132396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is (a) conducting a review and (b) undertaking other work on the deregulation of employment rights.

Andrew Griffiths:

The Government's position on employment rights was set out recently in the Government Response to the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices, in which we committed to firm action and future legislation to enhance employment rights. We are currently consulting on how best to achieve this change.

■ Living Wage: Thornbury and Yate

Luke Hall: [\[132323\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people are estimated to benefit from the planned rise in the national living wage to £7.83 in Thornbury and Yate constituency.

Luke Hall: [\[132324\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people are estimated to benefit from the planned rise in the national living wage to £7.83 in south Gloucestershire.

Luke Hall: [\[132325\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy how many people are estimated to benefit from the planned rise in the national living wage to £7.83 in the South West.

Andrew Griffiths:

This Government is committed to building an economy that works for everyone. Through the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage we continue to ensure the lowest paid in our society are fairly rewarded for their contribution to the economy.

The National Minimum Wage (Amendment) 2018 Impact Assessment includes an assessment of the number of people the Government expects to benefit from the planned increase in the National Living Wage to £7.83:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2018/24/pdfs/ukia_20180024_en.pdf

Members: Correspondence**Drew Hendry:**[\[132308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to respond to the letter of the hon Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey of 4 of December 2017 on unfair delivery charges.

Andrew Griffiths:

A reply was sent on 16 March 2018.

Research: Scotland**Douglas Chapman:**[\[131396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is the Government's policy for Scotland to lead the UK in research and development investment.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The Industrial Strategy shows how the government plans to invest in R&D to transform the UK economy. To do this we need to build on research and innovation excellence across the UK.

The Science and Innovation Audits (SIAs) are identifying and validating areas of potential globally competitive advantage across the UK to provide evidence to help underpin future investment decisions. Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region's SIA on data driven innovation undertaken in wave 1 has helped to inform and evidence their Edinburgh Region City Deal which includes funding for innovation projects. Scottish SIAs in subsequent waves include the Offshore Renewable Energy SIA (North of England and Scotland) and the Enabling Technologies in Scotland's Central Belt SIA (Published in September 2017); as well as the Maximising the Marine Economy of the Highlands and Islands SIA and the Precision Medicine in Scotland SIA (due to be published in the Summer) which are likely to be utilised in similar ways contributing to both strategy and funding decisions.

In addition, the new £115m Strength in Places Fund will support areas right across the UK to build on existing strengths in science and innovation, where proposals can demonstrate a strong impact on local productivity and enhanced collaboration.

Small Businesses: Billing**Bill Esterson:**[\[132416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the oral contribution of the Hon. Member for Burton of 13 March 2018 whether he plans to publish the notes of his meeting on the Prompt Payment Code.

Andrew Griffiths:

The Department does not release information from meetings which may be sensitive to policy development. As announced at Spring Statement, the Department will launch a call for evidence on how to eliminate unfair payment practices to small

businesses. Stakeholder views from meetings surrounding late payment, such as the Prompt Payment Code, will feed in to this policy development.

Bill Esterson: [\[132420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the oral contribution of hon. Member for Burton of 13 March 2018, what plans he has to ensure that signatories to the Prompt Payment code comply with the requirements of the code.

Andrew Griffiths:

The Chartered Institute of Credit Management (CICM) administer the Prompt Payment Code on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). If suppliers believe that a signatory has breached the principles of the Code, they can raise a complaint with CICM who will investigate further on a case by case basis. At Spring Statement, my Rt hon Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that BEIS will lead on a call for evidence; this will consider evidence to ensure unfair payment practices are eliminated for small business.

Bill Esterson: [\[132424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to ensure that signatories to the Prompt Payment Code pay all invoices within 30 days.

Andrew Griffiths:

Signatories to the Prompt Payment Code undertake to pay 95% of their invoices within 60 days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If suppliers believe that a signatory has breached the principles of the Code, they can raise a complaint with the Chartered Institute of Credit Management who administer the Code on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS); they will then investigate further on a case by case basis. The government is serious about delivering a fair payment culture and at Spring Statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that BEIS will lead on a call for evidence; this will consider evidence to ensure unfair payment practices are eliminated for small business.

Bill Esterson: [\[132428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to require signatories to the Prompt Payment Code to ensure that the payment terms in the code are adopted throughout their supply chains.

Andrew Griffiths:

The Government supports the Prompt Payment Code as a voluntary set of best-practice principles. The Prompt Payment Code encourages good practice throughout the supply chain by requesting that lead suppliers encourage adoption of the Code throughout their own supply chains. At the Spring Statement my Rt hon Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that BEIS will lead on a call for evidence; this will consider evidence to ensure unfair payment practices are eliminated for small business.

■ Subscriptions: Repayments

Frank Field:

[\[132391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's policy is on consumers' rights to request a refund if they were not made aware that they were on an auto-renewal contract for subscription-based services.

Andrew Griffiths:

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 makes clear that terms and conditions need to be prominent and transparent, when a business offers a subscription service or other long-standing rolling type of agreement otherwise they are open to challenge.

Under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs), traders must from the outset provide consumers with clear and important information in relation to subscription charges and renewal information, so that they can make an informed decision. Automatic renewals without sufficient reminders can be deemed as unfair terms.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Drinking Water

Tim Farron:

[\[124508\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much money his Department has spent on bottled water in each year since 2010.

Oliver Dowden:

It is long standing Cabinet Office policy not to provide bottled water for meetings.

Bottled water is sold via vending machines and in the local catering outlets in 70 Whitehall.

Information on how much money the department have spent on bottled water is not held centrally and could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

■ Cabinet Office: Keith Cochrane

Ged Killen:

[\[124204\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many meetings with Ministers Keith Cochrane attended in his role on the Government Network of non-Executive directors.

Oliver Dowden:

[Holding answer 25 January 2018]: As a routine, departments publish quarterly details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations on GOV.UK, including those with representatives from companies such as Carillion. Cabinet Office returns can be viewed using the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministers-transparency-publications>

■ Cabinet Office: Presidents Club**Catherine West:** [\[124753\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what records his Department holds on whether Ministers or officials from Government Departments were invited to the Presidents Club Dinner on 18 January 2018.

Oliver Dowden:

[Holding answer 29 January 2018]: This information is not held by the Cabinet Office.

■ Cabinet Office: Written Questions**Emma Reynolds:** [\[125909\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to answer Question 123288 asked on 17 January 2018.

Oliver Dowden:

I refer my Hon. Friend to the answer to PQ123288 which was given on 1st February 2018.

■ Childcare Implementation Taskforce**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[129779\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the reason is for the omission of the Childcare Implementation Taskforce from the list of Cabinet Committees and Implementation Taskforces published on gov.uk.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[129780\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Childcare Implementation Taskforce has been disbanded.

Oliver Dowden:

The Childcare Implementation Taskforce focused on cross-government readiness for the rollout of a coherent and effective childcare offer to support parents to work. From 2017, we began rolling out 30 hours of free childcare to working families of 3 and 4 year olds; support with 20% of childcare costs (worth up to £2,000 per child per year) for children under 12 through Tax-Free Childcare; and up to 85% support with childcare costs in Universal Credit. The Government remains absolutely focused on ensuring that all eligible parents can access these services as efficiently as possible.

■ Civil Servants: Recruitment**Jon Trickett:** [\[128185\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many exceptions to the legal requirements set out in the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles there have been since 2010; and to which appointments those exceptions applied.

Oliver Dowden:

The Commission gathers information on the use of exceptions from departments annually. This is available at:

<http://civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk/appointments-exception-scs-pay-band-2-2/>

■ **DHL****Jon Trickett:**[\[125202\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons DHL is no longer a strategic supplier to Government.

Oliver Dowden:

[Holding answer 31 January 2018]: DHL was removed from the list of strategic suppliers following a decision by the Commercial Relationship Board in the Cabinet Office to prioritise those suppliers with the highest levels of criticality and the greatest levels of cross government presence.

The Government continually reviews its portfolio of strategic suppliers.

■ **Government Departments: Impact Assessments****Jo Stevens:**[\[124727\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many impact assessments Government Departments have conducted since 2015.

Oliver Dowden:

[Holding answer 29 January 2018]: I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ122152 on 6 th March.

■ **National Security****Tom Watson:**[\[124851\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the remit of the new National Security Communications Unit will be; and if he will make a statement.

Tom Watson:[\[124854\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the new National Security Communications Unit will be based in the (a) Government Communications Service, (b) National Security Secretariat or (c) elsewhere.

Tom Watson:[\[124855\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff and at what grades will be employed by the new National Security Communications Unit.

Tom Watson:[\[124856\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what resources he has allocated to the new National Security Communications Unit.

Oliver Dowden:

[Holding answer 29 January 2018]: The National Security Capability Review (NSCR) identifies areas where we can do further cross-government work, including as one example on our strategic communications. The NSCR will set out further details when published.

DEFENCE■ **Armed Forces: Dogs****Jamie Stone:**[\[131727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of euthanized military working dogs.

Guto Bebb:

Military Working Dogs (MWD) provide an invaluable service to our troops, and every effort is made to rehome them at the end of their service life. The Ministry of Defence's approach to rehoming is in accordance with the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes Code of Practice and is consistent with that taken by high profile, well respected animal charities.

Decisions are taken following an extensive assessment of the dogs and any potential new home. We seek to maximise the number that can be rehomed, including through work with animal charities and external behavioural experts.

■ **Armed Forces: Radio****Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[132375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects Morpheus will receive a supply of radios to enable them to transmit data from their platforms to other users.

Guto Bebb:

Morpheus will deliver a core component of the next generation of tactical Communication and Information Systems capability and will replace the in-service Bowman communications system. It will re-use those elements of the Bowman system that are still fit-for-purpose and this includes the Bowman radios in the early phase. This approach means that Morpheus will be able to transmit data between users across a network from the outset.

■ **Armoured Fighting Vehicles****Gerald Jones:**[\[131619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many expressions of interest his Department has received on the supply of the future Mechanised Infantry Vehicle.

Guto Bebb:

The Ministry of Defence has not received any Expressions of Interest. In 2016, it did conduct market analysis of the supply base for 8 x 8 Mechanised Infantry Vehicles via Defence Contracts On-Line; eight organisations returned questionnaires.

■ **Army Air Corps****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[131633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the current liability is of 661 Squadron Army Air Corps.

Guto Bebb:

For the liability of 1 Regiment Army Air Corps, of which 661 Squadron is a sub unit, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 March 2018 to Question 131578. The Department does not release details for sub units as to do so would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

Attachments:

1. 131633 - WQnA extract on MOD Army [131578 - WQnA extract.docx]

■ **Defence: Procurement****Wayne David:**[\[131476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the proportion of defence contracts that procured through single source contracts in each year since 2013.

Guto Bebb:

[Holding answer 12 March 2018]: Ministry of Defence trade, industry and contracts information is published annually on gov.uk. The latest statistics are at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-trade-industry-and-contracts-2017> and include data on the proportion of non-competitive contracts placed by number and value for the period requested.

■ **Defence: Scotland****Douglas Chapman:**[\[131535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of defence industry jobs have been located mainly in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Guto Bebb:

The table below shows the number of jobs in Scotland supported by Ministry of Defence (MOD) expenditure with UK industry and commerce. The MOD has only collected and published this data for each financial year since 2013/14, and so it is only available for the past four years.

Jobs in Scotland Supported by MOD Expenditure with UK Industry and Commerce

FINANCIAL YEAR	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Scotland	9,000	9,800	10,000	10,500

Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100 jobs.

The data is taken from Table 8 in the supporting excel tables to the 'MOD Regional Expenditure with UK Industry and Commerce and Supported Employment,2016/17'. The full table is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684195/Excel_tables_relating_to_finance_and_economics_annual_statistical_bulletin_201617.xlsx

Information on how the figures were calculated can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-regional-expenditure-with-uk-industry-and-supported-employment-index>

■ Ministry of Defence: Buildings

Jamie Stone: [\[131729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many accommodation properties owned by his Department were rented to non-military personnel between January 2016 and January 2017.

Guto Bebb:

The number of service family accommodation properties owned by the Ministry of Defence that have been rented to non-military personal between January 2016 and January 2017 is given below.

JANUA RY 2016	FEBRUA RY 2016	MAR CH 2016	APR IL 2016	MAY Y 2016	JUN E 2016	JUL Y 2016	AUGU ST 2016	SEPTEM BER 2016	OCTOB ER 2016	NOVEMB ER 2016	DECEMB ER 2016	JANUA RY 2017	AVERA GE
11	14	15	15	15	15	16	16	16	16	18	18	20	16

■ Ministry of Defence: Capita

Jon Trickett: [\[131929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2016 to Question 54025, on Ministry of Defence: Capita, if he will update those figures to date.

Guto Bebb:

The Capita-led consortium (known as the Strategic Business Partner (SBP)) was appointed to lead and manage the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), the business unit within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) that manages the majority of the Defence estate.

Following a review in to both how the MOD manages the estate and of the support provided by the SBP, the contract will be brought to an end by 30 June 2019. During the period from 1 July 2017 the arrangements around the payment of fees have been changed. Fees based on the delivery of savings have now been replaced by those that reflect the level of resource provided to deliver DIO's outputs together with a fee for the provision of the senior management team which will reduce as contractor staff are replaced by civil servants by the end of the contract.

Over the period since the start of the contract, fees payable to the SBP are as follows:

2014-15 £33.3 million

2015-16 £58.4 million (revised following the payment of a retention)

2016-17 £32.5 million

2017-18 £31.6 million (to 28 February 2018)

The figure for 2016-17 has been updated to show the amounts payable to the SBP for the full year. The previous response, to Question 54025, provided information for the first six months of the financial year with some fees only becoming payable at the year end.

■ Ministry of Defence: Empty Property**Alex Sobel:**[\[132273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many houses rented by his Department are currently unoccupied.

Guto Bebb:

The majority of Service Family Accommodation properties are leased from Annington Homes Ltd. The remainder are either Ministry of Defence (MOD) owned or leased from other providers. The Department has approximately 8,759 void Service Family Accommodation properties in the UK as of March 2018.

Approximately half of the total number of void properties have been identified for disposal, or are being retained to ensure houses are available to meet rebasing plans as part of the Defence Estate Optimisation Programme and the Army Basing Programme. The MOD aims to keep 10% temporarily void to allow for major upgrade work and routine movements in and out of properties.

■ Ministry of Defence: Land**Jon Trickett:** [\[131927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the 91 sites referenced on page 5 of his Department's document entitled A Better Defence Estate, published in November 2016, how much land has been released for development since the publication of that document; and how many homes have (i) begun and (ii) completed construction on that land since the publication of that document.

Guto Bebb:

Since November 2016, four sites have been released, these are Hullavington Airfield, Chalgrove Airfield (transferred to Homes England), Rylston Road London (transferred back to the freehold owner), and Lodge Hill (transferred to Homes England).

The timeline for construction on these sites is a matter for the future land owners.

Jon Trickett: [\[131928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Written Statement of 6 September 2016, on Defence Estate Rationalisation, HCWS 133, whether he has any revisions to the date by which he expects the 12,565 homes to be built on the land referenced in that statement.

Guto Bebb:

The intent remains to release the sites referenced during this Parliament. Disposal dates for sites are subject to continuing work. Any changes to the published disposal dates will be subject to future announcements. The timeline for the construction of homes on the released land is a matter for the new land owner.

■ Ministry of Defence: Public Expenditure**Peter Dowd:** [\[132371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 March 2018, Spring Statement, HCWS 540, if he will publish a list of where the £12.7 million allocated to his Department to realise the opportunities from EU exit will be spent.

Guto Bebb:

The Ministry of Defence has been allocated £12.7 million in 2018-19 for essential EU exit preparations. This will fund preserving three Off-Shore Patrol Vessels, should they be needed to control and enforce UK waters and fisheries. It also includes some EU Exit preparedness funding for UK defence bases in Europe. As with all HMT Reserve funding, finalised allocations will be confirmed at Supplementary Estimates 2018-19 in early 2019.

■ Ministry of Defence: Scotland**Douglas Chapman:** [\[131534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) military personnel and (b) civilian support staff have been based in Scotland in each of the last 5 years.

Guto Bebb:

The link below provides the requested information.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/location-of-all-uk-regular-service-and-civilian-personnel-quarterly-statistics-index>

Ministry of Defence: Uber**Wes Streeting:****[132204]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department spent on services provided by Uber in each of the last five years.

Guto Bebb:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor (Harriett Baldwin) on 23 February 2017 to Question 64371 to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr Iain Wright).

Attachments:

1. 132204 - Ministry of Defence: Uber [Hansard Extract 23 February 2017 HOC 64371.docx]

MOD Caledonia**Jamie Stone:****[131725]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for the future of Caledonia base in Rosyth.

Guto Bebb:

The intent to dispose of Ministry of Defence Caledonia was included in the Department's estate optimisation announcement 'A Better Defence Estate' in November 2016. The estimated disposal date is 2022. The future use of the site is a matter for the new owner, but we will work with Local Authorities and relevant stakeholders to ensure the disposal provides the best outcome for Defence and the local community.

Veterans: Mental Health Services**Jamie Stone:****[131728]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to extend the armed forces mental health helpline service to veterans.

Guto Bebb:

We have recently announced a 24-hour mental health helpline for veterans and their families provided by the charity Combat Stress; the freephone number is 0800 138 1619.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Commonwealth Games: Living Wage**

Melanie Onn: [\[132186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if his Department will take steps to ensure that people employed by contractors at the 2022 Commonwealth Games are paid the Real Living Wage.

Tracey Crouch:

We are working with Games Partners to establish an Organising Committee for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Once established, the committee will be primarily responsible for procuring goods and services and we will work with it and other Games Partners to agree appropriate policies including contractor pay.

■ Cultural Heritage: Finance

Jo Stevens: [\[132187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment the Government has made of the effect on the heritage sector of the reduction in the Heritage Lottery Fund distribution budget for 2017-18 from the previous year; and whether his Department plans to take steps to help the heritage sector replace that funding.

