



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 May 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:49 P.M., 17 May 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	7	DEFENCE	16
ATTORNEY GENERAL	7	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	16
■ Euthanasia: Prosecutions	7	■ Armed Forces: Training	20
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	8	■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles	20
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	8	■ Army: Deployment	20
■ Business: Coronavirus	10	■ Army: Employment	25
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	11	■ Challenger Tanks	25
■ Post Office Horizon IT System Independent Review	11	■ Chinook Helicopters: Procurement	25
■ Research: Africa	11	■ European Fighter Aircraft: Exports	26
CABINET OFFICE	12	■ European Fighter Aircraft: Training	26
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	12	■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement	26
■ Elections: Proof of Identity	12	■ Military Aircraft: Procurement	27
■ Government Departments: Procurement	13	■ Ministry of Defence: Mass Media	27
■ Office for Veterans' Affairs: Staff	13	■ Ministry of Defence: Motor Vehicles	27
■ Regional Planning and Development: Devolution	14	■ Oman: Official Hospitality	28
■ Regional Planning and Development: UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement	14	■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions	28
■ Suicide	15	■ Shipping: National Skills Academies	29
■ Weddings: Coronavirus	15	■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Procurement	29

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	29	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	52
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	29	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	52
■ Events Industry: Insurance	32	■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers	54
■ Non-governmental Organisations: Coronavirus	32	■ Batteries: Recycling	55
■ Pigeon Racing	33	■ Birds of Prey: Licensing	56
■ Recreation Spaces: Exercise	33	■ Crops	56
■ Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus	33	■ Farms: Local Government Finance	57
■ Wrecks	34	■ Fisheries: Quotas	57
EDUCATION	36	■ Flood Control	58
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	36	■ Incinerators	58
■ Adoption	39	■ Shellfish: Animal Welfare	59
■ Arts and Music: Higher Education	39	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	59
■ Assessments	40	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	59
■ Assessments: Standards	40	■ Alan Duncan	69
■ Children	41	■ Bahrain: Political Prisoners	69
■ Children in Care: Human Rights	41	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	71
■ Education: Children	42	■ COVAX: Finance	72
■ Home Education: Standards	42	■ Global Partnership for Education: Finance	72
■ Overseas Students: Quarantine	43	■ India: Coronavirus	72
■ Pioneer Academy: Complaints	44	■ India: Overseas Aid	73
■ Pioneer Academy: Finance	44	■ Islamic State: Genocide	73
■ Pupil Exclusions	45	■ Israel: Gaza	74
■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment	45	■ Israel: Palestinians	74
■ Schools: Mental Health Services	46	■ Jerusalem: Armed Conflict	76
■ Special Educational Needs	51	■ Jerusalem: Palestinians	77
■ Sports: Finance	51	■ Jerusalem: Religious Buildings	77
■ Timothy Rowe	52	■ Mauritania: Slavery	78
		■ Palestinians: Coronavirus	78
		■ Russia: Ukraine	79

■ Said Odeh	79	■ Malaria: Vaccination	93
■ Saudi Arabia: Human Rights	80	■ Medical Treatments Abroad: Coronavirus	94
■ Switzerland: Clothing	80	■ Members: Correspondence	94
■ Tanveer Ahmed Rafique	80	■ Mental Health Services: Learning Disability	94
■ UN Commission on the Status of Women: Iran	81	■ Mental Health Services: Schools	95
■ UN Population Fund	81	■ Mortality Rates: Learning Disability	95
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	82	■ Neuromuscular Disorders	95
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	82	■ NHS 111	96
■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards	85	■ NHS Test and Trace: Fraud	96
■ Air Pollution	86	■ Organs: Donors	96
■ Alzheimer's Disease	86	■ Out-patients: Learning Disability	97
■ Babies: Coronavirus	86	■ Patients: Learning Disability	97
■ Children: Coronavirus	87	■ Phenylketonuria	97
■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Medical Treatments	87	■ Social Services: Mental Health	98
■ Contact Tracing: Computer Software	87	■ Social Services: Protective Clothing	98
■ Coronavirus: Children	88	■ Speech and Language Therapy: Finance	98
■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing	88	■ Surgery: Waiting Lists	98
■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	88	■ Travel: Quarantine	99
■ Coronavirus: Hospitals	89	HOME OFFICE	100
■ Coronavirus: Travel	89	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	100
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	89	■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers	104
■ Coronavirus: Vitamin D	90	■ Asylum: Finance	105
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions	91	■ Asylum: Housing	106
■ Flour: Folic Acid	91	■ Bail	108
■ Furs: Coronavirus	91	■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Migrants	108
■ Health Services	92	■ Criminal Investigation	109
■ Hospitals: Admissions	92		
■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists	93		
■ Immigration: EU Nationals	93		

■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre	109	■ Trade Agreements: Australasia	123
■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre: Airports	110	■ Trade Agreements: Australia	125
■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre: Employment	111	■ TRIPS Agreement	125
■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre: Operating Costs	111	JUSTICE	126
■ Immigration: EU Nationals	111	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	126
■ Marriage: Coronavirus	113	■ Courts: Video Conferencing	126
■ Migrants	113	■ Euthanasia: Prosecutions	126
■ Offences against Children	114	■ Prisoners' Transfers	127
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	115	NORTHERN IRELAND	127
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	115	■ Northern Ireland Government: Finance	127
■ Almshouses: Tenants' Rights	117	■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland	128
■ Avanton: Richmond upon Thames	117	■ Ulster Scots Language	128
■ Business: Rents	118	SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION	129
■ Community Champions Scheme	118	■ Elections: Proof of Identity	129
■ Devolution	119	TRANSPORT	129
■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention	119	■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	129
■ Housing: Insulation	120	■ A1 and A1 (M): Repairs and Maintenance	132
■ Local Government: Meetings	120	■ Air Pollution: Enfield	132
■ Planning	121	■ Aviation: Coronavirus	133
■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund	121	■ Blue Badge Scheme	133
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	122	■ Cycling: Safety	134
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	122	■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	134
■ Arms Trade: Israel	122	■ Electric Vehicles: Grants	135
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	122	■ Invalid Vehicles: Pilot Schemes	135
		■ Joint Maritime Security Centre	135
		■ M1	136
		■ Public Transport: Coronavirus	136

■ Railway Stations: Access	137	■ Kickstart Scheme	149
■ Railways: Bedfordshire	137	■ Kickstart Scheme: Young People	151
■ Roads: Safety	137	■ Pensions: Personal Savings	154
■ Speed Limits: Urban Areas	138	■ Poverty	154
■ Train Operating Companies: Coronavirus	139	■ Poverty: Children	154
■ Travel Restrictions: United Arab Emirates	139	■ Poverty: Coronavirus	155
TREASURY	140	■ Public and Commercial Services Union	155
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	140	■ Sign Language	155
■ Child Benefit	141	■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus	156
■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Holiday Leave	142	■ Social Security Benefits: Disability	156
■ Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation	143	■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations	157
■ Musical Instruments: Customs	144	■ Universal Credit	157
■ Overseas Aid	144	■ Universal Credit: Appeals	158
■ Sanitary Protection: VAT	144	■ Universal Credit: Disqualification	158
■ Self-employed: Government Assistance	145	■ Universal Credit: Young People	159
WORK AND PENSIONS	145	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	160
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	145	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	160
■ Bereavement Benefits	147	■ NHS Test and Trace: Fraud	160
■ Child Maintenance Service: Complaints	147	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	161
■ Disability	147	BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	161
■ Disability: Public Consultation	147	■ Contingencies Fund Advance	161
■ Employment: Disability	148	■ Use of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for Coronavirus related assistance	161
■ Employment: Government Assistance	148	CABINET OFFICE	163
■ Employment: Learning Disability	148	■ The UK's Emergency Alerts Service: Our way of warning you when lives are in danger	163
■ Employment: Sign Language	149		
■ Jobcentres: Staff	149		

HOME OFFICE	164	WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	166
■ Appointment of the Forensic Science Regulator	164	■ Safe To Be Me: A Global Equality Conference on LGBT Rights	166
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	165		
■ Rough Sleeping Initiative update	165		

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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Euthanasia: Prosecutions

Andy Slaughter: [R] [130]

To ask the Attorney General, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Policy for Prosecutors in Respect of Cases of Encouraging and Assisting Suicide between 1 April 2009 and 1 April 2021.