Michael Ellis:

We are working closely with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to implement the recommendations of the Government's recent Tailored Review. The review considered the impact of reduced lottery income and made a series of recommendations to ensure that funding is spent to support the resilience of the heritage sector, to maximise the benefits of heritage for people across the UK, and to preserve the UK's heritage for future generations.

HLF is treating 2018/19 as a transitional year as they prepare for their next five-year funding framework, starting in 2019. They are currently consulting on their framework and are actively encouraging people to give their views. The consultation can be accessed via their website.

■ Gambling: Video Games

Anna Turley: [\[132283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to regulate in-game purchasing in video games.

Margot James:

Game purchasers are protected by general consumer law such as the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. This includes a requirement on businesses not to subject anyone to misleading or aggressive marketing practices, or, for example, direct exhortation to buy products, such as games content, including in-game purchases such as loot boxes. The government is committed to ensuring

that consumers are properly protected and not exploited by aggressive commercial practices.

Anna Turley:

[\[132285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to regulate the game mechanics of (a) loot boxes and (b) similar in-game reward mechanisms in video games to ensure fair practices.

Anna Turley:

[\[132286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure the disclosure of the odds of winning items in (a) loot boxes and (b) similar variable reward mechanisms on screen at the time of purchase in video games.

Margot James:

Video games are subject to a mixture of statutory and voluntary regulation mainly linked to the Pan-European Games Information (PEGI) classification system. The PEGI ratings system is used to classify video games content against criteria which includes, among other things, gambling. Additionally, PEGI informs consumers purchasing products from major app stores if they contain further purchases and are considering the possibility of placing these notifications on boxed products.

Regulators such as PEGI and the Gambling Commission are speaking to industry to ensure that those who purchase and play video games are informed and protected. The government's Internet Safety Strategy sets out how the government will work with the industry to promote further awareness and understanding of PEGI age ratings, parental controls and advice on safe gaming.

We recognise the risks that come from increasing convergence between gambling and video games. The Gambling Commission is keeping this matter under review and will continue to monitor developments in the market.

■ Gaming Machines

Carolyn Harris:

[\[131475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the level of financial losses experienced by gamblers on fixed-odds betting terminals by NRS social grade; and if he will make a statement.

Tracey Crouch:

Neither we or the Gambling Commission have made an assessment, or are aware of such an assessment into this issue. However, research published by GambleAware in April 2016 provides analysis of financial losses on B2 and B3 gaming machines by socio-demographic characteristics. The research involved a sample of gaming machine players who held account cards which represents around 10% of gaming machine players, and should not be considered representative of all players. The

research can be found here: <https://about.gambleaware.org/media/1259/natcen-secondary-analysis-of-loyalty-card-survey-final.pdf>

■ Government Departments: Flags

Patrick Grady:

[132249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 8 January 2018 to Question 118594, on Government Departments: Flags, whether any government buildings in (a) Whitehall and (b) central London routinely fly the EU flag.

Michael Ellis:

There is no specific government policy regarding the flying of flags and no guidance is issued to Government Departments to routinely fly the EU Flag. As flag flying is deregulated, DCMS does not hold records on the flying of flags by other government departments, other than on the designated days for flying the Union Flag.

■ Music

Alex Sobel:

[131570]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage collaboration in the music industry between the UK and the EU.

Alex Sobel:

[132191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage collaboration between artists in the UK and the US within the music industry.

Margot James:

We are committed to supporting and promoting a thriving music industry and ensuring the continued growth of this vital and vibrant sector both at home and abroad.

To this end the government funded Music Export Growth Scheme continues to support the launch of UK music acts to international audiences with £2.8m from 2016-20. Another £200,000 is being made available up to March 2020 through the International Showcase Fund, delivered in partnership with the PRS Foundation.

At SXSW 2018 in Austin, 91 UK artists performed including at the British Music Embassy which was sponsored by DIT, BBC Music and UK music partners. DIT also organises an annual music sync mission to Los Angeles, in partnership with the BPI and the Music Publishers Association, and a song-writers mission to Nashville.

■ National Lottery: West Yorkshire

Alex Sobel: [\[132268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much National Lottery funding has been allocated to projects in (a) Leeds North West constituency and (b) West Yorkshire in each year since 2010.

Tracey Crouch:

Information on projects in receipt of a Lottery award can be found on the National Lottery Grants Database at the following link: <http://www.lottery.culture.gov.uk> and from Lottery Distributors' own websites. The grants database can be sorted on a national, regional, local authority and constituency level.

West Yorkshire is not a definable search area under the parameters of the Database. The table below therefore shows total value of the National Lottery grants awarded between 2010-11 and 2016-17 in Leeds North West constituency and to local authorities comprising the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The figures for grants awarded in 2017-18 will be confirmed at the end of March 2018.

■ Social Media: Hate Crime

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[131636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent progress her Department has made with social media platforms on a voluntary code of practice for online (a) abuse and (b) hate crime.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[131638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many responses his Department received to its consultation, Internet safety strategy green paper.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[131639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many responses to his Department's consultation, Internet Safety strategy green paper supported a voluntary code of practice for Social Media Platforms to tackle online (a) abuse and (b) hate crime content.

Margot James:

The Internet Safety Strategy consultation closed on the 7 December and we are currently reviewing responses. We received a wide range of views from industry, charities, academia and others. These will help shape our Government response to the consultation which we will be publishing in the Spring.

The Prime Minister confirmed plans to bring forward the code of practice in her speech on the 6 February. The aim of the code of practice is to prevent abusive behaviour online, introduce more effective reporting mechanisms to tackle bullying or harmful content, and give better guidance for users to identify and report illegal content. The Government will be outlining more detail on the code of practice in the spring, as part of the Government response to the strategy.

■ Sports: Drugs

David Simpson: [\[131516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support programmes tackling the misuse of drugs in professional sport.

Tracey Crouch:

The UK has always taken a strong stance on doping in sport, but we are not complacent. DCMS recently published a Tailored Review of UK Anti-Doping (UKAD), which committed an additional £6.1m of funding. This will support further the important work carried out by UKAD, as well as the implementation of the recommendations set out within that Review.

■ Television: Local Broadcasting

Graham P Jones: [\[132246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much local content television channels established under the Local Digital Television Programme Services Order 2012 have broadcast since their inception.

Graham P Jones: [\[132247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what information his Department holds on the annual operating (a) profits and (b) losses of local television stations established under the Local Digital Television Programme Services Order 2012.

Margot James:

Since the launch of the first local television service in Grimsby in November 2013, a total of 34 local TV stations have launched across the UK. Ofcom collects information annually on the performance of local television services and has included analysis of the sector's performance in its annual Communication Market Report published since 2016. The Communications Market Reports for 2016 and 2017 are available from the Ofcom website.

■ Young People: Unemployment

Jess Phillips: [\[131755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the effect of an expansion in youth full-time social action on the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

Tracey Crouch:

The Government will publish its response to the Review's report in due course.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices: Taxation****Ms Marie Rimmer:****[131546]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of apprenticeship starts since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017.

Anne Milton:

There have been over 1.2 million apprenticeship starts since May 2015. We publish progress on the number of apprenticeships starts within the department for further education and skills statistical first release, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr#2017-releases>.

We've introduced the apprenticeship levy to encourage sustained employer investment in high quality apprenticeships.

The previous year has seen significant changes for employers and understandably, it will take them time to adjust and respond. We must, however, not lose sight of why we introduced our reforms – to put quality at the heart of the programme for apprentices, and putting control in the hands of employers.

■ Carers**Ms Marie Rimmer:****[131547]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support kinship carers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The government recognises the important role that family and friends play in caring for children who are unable to live with their parents. Most children benefit from living with someone they already know and trust rather than a stranger.

The government issued statutory guidance in 2011 for local authorities (LAs) about supporting family and friends providing care for children who cannot live with their parents. The guidance makes it clear that children and young people should receive the support that they and their carers need to safeguard and promote their welfare. It explains that support, including financial support, can be provided under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. There is no limit on the level of financial support that local authorities can provide.

LAs are required to publish a policy setting out their approach to promoting and supporting the needs of all children living with family and friends carers, regardless of their legal status. The department has recently written to local authorities to remind them of this requirement and that the policy should be clear, regularly updated, and made freely and widely available.

■ Children: Day Care**Tracy Brabin:****[132399]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he had made of the number of children who will be eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare in the summer term 2018.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Each term we have stated a target for the number of eligibility codes we expect to be issued to eligible parents. We are expecting to issue a total of 370,000 30 hours eligibility codes by 31 March 2018 for the summer term 2018.

Further information relating to 30 hours codes issued for the summer term was published on 15 March 2018 in '30 hours free childcare: Spring term 2018'. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/30-hours-free-childcare-spring-term-2018>.

Tracy Brabin:**[132417]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2018 to Question 131381 on Children: Day care, for which local authority and for what reasons that disapplication was approved.

Nadhim Zahawi:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State agreed to a request from Birmingham local authority to disapply the Finance Regulations so that funding rates allocated to their maintained nursery schools could be changed part way through the 2017-18 financial year.

The request had support from the early years sector and the schools forum and had undergone proper consultation. The change to the method of allocating funding would have complied with the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations, if it had been decided before the start of the financial year.

Tracy Brabin:**[132418]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) three and (b) four year olds are eligible for 30 hours funded childcare.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In the 2015 Spending Review the government set out that 390,000 children are expected to be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. We estimate this to be around 42% of 3 and 4 year olds.

The number of eligible children will increase with a rising population through the academic year as more children turn three.

■ Children: Disability

Tracy Brabin:

[\[132419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many 3 and 4 year olds receive the early years Disability Access Fund.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Local councils make Disability Access Fund (DAF) payments and are required to pay £615 to early years settings for each child that is taking-up the three- and four-year old free entitlement (not in reception) and receiving Disability Living Allowance.

The early years and schools censuses based on census day in January 2018 will provide us with data about the take-up of the DAF. The early years census is open to local authorities until mid-April therefore final data is not available.

■ Children: Disadvantaged

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[132339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, further to his oral statement of 13 March 2017 on Spring Statement, if he will publish the allocation of the £500 million funding to vulnerable children in each year since 2010.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Funding for children's services is an unring-fenced part of the wider local government finance settlement. This gives local authorities the flexibility to focus on locally determined priorities and their statutory responsibilities. Local authorities used this flexibility to increase spending on services for some of the most vulnerable children to around £6.5 billion in 2016-17. See attachment for further detail on funding allocations.

Attachments:

1. Funding Allocation to Children's Services [132339 attachment.docx]

■ Collective Spirit Multi-Academy Trust

Lucy Powell:

[\[132245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2018 to Question 126339 on Collective Spirit Multi-Academy Trust and the Answer of 8 February to Question 126463 on Collective Spirit Multi-Academy Trust, if he will publish the invoices for all the related party transactions held by the Education and Skills Funding Agency relating to the Collective Spirit Multi Academy Trust.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have no plans to publish any invoices relating to any related party transactions held by the Education and Skills Funding Agency relating to the Collective Spirit Multi Academy.

Lucy Powell:

[\[132248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what due diligence checks were undertaken on the (a) suitability to run and (b) experience and knowledge of running schools of the people who set up the Collective Spirit multi-academy trust.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The system for approving new free schools is underpinned by a rigorous application and evaluation process. Each application is considered against published criteria, focusing on the capacity and track record of proposers, with due diligence and financial viability checks carried out on them and affordability and value for money checks on the application.

■ Education: Admissions

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[131545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve participation of students from under-represented areas in further or higher education.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

Widening participation in further and higher education is a priority for this government and we want to continue to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from it, regardless of background or where they grew up. 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential' published in December 2017 set out our plan for improving social mobility through education.

Whilst more disadvantaged 18 year olds are going to university than ever before we have, through our first guidance to the Office for Students (OfS), asked the OfS to encourage higher education (HE) providers to undertake outreach work with schools, and to focus particularly in those parts of the country with the greatest challenges, including in opportunity areas. These areas have been identified as those weakest in both the 2016 Social Mobility Commission's index and the Department for Education's data on school standards and capacity to improve.

In addition, the National Collaborative Outreach Programme run by the Higher Education Funding Council for England is supporting 29 consortia (including HE providers, further education (FE) colleges, schools, employers and others) to undertake outreach activities in geographical areas where the HE participation of young people is both low and much lower than expected based on GCSE-level attainment.

FE providers already fulfil a crucial role in driving social mobility by equipping or reskilling individuals with relevant labour market skills, providing routes into further study and often acting as a second chance at a basic education.

FE providers will play a key role in our reforms to technical education, leading to more and better opportunities for young people, whatever their background and ensuring that they are on a high quality route to employment.

A thriving careers system, that is accessible to everyone, is at the heart of our focus on social mobility. Our recently published careers strategy will support everyone, whatever their background, to go as far as their talents will take them and have a rewarding career.

■ Educational Psychology

Luciana Berger: [\[132244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to allocate funding for the training of educational psychologists after 2020.

Luciana Berger: [\[132430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to meet representatives of the Association of Educational Psychologists.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The educational psychologist workforce is critical to identifying special educational needs and their contribution is a mandatory requirement in the assessment process of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Educational psychologists also provide essential wider support to schools including in relation to mental health, personal, health and social education, and major incident support for children in their communities.

Funding levels for training for Educational Psychologists for 2020-21 and beyond will be decided as part of future Spending Reviews.

The Minister of State for Children and Families would welcome the opportunity to meet with Association of Educational Psychologists in due course.

■ Foster Care in England Independent Review

Tim Loughton: [\[132306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2018 to Question 130540, on Foster Care in England Independent Review, if he will publish the specific evidence reviewed by the Narey Review into Fostering which recommended the addition of Independent Reviewing Officers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The department will not publish the views and experiences of individuals. A summary of the call for evidence was published alongside the independent review. The independent reviewers, Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers, drew their conclusions from a broad range of evidence they collected from a number of individuals and organisations, some of which was provided confidentially. It is for organisations to chose whether to make their evidence public and some have done this.

■ Free School Meals: Liverpool**Mrs Louise Ellman:** [\[132329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has he made of the effect of changes to free school meals as a result of universal credit on children in Liverpool; and will he make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Our new criteria for free school meals eligibility will increase the number of children eligible for this vital benefit. We have not made city-level analyses of the effect of the changes. Due to the generous protections we will provide, all children receiving free school meals at the point the threshold is introduced, and all those who gain eligibility as Universal Credit rolls out, will continue to receive free school meals until the end of Universal Credit rollout. After this point, those children who were protected – if they are still in school – will continue to be protected until the end of their phase of education. While we estimate that around 50,000 more children nationally will benefit from our proposals once Universal Credit rollout is complete, many more children again will benefit as a result of our transitional arrangements.

■ Free School Meals: West Midlands**Mr Jim Cunningham:** [\[132290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the changes to the eligibility of free school meals under universal credit on child poverty in the West Midlands.

Mr Jim Cunningham: [\[132291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) primary and (b) secondary school pupils in Coventry who will be eligible for free school meals after the introduction of changes to the threshold for free school meals under universal credit.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Our new criteria for free school meals eligibility will increase the number of children eligible for this vital benefit. We have not made specific regional assessments of the effect of these changes. Due to the generous protections we will provide, all children receiving free school meals at the point the threshold is introduced, and all those who gain eligibility during the rollout of universal credit, will continue to receive free school meals until the end of universal credit rollout. After this point, those children who were protected – should they still be in school – will continue to be protected until the end of their current phase of education. While we estimate around 50,000 children more will benefit from our proposals in 2022, many more children again will benefit as a result of our transitional arrangements.

■ Further Education: Cheshire**Mike Amesbury:**[\[132349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for further education provision in Cheshire as a result of the the announcement made on 9 March 2018 of the proposed closure of the Hartford Campus by Warrington and Vale Royal College; and if he will make a statement.

Mike Amesbury:[\[132350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of access to (a) further and (b) adult education provision in the Cheshire West and Chester area for the academic year 2018-19 as a result of the announcement of the proposed closure of the Hartford campus of Warrington and Vale Royal College in Summer 2018.

Anne Milton:

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) allocates funds to colleges on an annual basis and institutions in Cheshire are funded through the same national funding formulae and systems as the rest of England, with levels of funding directly linked to levels of learner enrolment.

The ESFA is aware of the decision made by Warrington and Vale Royal College with respect to its Hartford campus. College corporations are responsible for their own financial and strategic decisions, and are expected to ensure financial sustainability and protect learner interests. The ESFA are monitoring the college to ensure it is developing a robust financial plan moving forward whilst continuing to deliver an accessible, high-quality further education offer for young people, adults and employers.

Warrington and Vale Royal College has informed the ESFA that free, or subsidised travel, will be available to approximately 300 learners whose courses will mostly transfer to the college's Winsford campus, or to a lesser extent, the Warrington campus.

The ESFA will continue to work with the college to ensure these arrangements are implemented to maximise continued access for learners, and that appropriate support is offered during a period of transition. The ESFA 16-19 bursary fund and adult discretionary learner support funds also help students to overcome barriers to participation, such as transport, so they can remain in education.

As is the case now, learners will also have the opportunity to access the range of provision offered by other Cheshire colleges and learning providers, in addition to provision outside of the county.

The ESFA will work with Cheshire West and Chester local authority to ensure that proposed changes do not result in a significant gap in accessible local provision. Local authorities have broad duties to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training, including to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people in their area who are over compulsory

school age but under 19 or aged 19 to 25 and for whom an Education, Health and Care plan is maintained, as set out in <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/participation-of-young-people-education-employment-and-training>.

■ Schools

Tulip Siddiq: [\[132340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what percentage of state-funded pupils benefited from a partnership between an independent school and a state-funded school in (a) 2016, and (b) 2017.

Anne Milton:

The department have consulted on the relationships between independent and state funded schools, and will be responding in due course.

■ Schools: Admissions

Derek Twigg: [\[132253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 21 January 2016 to Question 22952 on Schools Admissions, whether he plans to strengthen the position of siblings in school admissions policy.