Andy Slaughter: [R] [131]

To ask the Attorney General, how many of the 167 cases referred to the CPS by police under the Suicide Act 1961, Sections 2(1) and 2(A), between 1 April 2009 and 31 July 2020 did not result in a charge; and how many of those cases failed to pass the (a) evidential and (b) public interest stage.

Andy Slaughter: [R] [132]

To ask the Attorney General, how many of the 167 cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service by police under sections (a) 2(1) and (b) 2(A) of the Suicide Act 1961 between 1 April 2009 and 31 July 2020 related to a person with a terminal illness.

Lucy Frazer:

CPS Policy on assisted suicide provides guidance to prosecutors on assessing the evidential and public interest stages in the Code for Crown Prosecutors when reaching decisions in cases of encouraging or assisting suicide.

The Policy promotes consistency of decision making and is very clear about the factors which are to be considered both for and against prosecution. It sets out clear guidance about the importance of establishing whether the decision of the person who wants to commit suicide is voluntary, clear, settled, and informed, and whether the decision has been made without any pressure from the suspect.

The CPS publishes information collated from manual records on cases relating to Assisted Suicide. From 1 April 2009 up to 31 January 2021, there have been 167 cases referred to the CPS by the police that have been recorded as assisted suicide. Of these 167 cases:

- 110 were not proceeded with by the CPS;
 - 32 cases were withdrawn by the police;
 - eight are currently ongoing cases;
 - three cases of encouraging or assisting suicide have resulted in a conviction;
 - one case of assisted suicide was charged and acquitted after trial in May 2015; and
- eight cases were referred onwards for prosecution for homicide or other serious crime.

Of the 110 cases not proceeded with by the CPS, manual records indicate:

- 29 - did not meet the evidential stage.
- 45 - were not in the public interest.
- 30 – where information on either the evidential test or the public interest test is not recorded.

A further six cases are recorded with more than one suspect in the same case; these resulted in a mixed outcome where the evidential stage was not met for some suspects and the public interest test was not met for the others.

CPS manual records do not capture specific case circumstances, including those relating to persons with a terminal illness.

The CPS collects data to assist in the effective management of its prosecution functions. The CPS does not collect data that constitutes official statistics as defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Dr Julian Lewis:

[24]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps in respect of the reported attempt by China to take over Bacanora Lithium.

Paul Scully:

Mergers and takeovers are primarily commercial matters for the parties involved. The Government has powers under the Enterprise Act 2002 to intervene in transactions which raise national security concerns. The Government has recently strengthened those powers through the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

The Government is aware of this proposed transaction and is monitoring developments closely.

Gill Furniss:

[388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps to encourage international students to complete their PhD in the UK.

Amanda Solloway:

We want to attract and retain the most highly skilled, globally mobile talent from around the world, and ensure the UK is a top destination for scientists, researchers and innovators.

The UK has a world-leading research base: with less than 1% the world's population, the UK accounts for more than 3% of researchers, 7% per cent of the world's academic publications, and 14% of the world's most highly-cited academic publications.

In order to encourage international PhD students to study in the UK, UKRI has increased the overall proportion of UKRI studentships available to international students from Academic Year 2021/22. All students would receive a full award, to include a stipend and fees at the home level.

The new Student route was launched by Government on 5th October as part of the UK's new points-based immigration system, streamlining the immigration process for international students. Furthermore, from summer 2021, the new Graduate route will enable students who have completed a PhD to remain in the UK after graduation to stay and work, or look for work, for up to three years. Students who have successfully completed undergraduate and master's degrees will be able to stay for a further two years after study.

The Government has implemented a number of concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions. This has included offering extensions of visas for those whose leave has expired, and relaxing the rules on switching in the UK, as well as extending the deadline by which international students need to be in the UK to be eligible to apply for the Graduate route.

Chris Elmore:

[390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to establish a judicial inquiry into the Horizon Post Office scandal.

Paul Scully:

The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, chaired by retired High Court judge, Sir Wyn Williams FLSW was set up to get the answers the affected postmasters are looking for in a timely manner. A non-statutory Inquiry should be as thorough and robust as a statutory Inquiry but giving the Chair greater flexibility to determine how it is run. Post Office, Fujitsu, UK Government Investment (UKGI), and BEIS are all cooperating fully with the Inquiry, but all options regarding the Inquiry remain on the table, as I said in the House of Commons on 27 April.

Chris Elmore:

[391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Post Office's internal prosecutorial function was excluded from the 2020 inquiry into the Horizon Post Office scandal.

Paul Scully:

The terms of reference for the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry are set out at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020/terms-of-reference>.

The terms of reference explain that 'Post Office Ltd's prosecution function, matters of criminal law, the Horizon group damages settlement, the conduct of current or future litigation relating to Horizon and/or the engagement or findings of any other supervisory or complaints mechanisms, including in the public sector, are outside the Inquiry's scope'. However, Sir Wyn Williams has explained to Ministers that –

although the Inquiry will not discuss matters of substantive criminal law that should properly be decided by the criminal courts – he and his team will receive and consider information from affected postmasters as they give an account of their experiences including incidents relating to investigation, their prosecution and conviction or to look into and comment on aspects of this function as part of the organisation’s governance, leadership and culture.

The Government will continue to discuss the progress and approach to the Inquiry with Sir Wyn Williams.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 173011 on Business: Government Assistance, if he will publish the formula that was used to allocate the (a) Local Restrictions Support Grants (Open), (b) Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) and (c) Restart Grants; and what measure of (i) population and (ii) number of businesses was used to allocate each of those grants.

Paul Scully:

All information relating to how funding allocations for business support grants is contained within guidance that has been issued to local authorities and which is available on GOV.UK. All allocations figures are also available on GOV.UK.

LRSO (Open) allocations to local authorities were based on a government estimate of the number of in-scope business premises. This drew on data provided by the Valuation Office Agency which gave the number of business hereditaments in the local rating lists in the relevant sectors by local authority. Local authorities were asked to use their own understanding of local businesses to determine eligibility. This was a discretionary scheme meaning central government did not mandate which businesses a local authority was required to support.

For the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme, Local Authorities received an initial one-off lump sum payment amounting to £20 per head of residential population in each eligible Local Authority area when Tier 3 or widespread national restrictions in November were imposed, whichever was the earliest date. This calculation was based on ONS 2019 Mid-Year Population Estimate for the total population within a local authority. If an area agreed an enhanced package before National Lockdown, then that negotiated amount was honoured. A subsequent top-up to ARG of £500m in January 2021 was also based on the same calculation.

In March, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a further £425 million top up to ARG would be made available to those local authorities that had spent their initial two allocations. This tranche of ARG will be allocated on the basis of business population in an area, rather than residential numbers and will only be unlocked where expenditure requirements on the first two tranches are met.

The Restart Grants allocations have been made on the basis of an estimate of the number of business hereditaments in the specified sectors covered by the grant scheme. This estimate has been informed by Valuation Office Agency data on business hereditaments in the local rating lists, but local authorities are the decision makers on whether specific businesses are eligible or not. The Government paid 90% of this estimated total to Local Authorities and are committed to provide further top ups if required to cover all businesses in scope.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Chi Onwurah:

[714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 11 March 2021 to Question 164467 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, how much Admiral has been paid to date for communications services; and what the total value is of the contract with Admiral.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Vaccine Taskforce brought onboard specialist communications support as contingent labour using the Public Sector Resourcing framework, rather than signing a contract with Admiral as a company. This contingent labour ceased involvement with the Vaccine Taskforce at the end of 2020.