Nick Gibb:

It is for admissions authorities to decide whether to give priority to siblings in their admissions arrangements, where the school is oversubscribed, and many schools do choose to do this. The Government expects schools to balance prioritising siblings with ensuring places are also available for other local children who do not have a sibling at the school.

The Department wants fair access to a good school place for every pupil. That is why we routinely keep the admissions system under review and seek regular feedback from stakeholders on the system. Any changes to the School Admissions Code will require a full statutory process, including consultation and parliamentary scrutiny.

■ Teachers: Pay

Ms Marie Rimmer: [\[131622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the financial effect of the new national funding formula on the salaries of teachers in schools in England.

Nick Gibb:

Decisions on increases to teachers' pay for the forthcoming academic year will be informed by the School Teacher Review Body process, which is ongoing.

The Department has reformed the unfair, opaque and outdated school funding system, ensuring that, for the first time, school funding will be distributed based on the individual needs and characteristics of every school in the country.

Spending on schools will rise from just under £41 billion now to £43.5 billion in 2019-20. As the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies has confirmed, overall funding per pupil across the country will now be maintained in real terms until 2020, representing an increase of at least 70 per cent since 1990.

■ Universities: Mental Health Services

Dan Jarvis:

[\[132427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions his Department has had with universities on student mental health services.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

We will consider the responses carefully ahead of our response. The government's green paper on Children and Young People's Mental Health, was published on 4 December 2017 and consulted on until 2 March 2018. More than 2,500 responses were given in the consultation, which also included stakeholder events for representatives from across education to share their thoughts face to face. University representatives participated in this consultation activity, including from the Heads of University Counselling Services and Universities UK (UUK).

The department is working closely with UUK on embedding their Step Change programme within the sector. The Step Change framework offers detailed guidance to Higher Education Institutions and encourages them to adopt mental health as a strategic priority. More information on the Step Change programme can be found at <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>.

■ Universities: Strikes

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[131557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he is taking steps to secure compensation for students affected by strike action by university lecturers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

Universities are autonomous institutions and it is for them to ensure that they meet their obligations to their students. We remain concerned about any impact of strike action on students and expect universities to put in place measures to maintain the quality of education that students should receive. I am aware that during this period universities are putting in place measures to mitigate the impact of the industrial action on students, and that some are putting withheld salaries into student support funds. I would expect universities to offer financial compensation where the quality of a student's experience has been seriously affected. I am pleased that some have already said they will consider this and I would urge others to do so.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Chemicals**

Sue Hayman: [\[132232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department has spent on new IT capabilities to enable the (a) registration and (b) regulation of chemical substances in the UK market, after the UK leaves the EU.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Work has started on the delivery of new IT capability to enable the registration and regulation of chemical substances placed on the UK market. This forms part of our contingency planning for Day 1 readiness and will ensure continuity for businesses after the UK leaves the EU.

To date, Defra has spent has spent £330,000 on the Alpha development phase of a new IT system for the registration of chemical substances. No expenditure has been incurred to date on developing IT capability for the regulation of chemical substances as the initial phases of the project are focussed on registration.

■ Dame Glenys Stacey

David Hanson: [\[131629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many hours Dame Glenys Stacey will be working on the review of the rules associated with the current subsidy payments system.

George Eustice:

Dame Glenys Stacey has been appointed to work for two days per week, between 1 March and 31 December 2018, on the Farm Inspection Review.

David Hanson: [\[131630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what arrangements his Department has made with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that Dame Glenys Stacey will be able to continue her work as HM Chief Inspector of Probation whilst undertaking the review into the rules associated with the current subsidy payments system.

George Eustice:

HMI Probation has recently recruited two new director and head of function posts, as part of a new organisational design. This increases HMI Probation senior staff capacity substantially, and enables some delegation. It is anticipated that the organisation will continue to inspect and report exactly as planned.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: ICT

Eddie Hughes:

[\[131771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential benefits of using blockchain technology to store information on (a) food safety and (b) animal welfare; and if he will make a statement.

George Eustice:

Defra has been looking at how blockchain technology is already being used within the food and farming industries to improve data transparency and efficiency for suppliers, processors and consumers.

We have also undertaken a 'proof of concept' project to explore how blockchain technology could be used to improve traceability of food throughout the supply chain. This will contribute to our wider work looking at how blockchain technology could bring benefits across Defra's policy areas, including for food safety and animal welfare.

■ Environment Protection

Mary Creagh:

[\[132116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Funding programme on his Department's work to implement the 25 Year Plan for the Environment.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is an important source of funding for landscapes and achieving the 25 Year Environment Plan goals.

As a result, dedicated programmes for landscape partnerships, places of worship, parks and townscape heritage are being administered in a more streamlined way.

In 2018/19, the HLF will fund landscape partnerships through its Heritage Grants programme. From 2019 onwards, the HLF anticipates continuing to support landscape partnerships through the Heritage Grants programme as well as through a place-based campaign. This is currently the subject of an open consultation.

■ Fish: Exports

Sue Hayman:

[\[132234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on developing a new catch certificate system for UK (a) fish and (b) fish products exported to the EU after the UK leaves the EU.

George Eustice:

Defra is working with a range of agencies, including the Marine Management Organisation, and holding discussions with the Devolved Administrations, to develop a system for managing the issuing and processing of catch certificates if they are

required to accompany the import and export of fish and fish products between the UK and the EU. This is dependent on the outcome of the UK and EU negotiations.

■ Flood Control

Alex Sobel:

[\[132265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will take steps to prohibit the scorching of moorland in areas surrounding rivers and lakes with a high flood risk.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Heather and Grass Burning regulations 2007 prohibits the burning of heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium, except under licence from Natural England (NE), in a manner that exposes bare soil which extends more than 25m along the bank of a watercourse and is more than a metre wide. NE must be satisfied that the proposed burning is for conservation, enhancement or management of the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations, or for the safety of a person.

The Heather and Grass Burning Code 2007 also outlines good practice on planning where to burn and how to burn safely and responsibly.

■ Incinerators

Dr David Drew:

[\[132108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 27 February to Question 129074, which person or body carries out the monitoring to which he refers; and whether the operator of the waste incineration site is told in advance of the proposed testing.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The monitoring of dioxins and furans is carried out by independent monitoring contractors. The monitoring contractors must work to the strict standards of the Environment Agency's Monitoring Certification Scheme. The operator is told in advance of the proposed testing to ensure that the relevant personnel are present on site and that the necessary arrangements are made for access.

The minimisation of dioxin and furan emissions is primarily controlled by the design and set up of the plant, and by ensuring good combustion conditions. As such, there is very little an operator can do to operate the plant differently from normal on the day the monitoring is taking place so as to somehow produce lower emissions than usual. Specific changes in the way the plant is operated on a particular day would also be likely to show up in the results of the continuous emissions monitoring systems for other pollutants.

The Environment Agency is confident that the current arrangement in place for the periodic monitoring of dioxins and furans is fit for purpose.

■ Ivory: Sales

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[131449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the proposed EU ivory ban; and whether the Government has responded to the public consultation on ivory trade in the EU, which closed on 8 December 2017.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The UK is leading global efforts to close legal domestic ivory markets that can contribute to poaching and the illegal wildlife trade. The UK does not authorise the sale of, or other commercial trade in, raw elephant ivory of any age. We have recently consulted on proposals to go further and ban all ivory sales in the UK subject to limited exemptions. At the EU Environment Council meeting on 5 March the UK, alongside France, called on the EU and its Member States to ban, as a first step, the commercial trade in raw ivory within the EU as soon as possible.

The UK supports the European Commission's guidance, issued in May 2017, which recommended that, as of 1 July 2017, EU Member States should suspend issuing re-export certificates for raw ivory from the EU except in exceptional cases. This is in line with UK policy which has been in place over a decade.

The European Commission has recently consulted to gather information and views on ivory trade within the EU to help inform what further steps the EU might take regarding ivory trade. The UK Government has not responded to this public consultation, as in April 2017, we responded to a European Commission questionnaire to EU Member States examining options for possible restrictions on ivory trade in and from the EU.

■ Phytophthora Ramorum

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[131506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to stop the spread of Phytophthoras in woodlands since May 2015; and if he will make a statement.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

In England we have been actively managing *Phytophthora ramorum*, and *Phytophthora kernoviae* since 2009 to minimise the spread of these pathogens.

Phytophthora ramorum is distributed across the UK with most infected sites currently occurring in northwest, southern and western England. Our activity is focused on risk based aerial and ground surveillance to identify infection in the wider environment. Where infection is found, landowners are issued with Statutory Plant Health Notices to fell infected larch and rhododendron. There are also specific measures that regulate the movement and processing of larch infected with *Phytophthora ramorum*, in order to prevent the spread through the trade in larch timber and related products.

We are also working closely with key stakeholders on the issue to help manage the disease, share good practice, improve biosecurity and carry out research to understand more about the pathogen.

We are currently undertaking a fundamental review of the Phytophthora programme which will be completed in 2018.

■ Rural Areas

Dr David Drew: [\[132143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how his Department plans to use the Statements of Environmental Opportunity from National Character Area profiles to ensure the new environmental land management scheme enhances English landscapes.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

A new environmental land management system will be developed in the light of the outputs of the open consultation "Health and harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit". We will draw upon the skills knowledge and data held by our stakeholders including the classification of the English countryside encapsulated in the 159 National Character Areas in England, each with its own statements of Environmental Opportunity.

In particular we will be looking for ways of incentivising land managers to work together to secure environmental improvements at the landscape and catchment level.

■ Waste Disposal

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[131911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government plans to publish its Resources and Waste Strategy for 2018.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Resources and Waste Strategy will be published this year.

■ Xylella

Sammy Wilson: [\[131544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with the horticulture industry to contain the spread of *xylella fastidiosa*.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Xylella fastidiosa is not present in the UK and we have been proactive in engaging with the horticultural industry about the risks from this disease. We appreciate that it has a crucial role to play in minimising the risk of its introduction. In September 2017 the Chief Plant Health Officer wrote to businesses growing and trading host plants to

encourage good biosecurity and careful sourcing of plants. Biosecurity guidance has also been developed, with bespoke guidance produced for industry.

We have published information about *Xylella* on the Plant Health Portal and provide frequent updates to industry groups and individual businesses. We have, in association with the Horticultural Trades Association and the National Farmers Union, developed guidance on *Xylella* host plants to encourage good practice when sourcing plants. The industry has responded positively to this engagement, and we have noted that many retailers and nurseries are changing their buying behaviours to go above and beyond the minimum requirements. Stakeholder groups have also developed their own initiatives, including through the Horticultural Trades Association and Royal Horticultural Society, to ensure that best practice approaches are adopted by their members and at their events.

Xylella is present in some other EU Member States, and we have strongly pressed for the EU to strengthen measures to prevent further spread of the disease. Restrictions on the import and movement of high risk host plants were increased through new EU emergency legislation, which took effect in December. The UK pushed hard for this legislation to be put in place, including Defra's Secretary of State writing to the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis to urge stronger action.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ **Bermuda: LGBT People**

Alex Sobel:

[\[131572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote education on LGBT+ rights in Bermuda.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The UK is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people and is working closely with all the Overseas Territories on these issues. The Foreign Secretary spoke to the Premier of Bermuda on 28 February 2018 and reiterated his belief that the strongest, safest and most prosperous societies are those that are the most open and inclusive, and where the rights of all citizens are respected.

■ **Burma: Rohingya**

Rushanara Ali:

[\[903912\]](#)

If he will take steps to secure a UN Security Council referral to the International Criminal Court following reports of violence in Myanmar towards the Rohingya in August 2017.

Boris Johnson:

We assess that there is not yet sufficient support amongst UN Security Council members for a referral of the situation in Burma to the ICC.

I am deeply concerned by the human rights violations committed against the Rohingya. I saw for myself the devastation in northern Rakhine during my visit on 11 February. I met Aung San Suu Kyi and reiterated UK calls for alleged abuses to be investigated and those responsible to be held to account.

■ **Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Public Expenditure**

Peter Dowd: [\[132370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 March 2018, Spring Statement, HCWS 540, if he will publish a list of where the £29.6 million allocated to his Department to realise the opportunities from EU exit will be spent.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been allocated £29.6m for essential EU exit preparations in 2018-19. This will allow us to strengthen our diplomatic network so it is better able to engage with our European partners in support of a successful EU Exit. We will also strengthen our bilateral relationships as we prepare to leave the EU, and will increase our staffing in London to work on a range of related issues. As with all Reserve funding, finalised allocations will be confirmed at Supplementary Estimates 2018-19 in early 2019.

■ **Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Uber**

Wes Streeting: [\[132203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how much his Department spent on services provided by Uber in each of the last five years.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The table below shows the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's global expenditure and number of transactions with Uber for each financial year. Data on card expenditure is held from 2015 onwards only.

FINANCIAL YEAR	GLOBAL EXPENDITURE WITH UBER	NO. OF TRANSACTIONS
2015-16	£67,314	7,639
2016-17	£123,808	14,518
2017-18	£163,122	19,887

■ **France: Proof of Identity**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[132239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his French counterpart on that government's policies for the requirement to remove the turban for identification documents.

Sir Alan Duncan:

I have had no recent discussions with my French counterpart on this issue, which is a matter for the French government.

■ **Hezbollah: Weapons****Jim Shannon:**[\[132439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the amount of weapons held by Hezbollah.

Alistair Burt:

We are aware of reports that Hizballah continues to amass an arsenal of weapons in Lebanon and across the region. We condemn the threat this poses to regional stability and the direct contravention of UNSCRs 1559 and 1701.

■ **Israel: Gaza****Jim Shannon:**[\[132438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of rocket fire from Gaza into Israel.

Alistair Burt:

We are greatly concerned about recent trends showing an increase in rocket fire from Gaza into Israel. Rocket attacks threaten the daily lives of Israelis, increase the risk of instability and conflict, and make achieving peace more difficult. We call on all parties to refrain from violence and to commit to a negotiated solution to end the conflict.

■ **Israel: Palestinians****Jim Shannon:**[\[132436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on stability in the region of recent violence in Israel and the West Bank.

Alistair Burt:

While we have not made any assessment on this specific issue, we continue to call on all parties to work together to maintain calm. Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. We understand and share the deep frustration on all sides at the lack of progress on the Middle East Peace Process. The ongoing violence underlines that a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue.

■ **Jerusalem: Palestinians****Tommy Sheppard:**[\[132335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the legislation passed by the Knesset on 7 March 2018 to enable that country's Minister of Interior to revoke the

permanent residency status of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem; and if he will make an assessment of the compatibility of that law with international (a) humanitarian and (b) human rights law.

Alistair Burt:

Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised this issue with the Israeli authorities on 15 February, noting the importance of ensuring that the legislation is compatible with the Israel's obligations under international human rights law.

■ **Korea**

Mr Nigel Evans:

[\[131509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he plans to make to his South Korean counterpart in advance of the proposed summit between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-Un in April 2018.

Mark Field:

The Foreign Secretary is expecting to meet ROK Foreign Minister Kang *Kyung-wha* at the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 19 March, where they will discuss developments in inter-Korean relations.

The UK welcomes both the news that President Moon Jae-In and Kim Jong Un plan to hold a leaders' summit and the announcement that Kim Jong Un is willing to hold direct talks on denuclearisation with President Trump by May. We hope this signals that Kim Jong Un is ready to change path and put the welfare of his people ahead of the illegal pursuit of nuclear weapons. Until there is evidence that North Korea has halted its illegal programmes and is ready to abandon them, we will continue working with our international partners to keep up pressure and strictly enforce existing sanctions.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Patrick Grady:

[\[131721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of the hon. Member for Glasgow North of 16 November 2017 on the Consular Assistance received by a constituent following that constituent's detention in Morocco.

Alistair Burt:

A response has been sent.

■ **Palestinians: Radicalism**

Jim Shannon:

[\[132437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of institutionalised radicalism in the Palestinian territories.

Alistair Burt:

Whilst we have not made any assessment of this Specific issue, as the architect of the British Government's first ever Counter-Extremism Strategy, the Prime Minister has reaffirmed this Government's unwavering commitment to tackling extremism in all its forms. In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the UK's goal is to preserve the viability of the two-state solution and support peace efforts. A lack of progress towards peace can contribute to regional tensions and extremism. To that end, our support is helping to maintain stability, and we are committed to supporting the institutions of a future Palestinian state to ensure it can effectively deliver services and act as a partner for peace with Israel.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights**Wes Streeting:**[\[132202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the government of Sri Lanka on that government's failure to implement the UK-sponsored resolution 30/1 of the UN Human Rights Council.

Mark Field:

The UK is committed to the full implementation of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 34/1, under which Sri Lanka committed to implement a range of measures to provide for human rights, truth-seeking, reconciliation, and devolution of political powers following the end of its civil war. I encouraged Foreign Minister Marapana to continue to make progress on these commitments when I met him in Colombo in October 2017. Most recently I wrote to him on 7 March setting out UK views ahead of the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

■ Syria: Armed Conflict**Mrs Louise Ellman:**[\[132353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 12 March 2018 to Question 131113, on Syria: Armed Conflict, what progress has been made in implementing UN Security Council resolution 2401 since the adoption of the resolution calling for its full and immediate implementation on 5 March 2018; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt:

UN Security Council Resolution 2401 has still not been implemented due largely to the regime and Russia's failure to abide by its conditions. Pro-regime forces have continued to bomb Eastern Ghouta. The UN has reported that since 18 February 2018, over 1,100 civilians have been killed and over 4,000 have been injured. Only two humanitarian convoys have been permitted to deliver aid for approximately 54,000 people, a fraction of those in need, and medical supplies were removed from both convoys by the regime. 129 people, including 25 medical cases were evacuated on 13 March but around 1,000 serious medical cases remain. The regime's advance displaced around 12,000 people on 14-15 March. The UK is continuing to exert diplomatic pressure, including through the UN Security Council. On 7 March, the

Security Council discussed the situation at the UK and France's request. On 12 March, the UK organised an informal briefing on the situation of the Security Council by Syrian opposition and humanitarian actors. The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump on 4 March to discuss the appalling situation in Eastern Ghouta and agreed that Russia must use its influence on the regime to cease the campaign of violence.

■ Victim Support Schemes: Homicide

Stella Creasy: [\[132322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans his Department has to continue to allocate a financial support grant of £100,000 to the Victim Support homicide team in 2018-2019.

Harriett Baldwin:

The detail of Foreign and Commonwealth Office spending plans for 2018-19 is still being considered.

■ Yemen: Peace Negotiations

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[131711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to the Government of Oman to encourage them to broker a peace deal in Yemen; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt:

We continue to play a leading role in diplomatic efforts, towards a political solution to the crisis in Yemen, including bringing together key regional and international actors. Oman has a crucial regional role in finding a peaceful solution. The Foreign Secretary discussed this with Sultan Qaboos bin Said during his visit to Oman on 24 January.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[132386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times at A&E departments on (a) Fridays and (b) Saturday evenings.

Stephen Barclay:

NHS England's review of urgent and emergency care (UEC) proposes a fundamental shift in the way that emergency services are provided, including the development of highly responsive urgent care services outside of hospital. A number of approaches have, and are being introduced to reduce the pressure on accident and emergency (A&E) departments, reduce waiting times and improve patient flow.

By the end of 2017, 98.5% of major A&E departments had front-door clinical streaming in place, diverting people with more minor illnesses to more appropriate

services better suited to their needs, supported by additional funding of £100 million, as announced by the Chancellor in the spring budget 2017.

The transformation of NHS 111 services as part of the UEC programme is also helping to reduce pressure on A&E Services. In 2017 NHS 111 answered more than 14 million calls, an increase of 4% compared with the previous 12 months. Around 40% of calls now receive clinical input, the highest it has ever been and wherever possible, the caller will have their health issue dealt with there and then over the phone by the clinician without the need to go to another NHS service.

In addition, the National Institute for Health Research are undertaking a study to consider the impact of alcohol related attendances at A&E departments. This study, "Evaluating the Diversion of Alcohol-Related Attendances" is expected to publish in summer 2018 and alongside colleagues in Public Health England and the wider National Health Service, NHS England will review the evidence from this carefully before making any recommendations for future action.

■ Antibiotics: Drug Resistance

Kevin Hollinrake:

[R] [[132264](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish a new five year AMR Strategy, and whether that strategy will include best practice on infection prevention and control, including hand hygiene compliance.

Kevin Hollinrake:

[R] [[132266](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve hand hygiene compliance in hospitals to tackle antimicrobial resistance; and what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using health technology to improve such compliance.

Steve Brine:

The current five year United Kingdom Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) strategy was published at the end of 2013. Work is underway to consider the priorities and focus for a refreshed strategy and national action plan for publication at the end of 2018. The refreshed strategy will continue to focus on preventing infections as one of its key pillars.

The current AMR programme has an ambition to halve healthcare associated Gram-negative blood stream infections by 2020/2021. NHS Improvement leads this work and has included hand hygiene in its work programme for 2018/19 in support of the ambition. As part of our work on the refreshed strategy, we will consider how to make best use of evidence-based and cost-effective technology.

We are working with our partners across the health and social care system, including the Care Quality Commission, to ensure that consideration of best practice in hand hygiene policies remains a focus of inspections in acute trusts.

■ Asylum: Health Services**Derek Twigg:** [\[132251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's policy is on the provision of health care for asylum seekers in interim accommodation centres.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

Entitlements to healthcare in the United Kingdom for all migrants, including asylum seekers, are outlined in the NHS entitlements: migrant health guide. Amongst the groups exempt from charge are refugees (those granted asylum, humanitarian protection or temporary protection under the immigration rules) and their dependents; and asylum seekers (those applying for asylum, humanitarian protection or temporary protection whose claims, including appeals, have not yet been determined) and their dependents. Those whose application for asylum was rejected are also supported. Information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide>

■ Doctors: Migrant Workers**Luciana Berger:** [\[132433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of non-UK doctors not meeting the £55,000 salary threshold to qualify for Tier 2 visas on NHS staffing.

Stephen Barclay:

The Department does not hold information centrally on the number of medical practitioners who have been refused or potentially could be refused a Tier 2 (General) Certificate of Sponsorship.

The minimum requirements to access a Tier 2 (General) Visa remains at £30,000 for an experienced worker (and £20,800 for a graduate or person under 26). When applications for Tier 2 places exceed availability in any given month, occupations in shortage and PhD occupations obtain places first and then the remaining places are given to those earning higher salaries.

The Department is working with the Home Office to monitor the operation of the Tier 2 visa route to ensure it continues to attract the best and brightest migrants.

The Department continues to monitor and analyse overall staffing levels across the National Health Service and adult social care in addition to trust spending on agency staff. We work across government to ensure there will continue to be sufficient staff to deliver safe, high quality, efficient services on which patients rely.

■ General Practitioners: West Midlands**Mr Jim Cunningham:** [\[132288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the GP to patient ratio was for Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group in each year since 2010.

Steve Brine:

National Health Service workforce statistics are only available by NHS organisation areas. Prior to 2013, the region currently covered by Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was covered by Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Warwickshire Primary Care Trust (PCT). Figures for these PCT regions and the Coventry and Rugby CCG are set out in the table below.

CENSUS	PCT/CCG NAME	REGISTERED PATIENTS PER GENERAL PRACTITIONER BY HEADCOUNT	REGISTERED PATIENTS PER FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT GENERAL PRACTITIONER
2010	Coventry Teaching PCT	1,676	1,750
2011	Coventry Teaching PCT	1,683	1,771
2012	Coventry Teaching PCT	1,613	1,672
2010	Warwickshire PCT	1,618	1,712
2011	Warwickshire PCT	1,641	1,745
2012	Warwickshire PCT	1,610	1,709
2013	Coventry and Rugby CCG	1,645	1,692
2014	Coventry and Rugby CCG	1,686	1,735
2015	Coventry and Rugby CCG	1,707	2,065
2016	Coventry and Rugby CCG	1,786	2,155
2017	Coventry and Rugby CCG	1,874	2,255

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) refers to the proportion of full time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work. 1 would indicate they work a full set of hours, 0.5 that they worked half time, where 1 FTE = 37.5 hours per week.

■ Health Services: Travellers

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[131459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to include the health care needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the commissioning of health services.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

Both NHS England and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a legal duty to reduce health inequalities in both access to services and health outcomes. Public Health England (PHE) evidence and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments of local population groups which include Gypsy and Travellers is used by CCGs to develop local services. Services commissioned locally by CCGs are based on equality and health inequalities evidence and needs of local diverse communities.

The CCG Improvement and Assessment Framework provide us with an opportunity to assess how each CCG is meeting its duty to reduce health inequalities in diverse communities; particularly those that face the greatest health inequalities be that by deprivation or ethnicity.

The Department has commissioned research to investigate approaches to community engagement that are most likely to enhance trust between Gypsy/Travellers and mainstream health services. The project is due to report later in 2018.

■ Health Services: Vulnerable Adults

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[131452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has responded to the recommendations of the report by the Data and Research Working Group of the National Inclusion Health Board, Effective health care for vulnerable groups prevented by data gaps, which was commissioned by his Department in 2014.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

No formal response has been published by the Government to the report, Hidden Needs: Identifying Key Vulnerable Groups in Data Collections: Vulnerable Migrants, Gypsies and Travellers, Homeless People, and Sex Workers, published as part of the Inclusion Health programme in 2014. The health sector is, however, undertaking work which will meet many of the recommendations made in the report.

For example, NHS England is scoping out options for updating data collection within the National Health Service to include more of the protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010. This could potentially mean that the NHS Data Dictionary would identify Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities as separate groups for the first time, which would make it possible to more fully understand the extent of the inequalities this community experiences; the scoping work is due to be completed during 2018.

NHS England published guidance for general practitioner (GP) practices in 2015 which clarifies the rights of patients and the responsibilities of providers in registering with a GP practice; and a patient-facing information leaflet was published in 2017.

The Department has also commissioned research to investigate approaches to community engagement that are most likely to enhance trust between Gypsy/Travellers and mainstream health services; this project is due to report later in 2018.

This Government is concerned about the very poor health among people who experience homelessness and so we are taking action to address the root causes. Currently, it is not possible to identify patients who have paid for non-emergency treatment and who are registered as having no fixed abode within Hospital Episode Statistics. However, we are implementing an ambitious legislative reform, the Homelessness Reduction Act, which means more people will get the help they need earlier to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. We are committed to halving rough sleeping by 2020 and are investing £550 million to address the issue.

All of the above work is underpinned by the first-ever health inequalities duty, as laid out in the Equality Act 2010 and the NHS Act 2006 as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This ensures that health services take account of excluded and vulnerable groups in the planning of their services.

■ Health Visitors

Tim Loughton:

[\[132310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) actual and (b) full time equivalent health visitors who have been employed in each of the last seven years.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

NHS Digital publishes information on workforce statistics and the following table shows the full time equivalent (FTE) and headcount (HC) figures for health visitors working in National Health Service trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in each of the last seven years.

NHS Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS): Health visitors in NHS trusts and CCGs in England as at 30 November each specified year (FTE and HC).

YEAR	HEALTH VISITORS (FTE)	HEALTH VISITORS (HC)
November 2010	7,961	9,884
November 2011	7,812	9,626
November 2012	7,963	9,647
November 2013	8,526	10,213
November 2014	9,629	11,407

YEAR	HEALTH VISITORS (FTE)	HEALTH VISITORS (HC)
November 2015	10,279	12,173
November 2016	9,376	11,142
November 2017	8,317	9,995

Source: Provisional NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics, NHS Digital

■ King George Hospital Redbridge: Accident and Emergency Departments

Wes Streeting: [\[132206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it remains his Department's policy to close King George Hospital Accident and Emergency Department.

Stephen Barclay:

Decisions about local services are made by local commissioners, not by the Department. Any changes to services should be locally led by clinicians and patients.

In November 2017, the East London Health and Care Partnership (ELHCP) announced that it would be exploring further options for how urgent and emergency care services are delivered locally and in particular across both King George and Queen's hospitals. The ELHCP will work with clinicians, patients, partners and stakeholders to develop options.

■ Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust: Reviews

Rosie Cooper: [\[132341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the recommendations of the review conducted by Dr Bill Kirkup, Report of the Liverpool Community Health Independent Review, published in January 2018.

Stephen Barclay:

NHS Improvement, NHS England, the Care Quality Commission and officials from the Department have met and have agreed in principle to provide a joint response to the report. This response is being coordinated by NHS Improvement.

NHS Improvement will consider their response to the Kirkup report at their public Board meeting on 22 March 2018.

■ Liverpool Prison

Rosie Cooper: [\[132338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for the contract awarded for the provision of health services at HMP Liverpool of the recommendations of the report of the Liverpool Community Health Independent Review, published in January 2018.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

The Liverpool Community Health Independent Review identified failures in Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust's provision of health services to HMP Liverpool and healthcare in HMP Liverpool is currently undergoing significant review.

Services are now in the process of being re-procured to new service specifications based on an updated Health Needs Assessment.

Detailed improvement plans have been put in place with clear lines of accountability for delivery, as well as enhanced systems for reporting, and quality monitoring to ensure that any health care risks or incidents are escalated appropriately.

Joint governance arrangements have been formalised between healthcare commissioners and the prison management team to oversee this work.

■ Mental Illness: Debts**Luciana Berger:**[\[132243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his polices of the report of the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute on people with debt problem debt while receiving hospital treatment for mental health issues.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

The Government recognises the impact that debt may have on mental health and wellbeing and the difficulties that may be experienced by people with mental health problems in managing their debt. The Government will consider the recommendations of the report published by the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, 'Recovery Space: Minimising the financial harm caused by mental health crisis'.

In January 2017, the Prime Minister announced the Government would review the practice of general practitioners charging patients experiencing debt issues to complete Mental Health Evidence Forms when they require medical evidence for their creditors. The Department is working with the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute and a range of stakeholders from the financial and debt advice sectors and the British Medical Association to undertake the review, which we will publish in due course.

■ NHS: Licensing**Dan Carden:**[\[131665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 3.4 of Oversight of NHS-controlled providers: consultation response, published in February 2018, which providers that hold a licence and meet the accepted definition for NHS control under the new guidance issued by NHS Improvement which goes live from April 2018 have been or will be approached with a request to revoke their current licence and to apply for the new NHS-controlled provider licence.

Stephen Barclay:

The requirement for National Health Service controlled providers to hold a licence comes into effect on 1 April 2018. No applications for the NHS controlled provider licence or requests to withdraw a provider's current licence have formally been considered by NHS Improvement.

NHS Improvement has written to a small number of providers that they believe may meet the definition for the new NHS controlled provider licence and providers that were seen as likely to meet the criteria were also approached during the course of the consultation with an opportunity to respond with their views.

It is not appropriate at this stage to name these organisations as the decision regarding their need for an NHS controlled provider licence is yet to be made and the process needs to run its course.

Dan Carden:[\[131667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to ensure that maintenance of the rights of members of the public to (a) inspect and (b) obtain copies of the (i) annual reports, (ii) accounts and (iii) forward planning documents under section 39 of the NHS Act 2006 for entities holding new NHS-controlled provider licences.

Stephen Barclay:

Section 39 of the National Health Service Act 2006 requires NHS Improvement (Monitor) to maintain a register of National Health Service foundation trusts including their annual accounts and reports. This section of the Act applies to foundation trusts but it neither applies to independent providers of NHS services nor will it apply to NHS controlled providers. However, under section 93 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, NHS Improvement must maintain and publish a register of persons who hold an NHS provider licence. The names and addresses of NHS controlled providers will be included in this register.

In the case of NHS controlled providers which are formed as companies or limited liability partnerships, some documents (statutory accounts and reports) will be filed annually with other regulators such as Companies House or The Office of the Regulator of Community Interest Companies.

Forward planning documents submitted to NHS Improvement by NHS controlled providers are expected to be commercially sensitive information and held in confidence.

■ Organs: Transplant Surgery**Melanie Onn:**[\[132238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate levels of funding for organ transplant operations after the roll-out of the opt-out only scheme for organ donations.

Melanie Onn:

[\[132394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of organ transplants as a result of the roll-out of opt-out only organ donations.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

The Government's consultation on deemed consent for organ and tissue donation in England closed on 6 March 2018. The consultation sought views on how a new system of deemed consent for deceased donation could work in England and proposed a change in the current law on organ donation, to better reflect the position of the majority of people who would be happy to donate their organs and tissue after their death. This included the ability to refuse to consent to donation, so that the decisions of those who do not wish to be organ and tissue donors are also respected.

An impact assessment was published as part of the Government's public consultation, which set out the costs involved in moving to a new deemed consent system in England. This suggested that, when introduced as part of a wider communication and logistical package, such a system can be associated with higher donation rates. As part of the consultation, we invited further evidence to be submitted and will carefully now consider this before the Government responds.

HOME OFFICE

■ Cannabis

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[129743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to introduce the use of all forms of medicinal cannabis.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Government sympathises deeply with the situation faced by Alfie Dingley and his family. The Policing and Fire Minister met Alfie Dingley's family on 26 February. Both the Home Secretary and Mr. Hurd want to explore every option within the current regulatory framework.

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[130538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she bring forward legislative proposals to enable medicines derived from cannabis to be available on prescription.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Government's view is that products derived from cannabis should be subjected to the same regulatory framework that applies to all medicines in the UK. There is a clear regime in place to regulate medicines in the UK and this is administered by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The cannabis-based medicine 'Sativex' has been granted Marketing Authorisation in the UK by the MHRA for the treatment of spasticity due to multiple sclerosis. Sativex was tested for its safety, efficacy and quality before this authorisation was made.

■ Crimes of Violence: Liverpool Walton

Dan Carden: [\[131823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the effect of the reduction in neighbourhood policing on the police's ability to counter violent crime in Liverpool, Walton constituency; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

It is for operationally independent Chief Constables to decide how to best deploy officers in their force area to effectively counter violent crime. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are elected by the public to hold Chief Constables and the force to account; making the police answerable to the communities they serve.

The PCC for Merseyside has chosen to use precept flexibility to increase the force's direct funding by around £5.2m in 2018/19. She has set out her intention to use this funding to protect front line policing and enhance the force's armed capability to help combat serious violence.

■ Firearms: Crime

Dan Carden: [\[131826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of changes in the level of crimes involving firearms in (a) England and (b) Liverpool Walton constituency in each year since 2010.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Office for National Statistics publishes offences recorded by the police involving firearms at the police force area level. Offences involving firearms includes any notifiable offence recorded by the police where a firearm has been fired, used as a blunt instrument or been used as a threat. Figures for England and Wales are in Table 12 of Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables, year ending March 2017 available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/offencesinvolvingtheuseofweaponsdatatables>

Data are not available at a lower geographical level than police force area.

■ High Rise Flats: Fires

Dan Carden: [\[131824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of specialist firefighting equipment available to the fire services as a result of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Mr Nick Hurd:

It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority to allocate their resources, including equipment, across prevention, protection and operational response to prevent and mitigate effectively the fire related risks facing their communities.

Home Office also supports specialist National Resilience capabilities to respond to large scale incidents. These capabilities are discussed quarterly at the National Fire Chief Council's National Resilience Board and the Home Office Strategic Resilience Board to ensure that the agreed capabilities are in place, well maintained and remain fit for purpose.

■ Home Office: Buildings

Jon Trickett:

[\[132219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of her Department's estate is (a) rented, (b) owned and (c) occupied through any other type of agreement.

Victoria Atkins:

The proportion of the Home Office's estate that is (a) rented, (b) owned and (c) occupied through any other type of agreement is detailed in the table below.

DEPARTMENT	LEASEHOLD %	FREEHOLD %	PFI	%	OTHER %	MOTO %	TOTAL				
Home Office	221	38.7	15	2.6	1	0.2	275	48.2	59	10.3	571

Note: "other" includes property holdings provided rent free by port operators.