Details of commercial arrangements with all firms and contract labour used by the Vaccine Taskforce have been published in line with the usual transparency arrangements.

■ **Post Office Horizon IT System Independent Review**

Chi Onwurah:

[719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the independent review of the Post Office Horizon scandal will consider the failures in data design of the Horizon system.

Paul Scully:

The purpose of the Inquiry is to understand and acknowledge what went wrong in relation to Horizon and to ensure that there is a public summary of the failings that occurred at Post Office Ltd. At the Inquiry's outset its Terms of Reference were published, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-office-horizon-it-inquiry-2020/terms-of-reference>.

The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry's Terms of Reference state that the Inquiry will only consider the matters set out in its Terms of Reference.

■ **Research: Africa**

Chi Onwurah:

[723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 30 March 2021 to Question 173012 on Research: Africa, if he will

establish the number of early career researchers across the continent of Africa who will lose funding as a result of changes to the Official Development Assistance allocation to the Future Leaders: African Independent Research programme.

Amanda Solloway:

On average, the Royal Society funds 30 new FLAIR fellowships per year through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). Thirty fellowships were awarded for the 2020 cohort, and these will continue receiving full funding throughout this year. The Royal Society will not be funding any new FLAIR fellowships for this year.

CABINET OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Dame Diana Johnson: [140]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of adopting a zero covid-19 strategy.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 22 February, the Government published the [‘COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021’](#), providing a roadmap out of lockdown restrictions in England. I refer the hon. Member to the Prime Minister’s [statement](#) when presenting this to Parliament.

Stephen Timms: [38]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the change in the population of London since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement.

Julia Lopez:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ38 [UKSA's final response to PQ38.pdf]

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith: [311]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many local elector cards were issued as part of the Voter ID pilots in (a) 2019 and (b) 2018.

Julia Lopez:

The evaluations of the 2018 and 2019 Voter Identification pilot, which include information on locally issued elector cards, can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733128/Electoral_Integrity_Project_-_Local_Elections_2018_-_Evaluation.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819404/2019_Voter_ID_Pilots_Evaluation.pdf

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-identification-pilots>

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Debbie Abrahams: [241]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the lack of data on the use of Project Bank Accounts (PBAs) by Government construction procurers, what steps his Department plans to take to monitor the implementation of its policy that PBAs must be used unless there are compelling reasons not to use them.

Debbie Abrahams: [735]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, where a Department, agency or a non-departmental body has a compelling reason not to use a Project Bank Account what procedure is in place to record that reason and its justification; and who has the authority to sanction that reason.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to [PQ185363](#) on 26 April 2021.

Fleur Anderson: [492]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government has a policy on procuring (a) products and (b) services that have involved child labour.

Julia Lopez:

This government is committed to preventing modern slavery occurring in public sector supply chains.

The Cabinet Office has published commercial policy and guidance setting out the steps that all Government departments must take to identify and mitigate modern slavery and labour abuse risks throughout the commercial life cycle focussing on the areas of highest risk. This policy is mandatory for all Central Government Departments, their Executive Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies. The policy can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0519-tackling-modern-slavery-in-government-supply-chains>

■ Office for Veterans' Affairs: Staff

Mr Kevan Jones: [88]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to offer the Office for Veterans Affairs a physical office in which to operate.

Mr Kevan Jones: [89]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of staffing levels at the Office for Veterans Affairs.

Mr Kevan Jones: [90]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many full-time equivalent staff are employed by the Office for Veterans Affairs.

Leo Docherty:

The Office for Veterans' Affairs is currently established for 22 staff. Those numbers are kept under review to ensure it has sufficient capacity to lead the Government's delivery of the Veterans Strategy, working in concert with the many Departments that contribute to this. The OVA has an office in the Cabinet Office estate. Staff are able to work from there, or other Cabinet Office buildings, in line with COVID safe working guidance.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Devolution

Steve Reed: [745]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to include proposals on devolution in the proposed White Paper on levelling up.