■ Knives: Liverpool Walton

Dan Carden:

[\[131825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the trends in the level of knife crime in Liverpool, Walton constituency since 2010.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Home Office collects data on the number of selected offences involving a knife or a sharp instrument recorded by the police in England and Wales at the police force area level.

Data on knife offences at the police force area level can be found in the Home Office Knife Crime Open Data Tables, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

■ Members: Correspondence

Drew Hendry:

[\[132307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Minister for Immigration plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey dated 25 January 2018 seeking a meeting on behalf of his constituents.

Caroline Nokes:

The hon. Member's letter of 25 January was received and a response will be issued as soon as possible.

■ National Online Hate Crime Hub

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[131640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of cases that will be submitted to the National Online and Hate Crime Hub in the first year of its operation.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[131641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office, how much funding his Department will allocate to the Police National Online and Hate Crime Hub.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office has allocated initial funding of £200,000 for this first year of the new national online hate crime hub. The police report that a caseload of around 1,500 incident reports per year, based on a previous pilot, gives an indication of the potential caseload for the new hub, although this figure will vary based on a number of factors including proactive activity by the police to reach out to communities.

■ Notting Hill Carnival: Biometrics

Mr David Lammy: [\[132389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she received prior to the decision of the Metropolitan Police to use automated facial recognition at Notting Hill Carnival in 2016 and 2017.

Mr David Lammy: [\[132390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the operational justification for the decision made for the Metropolitan Police to use automated facial recognition at Notting Hill Carnival in 2016 and 2017.

Mr David Lammy: [\[132392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) white, (b) black, (c) Asian and (d) mixed race individuals were on the automated facial recognition watchlist for Notting Hill carnival in 2017.

Mr Nick Hurd:

A decision to deploy a facial recognition system is an operational one for the police.

■ Offences against Children

David Simpson: [\[131519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to allocate additional funding to police forces to tackle child grooming in (a) Northern Ireland and (b) the rest of the UK.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Home Office does not provide funding for the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Policing is a devolved matter and it is for the Department of Justice (Northern Ireland) to determine the level of resources required by the Service.

In England and Wales, £20m over three years has been awarded through the Police Transformation Fund to increase capability to target online grooming of children. The Home Office is also providing ongoing funding for several major child sexual abuse investigations through Police Special Grant.

Ministers engaged with every police force in England and Wales about changing demand before making decisions on the 2018/19 funding settlement. The Government recognised changing demands, including the complex and resource intensive work involved in investigating child sexual exploitation, through an increase in total investment in the police system of around £450m in 2018/19.

Increasing awareness of the risks posed to children by online offenders is vitally important to combat online grooming. The National Crime Agency's *Thinkuknow* education programme provides educational resources for use with children and young people helping them to identify the risks they may face, particularly online. This programme has been used across the country, including in Northern Ireland, to help keep children and young people safe online.

Lucy Allan:[\[132277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with police forces across England to protect children from sexual exploitation.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has prioritised child sexual abuse as a national threat to empower police forces to maximise specialist skills and expertise. We have provided millions of pounds of extra investment through the Police Transformation Fund to transform policing's response to changing crimes and threats including crimes against vulnerable people such as child sexual abuse. This includes awarding £1.9 million to the College of Policing to develop comprehensive training for first responders, and pilot a new licence to practise which will ensure that only those officers who are qualified to carry out specialist investigations in high risk areas like child protection are able to do so.

We have also funded a network of police regional child sexual exploitation coordinators and analysts, who identify organised child sexual abuse across police force boundaries, and prevention officers who work with the coordinators and analysts to implement early preventative approaches in child sexual exploitation hotspots.

We have also introduced new powers for the police to tackle offenders including new Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and Sexual Risk Orders in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, 2014 (amending the Sexual Offences Act 2003).

■ Offences against Children: Telford

Caroline Lucas:

[\[132435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will commission an independent public inquiry into the abuse of children in Telford with a structure and processes that provide past and current survivors of this abuse with (a) input and control over how and when their voices are heard within the inquiry, (b) full recognition of the trauma that may be associated with a survivor giving evidence and (c) comprehensive support mechanisms; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

In March 2015 the Government established the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse to consider the extent to which institutions have failed in their duty to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. The Inquiry has announced that it is investigating institutional responses to the sexual exploitation of children by organised networks. This investigation is currently under way. Within the terms of reference it is for the Inquiry to decide what it investigates and how.

The Inquiry is also running the Truth Project, which allows victims and survivors of child sexual abuse to share their experiences with the Inquiry. Their accounts are not tested, challenged, or contradicted. The information supplied is anonymised and will be considered by the Chair and Panel members when reaching their conclusions and making recommendations for the future.

■ Police

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[132377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase the number of police officers in (a) England and Wales and (b) Gloucestershire; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

Decisions about the allocation of police resources and deployment of officers are for Chief Constables and democratically accountable PCCs. They are responsible for ensuring the needs of the local community are met.

In 2017, I spoke to every force in England and Wales about the changing demands they face, and how these can best be managed, including the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Gloucestershire. Following this engagement, I announced the police funding settlement for 2018/19 which will see an additional £450m invested in the policing system, around £270m direct to PCCs. I understand that the Gloucestershire PCC has chosen to use his increased precept flexibility, which will provide around £3.3m additional funding for Gloucestershire Police in 2018/19. The Gloucestershire PCC has said that he will use this additional funding to improve services delivered to the public.

■ Police Pursuits: Safety

Alex Sobel: [\[132269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to work with police forces to reduce the risk to pedestrians and motorists during high-speed police pursuits.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Home Office is undertaking a review of the law, guidance and practice surrounding police pursuits and response driving.

As well as seeking the views of other Government departments, the police, the Independent Office for Police Conduct and the Crown Prosecution Service, we have also engaged with those representing other road users to make sure the review reflects the needs of all those affected. The outcome of this review will be completed in due course.

■ Police: Armed Response Vehicles

Louise Haigh: [\[131344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the announcement entitled Extra armed police to deal with terrorist threat, published by the National Police Chiefs' Council on 1 April 2016, how many additional armed response vehicles have been operationally deployed.

Mr Nick Hurd:

We are providing £144 million over the spending review period to uplift our armed policing capability and capacity, in order to respond more quickly and effectively to a firearms attack. The first phase of the armed uplift is complete, providing an additional 41 Armed Response Vehicles and around 650 armed officers.

■ Police: Mobile Phones

Mr David Lammy: [\[132001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) mobile phones and (b) other electronic devices had data extracted from them using (i) self-service kiosks and (ii) regional hubs by each UK police force in the last 12 months.

Mr David Lammy: [\[132003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many UK police forces have written procedures, regulations or guidelines in place governing the use of mobile phone extraction tools.

Mr David Lammy: [\[132004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has received representations on the deletion of mobile phone data extracted from suspects released without charge; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Home Office does not hold information on the number of mobile phones and other electronic devices that had data extracted using self service kiosks or regional hubs. In addition, the department does not hold information on the number of UK forces that have written procedures, regulations or guidelines governing the use of mobile phone extraction tools. Operational guidance is a matter for policing.

The Home Office is not aware of any representations on the deletion of mobile phone data extracted from suspects released without charge.

Mr David Lammy:**[132208]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the regulations, procedures and guidelines on the police using mobile phone extraction tools.

Mr David Lammy:**[132209]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what comparative assessment her Department has made of the ethnicity of individuals who have had data extracted from their mobile phones by the police compared with the ethnicity of the general population.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Home Office has not made any such assessments. The police are operationally independent of the Home Office and operational guidance is a matter for them. Furthermore, the department does not hold this information on ethnicity.

■ Police: Reserves**Julian Knight:****[131855]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that Police and Crime Commissioners make effective use of financial reserves.

Mr Nick Hurd:

In 2017, Police and Crime Commissioners held over £1.6bn in financial reserves. This is public money and the public are entitled to more information around police plans for reserves and how those plans will support more effective policing. That is why in January 2018, we published details of reserves levels held in all police force areas in England and Wales. Alongside this, we provided new guidance requiring PCCs to publish their reserves strategies in plain English, with a clear justification for each reserve held, including how it will be used to help deliver a good quality service to the public. You can find this information at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-financial-reserves>

■ Psychiatry: Migrant Workers

Rosie Duffield: [131857]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of adding child and adolescent psychiatrists to the Shortage Occupation List.

Caroline Nokes:

The independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) advises the Government on changes to the Shortage Occupation List (SOL). The MAC has determined that a number of medical professionals, including all nurses, paramedics and various doctors, including posts in emergency medicine, clinical radiology and old age psychiatry, are in national shortage and they appear on the published SOL in Appendix K of the Immigration Rules.

The SOL sits under Tier 2, our main immigration route for non-EEA workers. Applications for jobs on the SOL receive the highest priority – and the highest number of points – when allocating a Tier 2 (General) place.

The SOL is kept under regular review, with the most recent changes made to it last April.

Rosie Duffield: [131858]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Tier 2 visa applications sponsored by the NHS for NHS child and adolescent psychiatrists were turned down in the most recent year for which data is available.

Caroline Nokes:

The information you have requested is not included in statistics published by the Home Office.

Information on the total number of Tier 2 refusals can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2017/list-of-tables#visas>

■ Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

David Hanson: [131905]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the expected (a) completion and (b) publication date of her Department's review of the operation of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office is committed to publishing the review 30 months after the introduction of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

■ Refugees: Children

Rosie Duffield:

[\[131860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to extend to children recognised as refugees the same family reunion rights granted to adults.

Caroline Nokes:

We already have a comprehensive framework for refugees and their families to be safely reunited in the UK. Our refugee family reunion policy allows immediate family members of those granted protection in the UK to reunite with them here. The family provisions in the immigration rules also provide for relatives with protection in the UK to sponsor children when there are serious and compelling circumstances.

Our policy is also clear that where an application fails under the rules, we will consider whether there are exceptional reasons to grant leave outside the rules. In addition, refugees with family members in the UK may be eligible for resettlement under the Mandate and Gateway Schemes.

This policy is designed to provide a safe and legal route for close, dependent family members to join their refugee family in the UK. However, we must not create incentives for families to send children on dangerous journeys, often in the hands of criminals, rather than seek protection in the first safe country they reach.

■ Refugees: Social Security Benefits

Paul Blomfield:

[\[132342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2018 to Question 129976 on Refugees, when she plans to publish the evaluation of the implementation of the Post Grant Appointment Service.

Caroline Nokes:

I refer the honourable member to the answer I gave the hon. member for Manchester Gorton on 5 March 2018.

■ Sikhs

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[132240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions he has had with the head of the Security Industry Authority on the treatment of visitors wearing turbans to establishments where registered security staff are working; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

There have been no recent discussions with the Security Industry Authority on the treatment of visitors wearing turbans to establishments where registered security staff are working.

The Security Industry Authority is responsible for regulating the private security industry. One of its main functions is the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities within the private security industry.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Bank Services**

Afzal Khan:

[\[132387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether (a) his Department and (b) Cifas has undertaken an audit of the bank refusals made in error between January and July 2016 identified by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration; and what steps his Department has taken to lower that error rate.

Caroline Nokes:

The Home Office has reviewed the specific data sets identified through the inspectorate's file sampling exercise of records shared with Cifas to ensure their continued suitability for inclusion in the specification.

We have built in safeguarding processes to mitigate the risk of taking decisions incorrectly.

Afzal Khan:

[\[132388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timetable is for information to be provided to his Department by Cifas for immigration enforcement.

Caroline Nokes:

The Home Office updates the list of disqualified persons shared with Cifas for the purpose of the 2014 and 2016 Acts on a weekly basis, and banks and building societies refer to this data when checking applications for new accounts and reviewing existing accounts.

The Home Office set up a mechanism to enable financial organisations to report, on a voluntary basis at any time, new information on other financial product applications to Home Office intelligence teams.

■ **Undocumented Workers: Advisory Services**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[132237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information on (a) labour rights and (b) access to advice and remedy is routinely provided to workers who (i) file a complaint with and (ii) are encountered during labour inspections conducted by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

Victoria Atkins:

When a worker contacts the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority with a complaint about an employer the GLAA directs them to the information available on its website which covers rights and sources of advice.

Every worker interviewed or encountered during a compliance inspection is provided with a 'Workers' Rights' leaflet available at <http://www.gla.gov.uk/i-am-a/i-am-a-worker/workers-rights-leaflets/>.

■ Visas

Vicky Foxcroft: **[131623]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visas have been refused under section 322 (5) of her Departments Immigration Rules for minor tax errors.

Caroline Nokes:

The specific information that has been requested is not included in statistics published by the Home Office.

Information on the number of applications and decisions (i.e. grants, refusals, withdrawn and lapsed cases) is published quarterly in the Home Office's Immigration Statistics, Visas volume 1, table vi_01_q, latest edition at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2017>

■ Visas: Israel

Matt Western: **[131827]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Israeli citizens, including those living in illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, have visa-free access to the UK for tourism and business purposes.

Caroline Nokes:

Israeli citizens do not require a visa to visit the UK and are assessed for entry at the UK border.

■ Wildlife: Smuggling

Kerry McCarthy: **[131441]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) budget for and (b) number of staff in the Border Force CITES team was in each of the last two years.

Caroline Nokes:

Border Force's indicative budget, for this and future years, is published as part of the Home Office's publishing of the Annual Report and Accounts. This information can be found at gov.uk. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2016-to-2017>)

The ever-changing and complex challenges Border Force faces means its workforce is becoming increasingly multi-skilled, dynamic and flexible. Border Force has a workforce model clearly setting out roles and skills coupled with a strategic workforce planning process enabling effective identification of resourcing needs, training requirements and the effective deployment of staff. Staff can be deployed to areas of greatest need at short notice.

Border Force uses an intelligence led approach to detecting illegal CITES trade. This is a proportionate and risk based approach taking account of all available intelligence to inform targeting activities and deployments at the frontier.

■ **Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[131773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the hon. Member for Tottenham on 6 March 2018, column 187, Yarl's Wood Detention Centre, for what reason the question on human rights obligations was not answered.

Caroline Nokes:

We do not consider that the letter issued to individuals in immigration detention who have refused foods or fluids contravened human rights obligations.

The approach taken in the letter accurately reflects the fact that, in the interests of health and safety, the most appropriate way in which to respond to some cases of refusal to take food or fluids is to prioritise the consideration of the individual's case including, if appropriate, their removal from detention and the UK, whilst ensuring that the case is processed fairly.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Families: Disadvantaged**

Luciana Berger:

[\[132431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local troubled family co-ordinators there were working as part of the Troubled Families Programme in each year from 2012 to 2017.

Rishi Sunak:

Councils participating in the Troubled Families programme are required to dedicate sufficient coordination and analytical resource to delivering the programme locally.

In every year from 2012 to 2017 there has been a Troubled Families coordinator in each of 150 upper-tier councils participating in the Troubled Families Programme.

In addition to Troubled Families Coordinators who are responsible for the local implementation of the Troubled Families programme, there are also Troubled Families Employment Advisers, specialist data analysts and family key workers in every upper-tier local council who support delivery of the programme. A wide range of other specialist support will also be commissioned or called upon to provide support for families when they need it.

■ Local Government: Elections

Wera Hobhouse: [\[132278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will permit people running in local council elections to put their electoral ward as their address for personnel security reasons.

Rishi Sunak:

In its Response (Cm9578) published on the 14 March 2018, to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Review of Intimidation in Public Life, the Government accepts the Committee's recommendation to remove the requirement for candidates standing as local councillors to have their home address published on the ballot paper, and will look to bring forward secondary legislation to achieve this at a suitable opportunity with the aim of effecting this change in time for the 2019 local elections. The intention is for this secondary legislation to replace the requirement for a specific address with an option to include a statement of residence based on an electoral area where the candidate lives.

■ Rented Housing: Low Incomes

Dan Jarvis: [\[132422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the average cost of renting a property in (a) the social rented sector and (b) the private rented sector for households on low incomes in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The Department's English Housing Survey collects and publishes data on the average rent in the social and private rented sectors, this can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2016-to-2017-headline-report>

■ Social Media: Hate Crime

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[131637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether social media platforms are required to (a) report to the police, (b) cooperate with a police investigation and (c) remove content from their sites that is classified as online (i) abuse and (ii) hate crime.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

There are provisions under the Terrorism Acts that require the take-down of terrorist related material. Where material is harmful, but does not fall under this legislation the Social Media Platforms are governed by their own policy.

We have been working with industry partners, States and civil society under the High-Level Group on Hate Crime lead by the European Commission. This work has led to

the agreement of a set of 'standards of response' from the larger platforms and an active monitoring process to measure compliance.

The agreement, reached in 2016 can be viewed at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1937_en.htm and the first annual monitoring report can be viewed at http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=612086

■ Social Rented Housing: Consultation Papers

Dan Jarvis:

[\[132423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the social housing Green Paper is planned to include measures to increase the supply of social housing.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The Social Housing Green Paper will be a wide-ranging review of social housing in England.

Building more affordable homes is an absolute priority for this Government, and we have announced an additional £2 billion funding for affordable housing in areas of acute affordability pressure, increasing our budget to over £9 billion for a range of affordable homes, including for social rent. As part of this funding, at Spring Statement the Chancellor announced an extra £1.67 billion for an additional 26,000 more affordable homes in London and we made it a condition that some must be social rent. We will also raise the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap by a total of up to £1 billion in areas of high affordability pressure for councils who are ready to start building new homes.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Foreign Relations

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[132257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2018 to Question 129962, on Democratic Republic of Congo: Politics and Government, what recent (a) meetings and (b) discussions the UK Government has had with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Harriett Baldwin:

The UK has ongoing dialogue with the government of DRC on a range of political, economic and developmental issues. This is conducted through our Ambassador and officials in Kinshasa as well as visiting Ministers /senior officials from UK government departments. Most recently, the former Minister for Africa, Rory Stewart MP met President Kabila and other senior DRC ministers in November 2017 during his visit. This was preceded by a visit of the UK Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Simon Mustard. The UK continues to call for progress towards a peaceful transfer of power in the DRC, including by encouraging the government of DRC and other

political stakeholders to respect the constitution and fully implement the Saint Sylvestre accord.

■ Ethiopia: Food

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[132381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the level of food security in Ethiopia.

Harriett Baldwin:

Ethiopia is facing another drought in 2018, with high levels of humanitarian need. This week, the government of Ethiopia launched a humanitarian appeal which sets out that 7.9 million people are in need of emergency assistance to meet their basic food needs in 2018. This is on top of the 7.9 million people who are food insecure from year to year and are supported by the government of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP).

Responding to food insecurity is a top priority for the UK in Ethiopia and our work is making a real difference. DFID is currently assisting 4 million people in Ethiopia to meet their emergency food needs. Through the PSNP, we are also providing food and cash transfers to 840,000 people, building their food security. We will continue to closely monitor the level of food security in Ethiopia.

■ Gaza: Health Services

Alex Sobel:

[\[132188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether his Department plans to provide support for health services in Gaza as a result of the recent findings of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Alistair Burt:

The UK is providing £1.9 million to support the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Gaza urgent funding appeal. This is being delivered through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support critical water and sanitation needs identified by the appeal. UK funding is helping to provide clean water and rehabilitate sanitation facilities to stop the spread of disease, benefitting up to 1 million Gazans. Additionally the UK is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), which provides basic services to 1.3 million people in Gaza, including basic health care.

JUSTICE

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Alex Sobel:

[\[132189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will take steps to ensure the accessibility of early legal advice; and what steps are being taken to include proposals to

increase the provision of such early legal advice in the Government's review of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012.

Lucy Frazer:

Early legal advice is available for all legal cases within the scope of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO), subject to an assessment of means and merits. Last year, nearly £100m of public money was spent on early legal advice in civil cases.

As part of the LASPO post-implementation review, we will be looking at the changes introduced to legal aid by and under Part 1 of LASPO, including the changes to the scope of early legal advice and legal representation.

We have now launched the engagement phase of the post-implementation review into legal aid reforms. We will be gathering information from stakeholders and other interested parties to inform the future of legal support. We will use this opportunity to inform our wider consideration on the future of early legal advice in the justice system.

■ **Liverpool Prison**

Frank Field:

[131592]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to respond to recent reports on conditions at HMP Liverpool.

Lucy Frazer:

The conditions which inspectors found at Liverpool were unacceptable and effective measures should have been taken to deal with issues at a much earlier stage. A comprehensive action plan was published on the 19 January which sets out our plans on how we will address issues which the inspectorate has raised. This can be found via the following link: <https://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/contacts/hmps/prison-finder/hmp-liverpool-action-plan.pdf>

There is much still to do. However, we have now reduced operational capacity at HMP Liverpool compared with the inspection period, a new Governor has been appointed, and backlogs of maintenance tasks are being addressed, including repairing and replacing windows.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Sexual Offences**

Catherine McKinnell:

[129967]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department plans to implement any of the recommendations of the report, Joint Serious Case Review Concerning Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adults with Needs for Care and Support in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, published by the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board and Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board.

Lucy Frazer:

Child sexual exploitation is abhorrent and the crimes perpetrated in Newcastle have had a devastating impact on the lives of the victims. The Government acknowledges the seriousness of the issues raised in this serious case review and is committed to improving the national response to tackling sexual exploitation.

We have already taken significant action to tackle this issue. In February 2017, the Government published its Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: Progress Report and announced a £40m package of measures to protect children and young people from sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking, and to crack down on offenders. This included £7.5m for a new, ground-breaking Centre of Expertise that will identify, generate, and share high quality evidence of what works to prevent and tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 contains a wide range of offences designed to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation and provides robust sentences that reflect the seriousness of this offending. We keep these areas of the criminal law under review to ensure it is fully equipped to deal with the scourge of sexual offending against children and young people. For example, in April 2017, we commenced the offence of "sexual communications with a child", building on existing "grooming" offences.

The recommendations of the review cover a wide range of issues, which we will consider carefully in the context of this existing programme of work.

■ Prison Officers: Termination of Employment**David Hanson:****[131628]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people who had a prison officer grade were (a) dismissed and (b) resigned in each year since 2010.

Lucy Frazer:

The number of band 3-5 prison officers who have resigned or have been dismissed in each year since 2010 can be found in table 11b in the latest HMPPS workforce statistics publication at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-december-2017>

■ Prisoners: Mothers**Ms Marie Rimmer:****[131528]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women who had babies or infants resident with them in prison had those children taken away from them in 2017.

Lucy Frazer:

The number of babies and infants leaving Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) is recorded locally, but not collated centrally. The requested information could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

There are many reasons why babies or infants may be separated from their mothers. In all cases where it is proposed that a baby or infant should leave an MBU, a Separation Board takes place. The Board has an independent Chair and advice is provided by Children's Services. The separation process is carefully planned and sensitively handled. The paramount consideration in all cases is in the best interests of the child.

■ Prisoners: Pregnancy

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[131531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women were known to be pregnant while on remand or serving a sentence in prison in 2017.

Lucy Frazer:

Data on pregnancy are collected quarterly. The figures for 2017 are given in the table below.

All expectant mothers can apply for a place in a Mother and Baby Unit.

The Government is committed to improving the treatment of female offenders, and is exploring how we may enable more women with young children to serve their sentence in the community.

However, it is important to recognise that some women may commit offences that merit a custodial sentence, including some mothers with babies.

DATE	PREGNANT WOMEN ON REMAND/SERVING A SENTENCE IN PRISON
31 March	85
30 June	90
30 September	99
31 December	93

■ Prisons: Mother and Baby Units

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[131525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women in custody applied for a place in a mother and baby unit in 2017.

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[\[131526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women in custody were refused a place in a mother and baby unit in 2017; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

When considering applications for admission to Mother and Baby Units, the best interests of the child are paramount.

In 2016-17, 119 applications were received; 61 were approved and 16 declined. The remaining applications did not proceed for other reasons. Some women may change their mind, are released from custody, miscarry or have a termination.

■ **Prisons: Vocational Guidance**

Imran Hussain: [\[131647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many FTE National Careers Service staff were working in prisons at (a) 1 March 2016, (b) 1 March 2017 and (c) 1 March 2018.

Imran Hussain: [\[131648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the time-scale is for prison governors to be able to commission careers services.

Imran Hussain: [\[131649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether prison governors are able to employ National Careers Service staff.

Imran Hussain: [\[131650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when prison governors were informed of the decision to end National Careers Service provision in prisons.

Imran Hussain: [\[131651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what provision his Department is making to enable continued support for prisoners in applying for funds for distance learning and to support them with their courses as a result of the ending National Careers Service provision in prisons.

Imran Hussain: [\[131652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment the Government made of the potential merits of extending National Careers Service provision in those prisons where that service was effective.

Imran Hussain: [\[131654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department carried out an impact assessment on the decision to end National Careers Service provision in prisons.

Imran Hussain: [\[131655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what representations he has received on the decision to end National Careers Service provision in prisons.

Imran Hussain: [\[131656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the consistency of National Careers Service provision across the prison estate.

Imran Hussain:

[\[131657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what provisions are planned to be in place from 1 April 2018 to provide prisoners with independent careers advice at the start of their sentence.

Imran Hussain:

[\[131658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that careers advice services in prisons after 1 April 2018 maintain relationships with employers and educational institutions established under the National Careers Service.

Imran Hussain:

[\[131659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, to how many employers National Careers Service providers have referred prisoners during 2017.

Imran Hussain:

[\[131660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, to how many colleges and universities National Careers Service providers have referred prisoners during 2017.

Imran Hussain:

[\[131661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which services provided by the National Careers Service he plans to replace after the ending of that service's provision in prisons by 1 April 2018.

Lucy Frazer:

In 2016 a review of prison education by Dame Sally Coates commented on the overlap and duplication within current arrangements for support to prisoners. The Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service considered an internal review of National Careers Service (NCS) in custody delivery, which included the views of Governors and learning and skills staff, and identified significant inconsistencies and variations in delivery between prisons making it difficult to be assured that a universal and equitable service was being provided across the estate. The key findings of the review indicated that the National Careers Service in Custody contract was not delivering universal coverage across the estate and there was little time and opportunity to make the contract more responsive if extended for the maximum period of six months.

The current contracts for NCS delivery in custody (which are owned by the Education and Skills Funding Agency) will end on 31st March 2018. The contract could have been extended for a further period of 6 months maximum but such an extension left little time or opportunity to make them more responsive to the needs of people in prison. It may also have led to a further decline in delivery and performance as the contracts wound down and NCS staff sought and secured alternative employment. To avoid this, and to maintain value for money, a decision was taken not to extend the contracts further. The ESFA, under the terms of their contract gave notice to their providers by the end of 2017. Governors were informed via an internal HMPPS communication during the week of 22 January 2018.

Parliamentary interest around this area has been received from Lord Beecham who asked an Urgent Question which was tabled in the Lords on 31 January (asking why the government had cancelled the contract of the National Careers Service) and Lord Bird who is also seeking a meeting with Lord Keen to discuss this issue.

From this autumn, governors will be able to commission Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) through a new Dynamic Purchasing System introduced as part of the education reform arrangements. This will enable governors to shape a coherent service, reflecting the particular needs of their establishment. Until then prison governors will continue to have access to a range of existing providers for IAG advice such as DWP Prison Job Coaches, education staff (under the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) arrangements) and Community Rehabilitation Company staff. Also, in line with giving greater empowerment to prison governors, they may use their budgets to fill any priority gaps locally. Due to the range of available current (and future) delivery there is no requirement for governors to seek to employ NCS staff.

We will continue to work collaboratively with a range of partners to facilitate distance learning courses for prisoners. Opportunities for such study will still be available from the Open University (OU) and from the Prisoners Education Trust 'Steps to Success Scheme'. Additional learner support is also available under the OLASS arrangements and from the Virtual Campus (VC) e-learning platform that includes a number of career planning tools and OU courses, enabling prisoners to receive a similar learning experience to that of their mainstream peers.

The information requested in relation to the number of FTE NCS staff working in prisons, NCS provider referrals of prisoners during 2017 and colleges and universities that NCS providers have referred prisoners to during 2017 is not collected by the Department.

Imran Hussain: [\[131653\]](#)

o ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to announce the timetable for arrangements to replace National Careers Service provision in prisons.

Imran Hussain: [\[131662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he plans to take to ensure that careers advice provision contracts from the period beginning 1 April 2018 are not awarded to companies at risk of failure.

Lucy Frazer:

We will establish a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to operate alongside the main Prison Education Framework contract which will allow governors to commission specialist providers to complement the main educational provision.

From this autumn, governors will be able to commission careers advice through the DPS, and we believe this will allow governors to shape a coherent service, reflecting the particular needs of their establishment.

We carry out financial and commercial due diligence on potential suppliers as part of the procurement process for any new contracts that will be awarded for careers advice. This is part of the standard approach to due diligence as part of government procurement.

■ **Sexual Offences Act 2003**

Tim Loughton:

[\[132312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to review the scope of individuals covered by the position of trust terms of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to include (a) youth workers, (b) sports coaches and (c) ministers of religion.

Lucy Frazer:

The protection of children remains a priority for this Government.

My officials are currently considering proposals being developed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to extend the definition of a 'position of trust' in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to include "sports coaches".

We currently have no plans to extend the definitions to include youth workers or ministers of religion, but we keep this important area of the law under regular review.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ **Members: Allowances**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[132250\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what the cost to the House has been of payments made to hon. Members who have not taken their seats in the House in respect of their Parliamentary duties, in each of the last 10 years.

Andrea Leadsom:

The amount of representative money paid to Members of Parliament that have not taken their seats is based on the annual percentage increase of the consumer price index as at the previous December. Attached to this answer is a breakdown of the costs over the last 10 years.

Attachments:

1. Breakdown of representative money [Representative Money - Sinn Fein.docx]

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Devolution: Northern Ireland**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[132317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps she is taking to restore devolution in Northern Ireland.

Mr Shailesh Vara:

The UK Government remains determined to see devolved government re-established in Northern Ireland. We are committed to working with all the Northern Ireland parties - and with the Irish Government as appropriate - to remove the barriers to restoring the Executive and a fully functioning Assembly. Further detail is set out in the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's statement to the House of 12 March.

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry**Lady Hermon:**[\[131709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if she will meet the Chairman of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in Northern Ireland to discuss the implementation of his report; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Shailesh Vara:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will of course consider carefully any invitation she receives. It is important to note, however, that the report was commissioned by the devolved government, and how to respond to its recommendations should properly be for a devolved government to decide.

Northern Ireland Government**David Simpson:**[\[131416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when the Government plans to place a Minister in the Department of Health in Northern Ireland in the absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr Shailesh Vara:

It remains the UK Government's strong belief that devolved government is in the best interests of all the people of Northern Ireland. Our commitment to devolution under the terms of the Belfast Agreement remains steadfast.

In the continued absence of devolved government, however, the UK Government will take the necessary steps to ensure good governance and the continued delivery of public services in Northern Ireland. That included the step taken last week by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the setting of a budget for 2018-19. This budget position included a real terms boost to health spending to address building pressures in that area.

Lady Hermon:[\[131703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps she is taking to appoint an independent person to chair the next round of talks between the DUP and Sinn Fein and other political parties in order to restore a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Shailesh Vara:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made a statement on 12 March. She has made clear she will rule nothing out which could assist the parties in reaching an

agreement. Ultimately, this requires the parties to come together and find an accommodation that restores the Executive.

■ St Patrick's Day: Police

David Simpson:

[\[132653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what information she holds on policing costs during St Patrick's Day celebrations in 2017 in Northern Ireland.

Mr Shailesh Vara:

Policing is a devolved matter. The PSNI's main grant budget is allocated by the Department of Justice from the Northern Ireland block grant, through the Policing Board. Operational policing costs are a matter for the Chief Constable.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Northern Ireland Government

Lady Hermon:

[\[131700\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, if she will publish the advice she received from the DUP in relation to her visit to Belfast on 12 February 2018 during the negotiations between the DUP and Sinn Fein; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs Theresa May:

As you would expect, Ministers and advisers spoke to a number of people from different parties in the run-up to the my visit, but no written advice was received from the DUP or any other party.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Young People

Dan Jarvis:

[\[132425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a 16-25 bus discount scheme similar to the 16-25 railcard.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Department is supportive of concessions for 16-25 year olds. However, there are no plans at present to introduce a statutory national bus travel concession for all young people across England. Local authorities have the discretion to offer travel concessions to young people, funded from local resources. In addition, many operators offer discounted tickets on commercial basis.

The Conservative Manifesto contained a commitment to introduce discounted travel on buses for apprentices. My Department is currently exploring the best way of delivering this.

■ **Department for Transport: Consultants**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[131761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much money his Department has spent on each (a) consultant and (b) consultancy firm since 2010-11.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The following table provides the total published consultancy expenditure for the core Department and its four executive agencies*, covering financial years 2010-11 to 2016-17:

FINANCIAL YEAR	EXPENDITURE (£M)
2010-11	6.5
2011-12	6.1
2012-13	10.9
2013-14	9.0
2014-15	19.6
2015-16	27.6
2016-17	50.0

Expenditure for the current financial year would be published at a future date, and is therefore not included in the above table.

We are unable to answer the second part of your request as this information it is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The increased expenditure levels from 2014-15 result from the progression of a number of large infrastructure projects such as Thameslink, Crossrail and Intercity Express, plus increased activity linked to HS2, requiring additional legal and technical expertise which is not held internally within the Department. The increase is a reflection of Government's commitment to provide the biggest investment in transport infrastructure in generations. All consultancy contracts are competitively tendered to ensure value for money and every effort is made to transfer skills to permanent staff and ensure reduced reliance on external contractors.

*DfT's executive agencies are: Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency, Maritime & Coastguard Agency, Vehicle Certification Agency

■ East Coast Rail Franchise

Ian Mearns:

[\[132024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the partnership comprising Arup, SNC-Lavalin Transport Advisory (InterFleet) and EY to provide services to support him with his duties as operator of last resort, was extended when the original two year contract expired in November 2017.

Joseph Johnson:

Yes. The original contract is capable of being extended for a period of up to 12 months. The Department exercised 6 months of this extension in November 2017.

■ Electric Vehicles

Richard Burden:

[\[132284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the uptake levels of electric and low-emission vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

Since 2011, over 130,000 ultra-low emission battery electric, hydrogen fuel cell and plug-in hybrid vehicles have been registered in the UK. Sales of ultra-low emission vehicles have been increasing rapidly, up by 27% in 2017 compared to 2016.

However, they still make up only a small proportion of the total with 1.8% of all new car sales in 2017. We want to see this continue to increase and we will shortly be publishing a strategy on the transition to zero emission road transport.

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[132364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of electronic vehicles on UK roads by 2028.

Jesse Norman:

We have not made an estimate for 2028. However, the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, published in October, set out that one possible pathway to 2032 could involve emissions from transport falling by almost 30 per cent compared to today. In order to achieve this pathway at least 30 per cent of new car sales are expected to be ultra low emission vehicles by 2030, and possibly as many as 70 per cent. For new vans, up to 40 per cent of sales could be ultra low emission vehicles by 2030.

■ Electric Vehicles: Grants

Richard Burden:

[\[132282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to renew the plug-in car grant for electric vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Plug-in Car Grant will be maintained at the current rates until at least late April 2018. We are currently undertaking a review of grant rates and will make an

announcement on next steps in due course. The Plug-in Car Grant will continue in some form until at least the beginning of 2020.

■ Global Navigation Satellite Systems: Driving Tests

Anna Turley:

[\[132281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Public and Commercial Services Union on the implications for public safety of the new satellite navigation test.

Jesse Norman:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) introduced the new practical driving test on 4 December 2017. Senior officials engaged with representatives from the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union throughout the development of the new driving test and considered any concerns raised by PCS.

The new elements of the test were trialled extensively. No incidents were recorded during the trial of in excess of 3,000 candidates.