Julia Lopez:

Levelling Up is at the heart of this government's agenda to build back better after the pandemic and to deliver for citizens in every part of the UK. The detail of bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunity in every part of the UK will be published later in the year, as part of our landmark Levelling Up White Paper.

■ Regional Planning and Development: UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Emily Thornberry: [640]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Board of Trade's Global Britain, Local Jobs report, what assessment he has made of whether the UK-EU TCA contributed towards the levelling up agenda.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government is taking full advantage of the opportunities outside the EU to boost our economy, reduce burdens on business, and save taxpayers money, while upholding workers' rights and welfare standards.

As part of the Queen's Speech the Government outlined a series of bills in the legislative programme that will ensure we make the most of these opportunities.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, which fully delivers on what the British public voted for, gives us the freedom to pursue policies that work for people

across the UK to promote levelling up in education, skills, infrastructure and technology, while creating a greener and more outward-looking economy.

■ Suicide

Rachael Maskell:

[\[342\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have taken their own life in each month of the last five years.

Julia Lopez:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ342 [UKSA's final response to PQ342.pdf]

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper:

[\[869\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish updated and detailed guidance for weddings, civil partnership ceremonies and receptions to take place at (a) step 3 and (b) step 4 of the covid-19 roadmap.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[870\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the advice he has received on the reasons for the disparity between the covid-19 guidance for weddings and receptions and the guidance for the events and hospitality sector.

Penny Mordaunt:

In the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021, the Government has set out the gradual and cautious approach to reopening different sectors in England, guided by science and the data. It is important that we take a cautious approach in easing restrictions, so that we can see the impact of the steps we are taking before moving to the next step.

For that reason, we will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation.

On 10 May, the Government announced plans to proceed with Step 3 on 17 May. Based on the data, we have passed the four tests set out in the roadmap, which means that the planned easing of wedding and reception limits can continue as planned and set out in the roadmap.

Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are permitted for up to 30 people in COVID Secure venues that are permitted to open. Receptions can also proceed with up to 30 people in a COVID Secure indoor venue, or outdoors, which includes private gardens.

On 13 May, the Government published further detailed wedding guidance :
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

Guidance will be updated again ahead of Step 4.

DEFENCE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timetable is for the delivery of all the Ajax vehicles ordered by his Department; and whether the first batch will be delivered on time.

Jeremy Quin:

The AJAX delivery schedules are currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Defence and GDLSUK. 14 non-turreted AJAX vehicles at Capability Drop 1 have been delivered to date. A further 12 turreted AJAX vehicles are currently going through General Acceptance Testing.

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what equipment used on the Ajax vehicle is also operable on (a) Boxer, (b) Challenger and (c) Warrior vehicles.

Jeremy Quin:

The Army seeks to exploit the benefits of the commonality and re-use of mission systems that can be integrated onto its vehicles. For example, Ajax, Boxer and Challenger are being configured with digital architectures that will enable greater mission system commonality in communications systems, electronic countermeasures and digital management systems. Specifically, Ajax and Boxer will use a Remote Weapon Station from a common family, and common shot detection systems; whilst Ajax and Challenger 3 share common sights and chain gun.

Although some of these common mission systems can also be fitted to Warrior, as part of the recent Integrated Review, the decision has been made not to take the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme forward.

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Type 31 frigates will be built; and how many his Department has ordered.

Jeremy Quin:

Five Type 31 frigates have been ordered to be built by Babcock at Rosyth.

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to put the Type 32 frigate out for competition; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

In the Defence Strategies published earlier this year we outlined plans to procure up to five Type 32 frigates. Work is ongoing to develop the operational concept and the programme and procurement strategy for the Type 32 will be decided following the concept phase.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:[\[121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Type 45 destroyers are undergoing refit.

Jeremy Quin:

Two Type 45 Destroyers, HMS Daring and HMS Duncan, are currently undergoing planned deep maintenance. Work is also underway on HMS Dauntless, the first ship to enter the Type 45 Power Improvement Project.

It is planned that all six Type 45 ships will have received the Power Improvement Project upgrade by the mid-2020s. The programme is dependent on the availability of ships to undertake the upgrade, balanced against the Royal Navy's standing and future operational commitments.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:[\[122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Government's military objective is in Mali.