In July 2017, the DVSA carried out a risk assessment of the new test and conducted further evaluations in September 2017, which did not identify any unacceptable risk. It also commissioned an independent assessment of the test from The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The RoSPA report concluded that all new parts of the driving test were low risk.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[131760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's most recent estimate of the total cost of High Speed Rail 2 is; and how much of that funding has been spent.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

At the 2015 Spending Review (SR15), the Government restated the long-term Funding Envelope for delivery of the full HS2 scheme of £55.73bn (2015 prices), of which £27.18bn has been allocated to Phase One and £28.55bn for Phase Two. We are determined to deliver HS2 within its total Funding Envelope and have set HS2 Ltd cost targets to deliver the programme below this amount.

Expenditure on HS2 from 2009/10 to 2016/17 is £2.3bn. This consists of expenditure by both HS2 Ltd on delivering the programme and by the Department for Transport on land and property.

■ High Speed Trains: Midland Main Railway Line

Andy McDonald:

[\[132359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost of ensuring the High Speed Trains on the East Midlands line will be PRM TSI compliant by 2020.

Joseph Johnson:

The Department is working with East Midlands Trains to consider various options and the indicative costs for meeting the accessibility requirements on the route. No decisions have yet been taken. Around two thirds of the rolling stock sets on the East Midlands line are not High Speed Trains.

Motor Vehicle Type Approval: Cars**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[132378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of (a) the number of the kit or replica cars on the road and (b) what proportion of vehicle emissions they represent.

Joseph Johnson:

It is not possible to estimate the number of kit or replica cars on the road since registration figures are not readily available for such manufacturers. As a result we are unable to estimate the proportion of vehicle emissions they produce.

Sir Greg Knight:[\[132382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to Road vehicles: improving air quality and safety consultation, published by his Department in February 2018, what estimate he has made of the number of people employed in SMEs in the kit car or replica car industry; and what discussions he has had with those SMEs on his proposals set out in that consultation.

Joseph Johnson:

The Department actively engaged with the motor manufacturing industry while developing the proposals in this consultation, which closed on Friday March 2nd. We did not hold specific discussions with kit car or replica car manufacturers, or estimate the number of people employed in this particular sector of the industry. All responses to the consultation, from all sectors, will be carefully considered in shaping the government's policy and the final regulatory measures.

Parking: Pedestrian Areas**Kate Osamor:**[\[131899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to review his Department's policy on parking on pavements.

Jesse Norman:

Decisions on pavement parking should be taken by councils, based on their understanding of local needs. However, the Department for Transport is undertaking further evidence-gathering on the issue of pavement parking and how it is addressed in current regulation.

■ Public Transport: Rural Areas**Dan Jarvis:**[\[132426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the adequate provision of public transport in rural areas.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government recognises the importance of public transport for both the sustainability and independence of rural communities. Since January 2014, £40m Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) funding per year is paid directly to local authorities, rather than bus operators, in relation to the services that councils fund. This funding is ring-fenced to ensure that it is used to support bus services, but within that it will be for each local authority to decide how to use it.

We are also encouraging local authorities to innovate such as through our Total Transport pilot projects which have explored ways to join up the commissioning of publicly funded transport services so that available funding goes further. The Bus Services Act 2017 also provides a number of tools to facilitate local authorities working together with operators and communities to provide improved bus services in rural areas.

■ Railway Industry Association**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[132111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implication for his policies of the report by Oxford Economics on behalf of the Railway Industry Association, published in February 2018.

Joseph Johnson:

The Government welcomes the report by Oxford Economics on behalf of the Railway Industry Association, entitled "The Economic Contribution of UK Rail 2018". My officials will be reviewing the report in detail, to consider how and where it might be used to inform future policies.

■ Railway Stations: Repairs and Maintenance**Ruth George:**[\[132318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much has been spent from the public purse through the Access to All fund to make improvements to railway stations in each years since 2006.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Since 2006, spending through the Access for All programme is as follows:

(£m)

2006/09	£102.1
2009/10	£57.89
2010/11	£43.67
2011/12	£54.1
2012/13	£52.18
2013/14	£105.28
2014/15	£47.96
2015/16	£43.19
2016/17	£42.6
2017/18	£15.4

Note that funding isn't allocated on a specific annualised basis. Projects get developed and built over several years, so in some years more is spent, in some years less. We have committed to continuing Access for All in CP6.

Ruth George:

[\[132319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, of what factors Network Rail and his Department take account in deciding on allocations of Access to All funding.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

For the last tranche of funding, stations were selected based on their annual footfall, weighted by the incidence of disability in the area. We also took into account the priorities of the industry, the availability of third party funding and local factors such as proximity to a hospital, together with consideration of geographic spread across the rail network.

Although details of how we will select stations for future funding has yet to be finalised it is likely to be broadly similar to the process used for earlier tranches of the programme.

Ruth George:

[\[132320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what public funding other than Access to All funding is available for improvements to accessibility at railway stations.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Aside from the dedicated Access for All funding, two funds are partly dedicated to improving accessibility - each of the franchised operators has around £100,000 to £600,000 to spend annually in making accessibility improvements at stations as part of the Minor Works Budget; and the Station Improvement Fund introduced in the Northern Rail and West Midlands Railway franchises can also be used to make stations accessible.

In addition, there are five other funding streams which may help deliver accessibility improvements insofar as any upgrades delivered under them would have to comply with current accessibility standards – the National Stations Improvement Programme, the Station Commercial Project Facility, Customer and Community Investment, Designated Community Rail Development Fund and Major Projects works (as per the redevelopment of Reading station for example).

Ruth George: [\[132330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which railway stations have received Access for All funding in each of the last five years.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Access for All funding is allocated in 5 year Control Periods. For 2014-19 a further 68 stations were selected for the programme. Details of all of the stations which have received funding since 2006 are available on the Network Rail website at:

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/passengers/station-improvements/access-for-all/>

■ Railways

Andy McDonald: [\[132358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the timetable of three weeks allocated by the Office of Rail and Road for a public consultation to scrutinise Network Rail's strategic plan for the railways between 2019 and 2024.

Joseph Johnson:

The Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) invitation for stakeholders to comment on Network Rail's Strategic Business Plans was just one part of its two and a half year process to inform the regulatory framework for Control Period 6 (CP6). This is an interactive process, with stakeholders invited to engage at every stage. Additionally, ORR expressly required Network Rail to engage with its stakeholders as part of its development of the Strategic Business Plans. These plans have now been submitted to ORR for review and ORR invited high level feedback from stakeholders, including passenger representative groups, to inform its assessment of what Network Rail should deliver in CP6 and the funding that is required for this. ORR made clear that it was seeking high level and material points only at this stage. Furthermore, ORR will consult on its draft determination in June until the end of August, which will give stakeholders a further – and more formal - opportunity to comment and to do so in more detail.

■ Railways: Concessions

Tulip Siddiq: [\[132348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons the nationwide trial of the 26-30 railcard was limited to 10,000 such railcards; and whether his Department took steps to ensure that government digital systems could cope with the level of demand.

Joseph Johnson:

The Chancellor announced a 26-30 railcard in Budget 2017. The nationwide trial of 10,000 26-30 railcards is an industry-led initiative to gather evidence and to inform discussions between Government and industry about roll-out of the railcard. Delivery of the trial launch, including sales of the railcard, was led by Rail Delivery Group and it was their digital systems that handled transactions and enquiries on the day.

Railways: Franchises**Ian Mearns:**[\[132026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will place an updated copy of the contracted franchise payment profiles for all train operating companies in the Library.

Joseph Johnson:

The Secretary of State for Transport will endeavour to place an updated copy of the contracted franchise payment profile for all train operating companies in the Libraries of both Houses shortly after the laying of the Department's annual accounts before Parliament.

Railways: Infrastructure**Ian Mearns:**[\[132025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether Directly Operated Railways has a valid safety certificate under the Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 and is authorised to work on rail infrastructure, to run trains and to manage stations.

Joseph Johnson:

No. Directly Operated Railways Ltd is not a Train Operating Company so it is not necessary for it to be licensed for railway operations. In the event that the Department for Transport needs to step in to run rail passenger operations in its capacity as the Operator of last Resort it will use another of its companies as the train operator. The OLR is currently in discussion with the Office of Rail and Road to secure all relevant licenses, including those relating to safety, in line with its normal operating procedures. This is in connection with the Secretary of State's announcement to Parliament of 5 February 2018.

Railways: Procurement**Andy McDonald:**[\[132360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Network Rail's procurement framework for Control Period 6 will encourage UK SMEs to tender for work.

Joseph Johnson:

As an arm's length body, Network Rail (NR) operates with independence on day-to-day operational matters from the Department. Good procurement practices however demand that public sector organisations buy the goods, works and services they

need using fair and open procurement processes, meeting the standards in Managing Public Money.

I do note, however, NR is taking a number of actions to increase their direct and indirect spending with SME businesses, including:

- Reviewing procurement processes to ensure barriers are removed, for example clearer instructions for and the introduction of simpler financial assessments for bidders into NR's standard Pre-Qualification Questionnaire;
- Reviewing poor main contractor practices in the management of sub-contractors;
- Actively encouraging Tier 1 suppliers to embrace the SME agenda by implementing regional conferences with SME/Tier 2 suppliers;
- Continuing to increase engagement with SMEs through roadshows and attendance at meet the buyer/trade events as well as improving pipeline visibility and promoting greater consistency in performance measures;
- Developing capability within NR to enable better understanding of indirect expenditure with SMEs;
- Contributing to various cross-industry working groups and leading the dialogue within the Rail Supply Group on improving SME engagement.

■ Roads: Shrewsbury

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[132363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether an announcement on the North West Relief Road and the large local majors scheme is still scheduled to take place in the summer of 2018.

Jesse Norman:

The Government intends to make announcements on the current Large Local Major scheme bids, which include the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road, by the summer of 2018.

■ Southeastern: Rolling Stock

Tom Tugendhat:

[\[132058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with Southeastern on its compliance in delivering a minimum train length at all times on the Hastings Line, Paddock Wood Line and Maidstone East Line.

Joseph Johnson:

My officials regularly meet with Southeastern to discuss performance. We monitor Southeastern's performance against their contractual targets. These targets include thresholds for short formations during the morning and evening peaks. These are measured across the franchise as a whole, not by line or route.

TREASURY**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties****Fiona Bruce:**[\[132365\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has had discussions with the Home Office on the re-introduction of the alcohol duty escalator; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Jenrick:

Treasury ministers meet regularly with ministers from other departments to discuss a wide range of policy issues.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of ministerial discussions are not disclosed.

■ Bank Services: Travellers**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[131615\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to encourage the banking sector to improve financial inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to ensuring that individuals, regardless of their background or income, have access to useful and affordable financial products and services. The Equality Act 2010 protects all individuals, including Gypsies and Travellers, against racial and other forms of discrimination.

The Payment Accounts Regulations 2015 require the nine largest personal current account providers in the UK to offer fee-free basic bank accounts to customers who do not have a bank account or who are ineligible for a bank's standard current account. The regulations also state that when a customer applies for an account, firms must not discriminate by reason of the customer's place of residence, and that the conditions applicable to holding a basic bank account must not be discriminatory.

In order to open a basic bank account, firms will need to verify their customers' identities, which generally includes verifying their addresses. While the way in which firms choose to do this is not stipulated in law or by the regulator, firms are assisted in making such policies through industry produced guidance notes. For the financial institutions, these are the Joint Money Laundering Steering Group (JMLSG) guidance notes.

The JMLSG guidance notes acknowledge that if Travellers are not able to produce standard identification evidence, and if verification of address is necessary, a check with the local authority, which has to register travellers' sites, may sometimes be helpful.

More widely, the Government has also committed to establish a Financial Inclusion Policy Forum, which will provide leadership and ensure collaboration across government and with the sector in tackling financial exclusion.

■ Children: Day Care**Catherine McKinnell:** [\[132259\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2018 to Question 126732, what the evidential basis is for HMRC's estimation that less than one per cent of families eligible to receive tax-free childcare will not be able to use online services or access the internet.

Elizabeth Truss:

The estimate of those able to use online services or access the internet is based on research of the target market. HMRC commissioned research to understand parent's digital capability and confidence to manage an online childcare account.

■ Credit**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[131758\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the total cost cap on payday lending to high-cost credit products.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to protecting consumers from unfair lending practises. To this end, the government has given the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) strong powers, including the power to cap the cost of credit, and it will do so if it thinks it is necessary to protect consumers.

The FCA is conducting a review of the high-cost credit market, and will publish a substantive update in May. The government will continue to work closely with the FCA to ensure that all customers are treated fairly.

■ Employment**Liam Byrne:** [\[131568\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 8 in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government is committed to the delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 8 calls for action to "*promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*".

The most sustainable way to drive growth is to raise productivity. This Government is determined to boost productivity by investing in infrastructure, boosting R&D spending, and ensuring businesses can access the finance they need to grow.

We are also improving skills provision, notably through the introduction of T-levels and a focus on apprenticeships, so that everyone has the skills they need to prosper in the economy of the future. We are now at record employment, and we are ensuring good work through taking forward Matthew Taylor's recommendations.

■ Money Laundering: Prosecutions

Helen Goodman:

[\[132298\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 5 March 2018 to Question 130173, on Money Laundering: Prosecutions, if he will list the individuals successfully prosecuted under the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 in (a) 2016-17 and (b) 2017-18.

Mel Stride:

HMRC is not able to disclose the information requested.

■ Multinational Companies: Taxation

Frank Field:

[\[132344\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the potential monies that would accrue to the public purse of the introduction of revenue-based taxes on multinational companies.

Mel Stride:

The UK applies value-added tax to businesses' supplies of goods and services to UK consumers. Corporation tax is imposed on a business's profits relating to value generated through UK activities. The government continues to support the principle that a multinational group's profits should be taxed in the countries in which it generates value. It does not, for example, believe that the profits of a business that undertakes all of its activities in the UK should be taxed in overseas markets in which the business's goods and services might be sold.

The Government has set out its receptiveness to exploring interim measures with like-minded countries, like a tax on revenues, to tax certain digital businesses which generate value from UK users. That would be designed to compensate for unrecognised user-created value pending wider reform of the international corporate tax system. The yield from such a tax would depend on its scope, rate and detailed design.

■ Pensions: Low Incomes

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[132258\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to encourage people from low-income households to save towards their pensions.

John Glen:

Automatic enrolment has been a success with 9.4 million workers enrolled into workplace pensions since 2012.

Figures from DWP show that the largest increase in participation has been among eligible low earners, with 63% of these workers in the private sector earning between £10,000 and £19,999 now saving into a workplace pension – an increase of 43 percentage points from 2012. Workplace pension participation among eligible men and women has equalised.

We want to build on the increase in participation. The minimum contributions required under automatic enrolment will increase from the current 2% of qualifying earnings to 5% in April 2018 and 8% in April 2019. This will help to boost pension savings. DWP's 2017 review of automatic enrolment set out the Government's ambitions for future reforms to expand the policy.

We recognise the importance of financial resilience and have therefore been working to provide low-income households with products that make it easier for them to build savings outside of a pension as well, such as Help to Save and the Lifetime ISA.

■ Personal Income

Tulip Siddiq: [\[131759\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to page two of Walking on Thin Ice: the cost of financial insecurity, published by Citizens Advice on 22 February 2018, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of that report's findings on the proportion of adults (a) who had at least one monthly drop in their income and (b) with unpredictable incomes who have gone without food or other essentials.

John Glen:

The Government is aware that making ends meet is sometimes challenging, which is why we are proactively putting in place measures to help the most vulnerable.

The lowest earners have seen a 7% real-terms increase to their wages since 2015, thanks to policies such as the National Living Wage (NLW). Full time NLW workers will receive another £600 pay rise next month.

The Government-commissioned Money Advice Service's Financial Capability Strategy specifically focuses on measures to encourage saving. To help this work, we are creating a help to save scheme – giving families on low incomes up to a £600 Government bonus to build a rainy day fund.

■ Personal Income: Mid Sussex

Sir Nicholas Soames: [\[132343\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the effect of recent increases in the National Living Wage and the personal allowance on the personal incomes of Mid Sussex constituents.

Mel Stride:

The government is committed to supporting working families and ensuring they retain more of what they earn. Following increases to the personal allowance threshold and National Living Wage that will come into effect across the UK from April, a full-time worker earning the National Living Wage in Mid Sussex will be taking home over £3,800 more per year after tax compared to a full-time minimum wage worker in 2010.

■ Revenue and Customs: Finance

Peter Dowd:

[\[132368\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 March 2018, Spring Statement, HCWS 540, if he will publish a list of where the £260 million allocated to HMRC to realise the opportunities from EU exit will be spent.

Mel Stride:

HMRC has been allocated £260m for essential EU exit preparations in 2018-19. This funding will support the department in preparing for departure from the EU, including for new customs arrangements. HMRC will continue to work with HMT as progress is made and keep the department's requirements under review accordingly. As with all Reserve funding, finalised allocations will be confirmed at Supplementary Estimates 2018-19 in early 2019.

■ Shareholders: Sanctions

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[132256\]](#)

To ask the Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps she is taking to ensure that funds raised by foreign companies through initial public offerings in London do not finance companies under US and EU sanctions; and if she will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is the competent authority responsible for the UK initial public offering (IPO) process. Companies seeking to admit securities to the Official List must apply to the UK Listing Authority (UKLA), a division of the Financial Conduct Authority.

The UKLA is responsible for assessing the eligibility of any potential issuer and approving the prospectus of any company that wishes to list its securities on the London Stock Exchange. The UKLA can request advice from the Office of Financial Sanctions (OFSI), which is part of HM Treasury, in relation to UN, UK or EU sanctions but responsibility for the admission of companies to the Official List lies with the UKLA.

OFSI assesses all reported suspected breaches of UN, EU or UK financial sanctions to determine whether a breach has occurred and if so, the extent of any breach before taking action. OFSI refers the most serious cases to the National Crime Agency ("NCA") for criminal investigation.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Treasury Department enforces US economic and trade sanctions. OFSI regularly engages with OFAC on financial sanctions but OFSI has no role in ensuring compliance with or enforcement with US sanctions.

■ Treasury: Public Expenditure**Peter Dowd:**[\[132366\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Written Statement of 13 March 2018, Spring Statement, HCWS 540, if he will publish a list of where the £24.8 million allocated to his Department to realise the opportunities from EU exit will be spent.

Elizabeth Truss:

HM Treasury has been allocated £24.8m for essential EU exit preparations in 2018-19. This will be spent on areas of work including financial services and customs, ensuring that the government delivers an orderly and successful exit from the EU. As with all Reserve funding, finalised allocations will be confirmed at Supplementary Estimates 2018-19 in early 2019.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Females: Footwear****Helen Jones:**[\[132155\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to amend the Equality Act 2010 so that women at work are not forced to wear footwear which is damaging to their long term health; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government takes the issue of workplace discrimination very seriously and will continue to work hard to ensure women are not discriminated against in the workplace by outdated attitudes and practices, including in relation to dress codes. Workplace dress codes must comply with both equalities and health and safety legislation, which means they must be reasonable and should not place more onerous requirements on women (or men) unless they can be justified objectively.

Following the inquiry into high heels and workplace dress codes, the House of Commons Petitions Committee and Women and Equalities Select Committee recommended that the Government Equalities Office (GEO) produce guidance on dress codes. The GEO has worked with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to draw up guidance for employers and employees to help them understand how discrimination law and health and safety law apply to workplace dress codes. The guidance is due to be published in due course, and will raise awareness of existing statutory protections.

■ Gender Recognition Act 2004**Sarah Champion:**[\[132331\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when she plans to publish the consultation on reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 announced on 23 July 2017.

Sarah Champion:

[\[132332\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the public consultation on reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 is planned to include a proposal and question on legal recognition for non-binary people.

Sarah Champion:

[\[132333\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she plans to hold discussions with trans community groups as part of the the Government's public consultation on reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

Victoria Atkins:

We are currently considering the content of the consultation on the Gender Recognition Act 2004, and we will be publishing the consultation in due course. The Government recognises that there are a wide range of views on reforming the Act and we are taking time to engage with stakeholders in advance of the consultation to understand these views in more detail. As part of this pre-consultation engagement, we have been meeting with trans community-based organisations and trans lobby groups to understand their viewpoints on the Gender Recognition Act and how it might be reformed. We consider their knowledge and experiences to be very valuable and will continue to engage with them throughout the consultation, once it is published. We have also engaged widely with a range of other organisations including women's groups, single sex service providers, and faith stakeholders and will continue to do so through the consultation process

Alongside this work, we are also considering the responses relating to gender identity from our recent national LGBT survey. This evidence base will inform the consultation document, and careful consideration will be given to the possibility of including non-binary within the consultation.

■ Legal Profession: Equal Pay

Sarah Champion:

[\[131460\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the scope of gender pay reporting applies at the level of partner at legal firms who employ over 250 staff.

Victoria Atkins:

Legal firms with 250 or more employees will be required to publish gender pay gap information by 4th April

Partners and Limited Liability Partnership members are likely to meet the definition of employees but are not counted for the actual gender pay calculations. This is because their pay is based on profit sharing, which cannot be readily compared with regular pay.

■ LGBT People: Surveys

Sarah Champion: [\[132334\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many non-binary respondents made submissions to the Government Equalities Office's nationwide LGBT survey.

Victoria Atkins:

We received over 100,000 responses to our nationwide LGBT survey. The Government is still in the process of analysing the findings from the survey and will be publishing the results in full in due course.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Credit Unions**

Peter Kyle: [\[132193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons the Credit Union Expansion Project has been closed; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The DWP engaged a contractor to deliver Credit Union Expansion Project. The contractor repeatedly failed to meet its obligations. This left them in breach of contract and left the DWP with no alternative but to terminate the contract.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

Gavin Newlands: [\[132198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints relating to the equalisation of the state pension age investigation case managers at the office of the Independent Case Examiner are investigating; and what the average waiting time for such a complaint lodged with the Independent Case Examiner to be allocated to an investigation case manager was in the last 12 months.

Kit Malthouse:

Investigation case managers at the Independent Case Examiner's Office are currently investigating 35 complaints relating to the equalisation of the state pension age. In the period March 2017 to February 2018 the average waiting time for complaints relating to the equalisation of the state pension age to be allocated to an investigation case manager was 39 weeks.

Gavin Newlands: [\[132199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many independent case managers at the office of the Independent Case Examiner are working on cases relating to complaints on the equalisation of the state pension age.

Kit Malthouse:

The Independent Case Examiner's Office has 3 investigation case managers working on cases relating to complaints on the equalisation of the state pension age.

■ Universal Credit

Frank Field:

[\[131422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing (a) time and (b) accuracy targets for the (i) processing of universal credit applications and (ii) payment of universal credit.

Alok Sharma:

In 1998 the Government removed targets for speed of payments because of the impact these targets had on accuracy of payments. Successive governments have endorsed this policy. Latest data suggests 81% of Universal Credit claims are paid in full at the end of the first assessment period and, for those cases not paid in full, there are outstanding verification issues.

Advances are also widely available, can be accessed within days and, in an emergency, can be paid on the same day.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[131455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 11 of the DWP claimant service and experience survey 2015 to 2016, published on 17 January 2017, what steps her Department has taken in response to the findings that as universal credit continues to expand, a smaller proportion of customers reported that it was easy to get in touch with her Department.

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[131456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 13 of the DWP claimant service and experience survey 2015 to 2016, published on 17 January 2017, what steps her Department has taken in response to the findings that there was a decline in the proportion of universal credit customers who reported that they had been given correct information over the telephone.

Alok Sharma:

Universal Credit Full Service is now being rolled out across the nation, where the main route to access Universal Credit is instead through digital channels. The digital solution enables the Department to provide full personalised support for every household.

Over 99% of claims are made online and claimants can contact their work coach at any point during their claim via email and their online journal. The Universal Credit telephone helpline has now been made free and face to face support is also available for claimants to make and manage a Universal Credit claim.

The survey only covered Universal Credit Live Service claimants who did not have access to this digital service.

Stephen McPartland:

[\[131602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on lowering the taper rate for universal credit.

Alok Sharma:

We have made the taper more generous by reducing the rate from 65 per cent to 63 per cent in April last year. This lowered the rate at which Universal Credit payments reduce when a claimant starts working, meaning claimants can keep more of every pound they earn. We expect this to benefit 3 million families once Universal Credit is fully rolled out.

As the Chancellor set out in the 2017 Autumn Budget, we keep these matters under review.

■ Universal Credit: Scotland

Danielle Rowley: [\[132351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claims in Scotland include a child component.

Danielle Rowley: [\[132352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many households receive universal credit with a child element in Scotland.

Alok Sharma:

The available information on the number of households in receipt of additional Universal Credit support for parents is published and can be accessed at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>.

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Universal Credit: Yorkshire and the Humber

Alex Sobel: [\[132270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children are included on universal credit claims in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Mr Jim Cunningham: [\[132292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children are included on universal credit claims in the West Midlands.

Alok Sharma:

The information requested is not currently available.

The Department updated its strategy for releasing official statistics on Universal Credit (UC) in January 2018. As outlined in the strategy, officials are currently assessing the data for UC and will release information once the necessary quality assurance work has taken place. As part of this, we are investigating new data areas

for publication, including households with children. These statistics will be published in accordance with the relevant protocols in the Code of Practice for official statistics.

Universal Credit official statistics and the Department's release strategy can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-statistics>

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

EDUCATION

■ Improving the educational outcomes of children and young people in need of support and protection

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr Damian Hinds): [\[HCWS555\]](#)

This government is committed to ensuring that every child – regardless of their circumstances – can benefit from their education, ensuring they have the knowledge and skills to fulfil their potential, and the resilience they need for future success.

Since 2010, thanks to government reforms and the hard work of teachers, we have made significant progress in raising standards in the education system. There are now 1.9 million more pupils in good or outstanding schools compared to 2010 and last year 154,000 more six-year-olds were on track to be fluent readers than in 2012.

Today, I am announcing a programme of work to improve our understanding of the educational experiences and outcomes of all children with additional needs, and those who live in challenging circumstances.

These children perform less well at school on average, are at greater risk of being excluded and are overrepresented in Alternative Provision. This is an overlapping cohort whose needs are often complex – many have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, or are children in need of help and protection and so are supported through the social care system. This work is about understanding what works for these children and spreading effective practice to ensure they can fulfil their potential.

This programme of work includes:

- An external review of school exclusions, led by former Children's Minister Edward Timpson CBE. It will help us to understand how and why schools use exclusion, what drives the variation in exclusion rates and, particularly, the disproportionate exclusion rates of some groups – including black Caribbean boys, Children in Need, Looked After Children, and those with Special Educational Needs;
- Taking forward reforms to Alternative Provision (AP). AP educates children who are unable to attend mainstream or special schools, for example due to illness or exclusion. Today the government is publishing *Creating Opportunity for All: Our Vision for Alternative Provision* – it outlines our plan to ensure consistently high quality education is provided to all children in AP, across the country, and determine a clear role for AP as an integral part of the education system. This package includes a £4 million Innovation Fund to develop effective practice;
- Reviewing the outcomes of and support for Children in Need, as set out in our manifesto. We are already reforming children's social care to improve children's safety and stability, but our ambition must be for Children in Need to achieve their full potential. New data published today sets out the challenges they face, and their

outcomes through school. The review will develop evidence to understand what works to improve these children's educational outcomes in practice. This starts today with launching a call for evidence.

I will respond fully to the recommendations of Dame Christine Lenehan's review of residential special schools, *Good Intentions, Good Enough?*, later this year. I will take that opportunity to set out how the government will continue working to achieve the vision of a reformed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities system, underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014.

We will focus on what is effective – using evidence to implement successful policy, and to spread best practice. These measures should help to ensure that all children and young people benefit from their education, transforming their experiences and outcomes.

Creating Opportunity for All: Our Vision for Alternative Provision and Terms of Reference for the exclusions review will be placed in the House Libraries, and published on the Department for Education's website. The website will also contain links to supporting documents for both the exclusions and Children in Need reviews.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ March Agriculture and Fisheries Council

Minister of State (George Eustice):

[\[HCWS552\]](#)

Agriculture and Fisheries Council will take place on 19 March in Brussels.

As the provisional agenda stands, the primary focus for fisheries will be an exchange of views regarding a Regulation on a multi-annual plan for demersal species in the Western Mediterranean Sea.

The primary focus for agriculture will be the adoption of Council Conclusions on 'The Future of Food and Farming'.

There are currently two items scheduled under 'Any other business':

- working conditions and safety on board fishing vessels – ratification and transposition of international instruments
- joint declaration of 10 Member States (Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain) on future development of freshwater aquaculture in the EU after 2020.

Parliament voted to trigger article 50 and leave the European Union. Until we leave the EU, all the rights and obligations of EU membership remain in force. The outcome of our negotiations with the EU on a future partnership will determine what arrangements apply in future.

■ MARCH EU ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment (Dr Thérèse Coffey):
[\[HCWS554\]](#)

I attended the EU Environment Council in Brussels on 5 March. Hannah Blythyn AM, Welsh Minister for Environment also attended.

I wish to update the House on the matters discussed.

Communications on delivering on the Circular Economy Action Plan – exchange of views:

a) European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy;

b) Monitoring Framework for the Circular Economy;

c) Implementation of the Circular Economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation.

Ministers exchanged views on the Presidency's questions regarding the Plastics Strategy and the interface between chemicals, product and waste legislation. The UK referenced the Industrial Strategy, Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan, highlighting UK actions including eliminating all avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042 in England; a deposit return scheme for drinks containers in Scotland and a reduction of around 80% of single-use carrier bags in Wales since a charge was introduced. Several member states called for the reopening of the Packing and Packaging Waste Directive, others highlighted the role of eco-design for plastics and the role of taxation on plastics.

On the EU's proposed monitoring framework, the UK welcomed the recommendations but called for greater emphasis on the development of indicators earlier in the waste hierarchy to help design out waste. Some member states regretted the lack of concrete measures to address chemicals in the plastics strategy and wanted further references to a non-toxic environment. Others wanted to improve the traceability of chemicals in plastics.

The Presidency stated it plans to adopt Council Conclusions on the European Strategy for Plastics, and on the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation at the June Environment Council in Luxembourg.

Greening The European Semester – exchange of views

The Commission noted that there has been increased focus on greening the European Semester, with the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) providing better information in this regard. Ministers also responded to Presidency questions on compliance and sustainable finance. Several member states thought there was a role for the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework in supporting a transition to a sustainable, low carbon economy. The Commission noted the need for actions to be integrated strategically.

AOB items

The following items were also discussed under Any Other Business.

1. 21st European Forum on Eco-innovation for Air Quality (Sofia, 5-6 February 2018) The Commission noted that urgent action needed to be taken at national and EU level to tackle air quality. They stated that a coordinated approach together with strong regulation and enforcement were required to succeed.

2. Global Pact for the Environment

The Council took note of the AOB on the Global Pact for the Environment from the French, supported by Luxembourg. Many delegations supported its aims, and the Commission stated it would propose a draft negotiating mandate for the areas within its competence.

3. Amsterdam declarations – Combating imported deforestation

Delegations took note of the joint AOB from France, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany and the UK on eliminating deforestation from supply chains. The UK intervened to support the Declaration and to encourage other member States to join this initiative.

4. Implementation of the Regulation on invasive alien species

The Danish delegation, supported by the Lithuanian and Greek delegations provided information on the implementation of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species

6. Review of the Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)

The Commission provided information on the Review on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH).

7. Current legislative proposal (Public deliberation in accordance with Article 16(8) of the Treaty on European Union) Regulation on CO2 standards for cars and vans

The Commission introduced its proposal for a regulation on emissions standards in cars and vans, with the intention of reaching a General Approach at the October Environment Council. The Presidency confirmed it will table a policy debate for the June Environment Council.

8. Developments regarding shipping and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

The Commission provided an update on progress ahead of the April IMO meeting in London

9. 24th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24, Katowice, 3-14 December 2018)

Poland introduced an AOB on the 24th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP24). They noted the importance of adopting the implementing rules underpinning the Paris Agreement and acknowledged the Talanoa Dialogue as a fundamental step towards achieving the Paris temperature goals. Many delegations, including the UK, agreed on these two priorities with several member states calling for the publication of a

Commission communication on the EU's long-term strategy in early 2019. **10.**

Commercial trade in raw ivory within the EU

The UK introduced a joint AOB with France calling for a ban on the intra-EU trade in raw ivory. This received support from Germany and Luxembourg. The Commission noted it will release a progress report on the EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking in July, detailing its next steps.

Parliament voted to trigger article 50 and leave the European Union. Until we leave the EU, all the rights and obligations of EU membership remain in force. The outcome of our negotiations with the EU on a future partnership will determine what arrangements apply in future.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Foreign Affairs Council – 19 March 2018

Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Alan Duncan):

[\[HCWS553\]](#)

My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will attend the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) on 19 March. The Foreign Affairs Council will be chaired by the High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Federica Mogherini. The meeting will be held in Brussels.

Prior to the FAC there will be an informal meeting, over breakfast, with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister. The Foreign Secretary will brief EU Ministers on developments in our response to the incident in Salisbury. The FAC will then discuss Ukraine, Syria and Iran. There will also be a lunch with the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea to discuss recent events.

Foreign Affairs Council

Ukraine

Ministers will have a substantive discussion on Ukraine. This will address the twin strategic challenges facing Ukraine: its crucial reform agenda and ongoing Russian aggression, including in Crimea. The UK remains fully engaged in Ukraine, and will focus on continuing our support to Ukraine in tackling these fundamental challenges.

Syria

Ministers will be joined by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura to discuss Syria, including implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2401 and support for the UN-led Geneva talks. Ministers will also discuss preparations for the second Brussels conference, which will take place on 24-25 April and will focus on humanitarian support and bolstering the UN-led political process in Geneva.

Iran

Ministers will discuss shared concerns around Iran's destabilising regional activity and the EU's role in responding to this.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Post-Council Written Ministerial Statement: Informal Trade Foreign Affairs Council** **27 February 2018**

Minister of State for Trade Policy (Greg Hands): [\[HCWS551\]](#)

The EU Foreign Affairs Informal Council (Trade) took place in Sofia on 27 February 2018. I represented the UK at the meeting. A summary of the discussions follows:

On follow up to the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference held in December 2017, Ministers discussed the lack of negotiated outcomes at the multilateral level. Nonetheless, there was a broad welcome for the new joint initiative statements at MC11. The objective was for a critical mass of interested WTO Members to make progress in the areas addressed by the joint statements. These discussions should be open to everybody to join. Developments around the WTO Appellate Body were also discussed.

Commissioner Malmström updated the Council on the state of play of the EU's Free Trade Agreements, stating that Japan and Singapore would be presented to Council imminently, and that negotiations with Indonesia and Chile were ongoing. Negotiations with Malaysia were set to resume in the near future.

Discussion revolved around Mexico and Mercosur, which were both reported to be in the end game but with a number of issues remaining to be resolved. I called on the Commission to show ambition on data flows in the Mexico agreement.

Under AOB, and after I had had to leave, the Commission gave an update on EU-US relations, and assessed that the US' likely imposition of import tariffs or quotas on steel and aluminium on national security grounds was unjustified. The Commission and Member States agreed to continue to engage the US Government and Congress in order to argue against any measures, highlighting the knock-on impact of safeguards on global markets. Since the President's announcement on 1 March that he intends to impose tariffs, discussions with the EU have continued and the UK will stay closely engaged on this live issue.

TREASURY**■ Annual European Union Finances Statement**

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):

[\[HCWS556\]](#)

I have today laid before Parliament *the European Union Finances 2017: statement on the 2017 EU Budget and measures to counter fraud and financial mismanagement (Cm 9576)*. This is a routine annual publication. It is the thirty seventh in the series.

The statement gives details of revenue and expenditure in the 2017 European Union Budget, recent developments in EU financial management and measures to counter fraud against the EU Budget. It also includes a chapter and annex updating on the use of EU funds in the UK over the period.