James Heappey:

The UK has two distinct, but complementary, military commitments in Mali, each with clear objectives that support HMG multilateral and bilateral objectives.

We have deployed 300 personnel to the UN's peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA. Our overall objective is to help the Mission to address and prevent conflict, and reduce the spread of insecurity across Mali and the wider Sahel, by contributing to its efforts to protect civilians and support sustainable peace.

Fulfilling a gap identified by the UN, the UK task force is designed for long-range reconnaissance, meaning they seek to understand the threats to civilians and to the Mission, and provide this information to support mission planning and effective operations.

In parallel, the UK also contributes CH47 helicopters deployed to the French-led counter-terror mission, Operation BARKHANE. Our objective is to support France and other partner nations address terrorist threats across the Sahel. Our CH47s fulfil a non-combat, logistics role, with the aim of helping troops and equipment safely transport around the vast operating environment.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:[\[123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what air, land and sea attack missile capabilities will be included in the Type 26 frigate.

Jeremy Quin:

The Type 26 frigate will be equipped with a Sea Ceptor anti-air missile defence system. Type 26 will also be capable of embarking a Merlin anti-submarine warfare helicopter or Wildcat maritime attack helicopter, which will be able to deploy the Sea Venom and Martlet variants of the Future Anti-Surface Guided Weapon.

Daniel Kawczynski: [168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many soldiers serving abroad have been vaccinated against covid-19.

James Heappey:

As at 10 May 2021, 2,862 UK Armed Forces personnel serving overseas have received at least one vaccine against COVID-19. Defence will ensure that no member of the Armed Forces serving or deploying overseas is disadvantaged in their access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Daniel Kawczynski: [169]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when all armed forces personnel will have received their vaccination against covid-19.

James Heappey:

All Armed Forces personnel are expected to be offered a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 31 July 2021, in line with UK timelines for the national vaccination programme. Defence will ensure that no member of the Armed Forces, including those serving or deploying overseas, is disadvantaged in their access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Dr Julian Lewis: [26]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government will take, following the killing by extremists of Afghan girl students at school, to use air power from external bases, in conjunction with the US, to assist the Afghan Government resist terrorism by (a) Daesh and (b) the Taliban, after all NATO land forces have been withdrawn from Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

We deplore the attack on the Sayed al-Shuhada School in Kabul and send our deepest condolences to the families of those killed.

NATO partners, including the UK, confirmed on 14 April that an orderly and coordinated withdrawal of NATO forces will begin by May. As agreed by NATO Foreign and Defence Ministers, the withdrawal of Resolute Support Mission forces from Afghanistan will be complete within a few months. The UK's Operation TORAL forms a part of the Resolute Support Mission and as such we will draw down this operation in line with our NATO Allies and Partners.

The UK has not engaged in combat operations, including close air support, since the end of Operation HERRICK in 2014. We have no plans to restart combat operations believing instead that the political process must now move forward.

The UK remains committed to supporting Afghanistan on its path to a more peaceful and positive future. Only a negotiated and inclusive settlement will bring sustainable peace. For there to be any chance of a lasting peace, the Taliban must engage meaningfully in a dialogue with the Afghan government. The UK remains committed to supporting the development of the Afghan Security Forces on their path to becoming fully self-sufficient and in maintaining security for the people of Afghanistan. We are committed to continue providing financial support to sustain Afghan forces through to at least 2024.

The Taliban has committed to preventing terrorist groups using Afghanistan to launch international attacks; they must deliver on their commitments. We need to see action that matches their word.

Dr Julian Lewis:

[27]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans the Government has to commission a new Royal Yacht for use by the Royal family and for other national purposes.

Jeremy Quin:

We are currently reviewing our National Shipbuilding Strategy, which will outline the Government's future plans for shipbuilding programmes and how we will set the conditions for a globally successful, innovative and sustainable shipbuilding enterprise. The Government is open to considering a range of capabilities which can help to meet our strategic objectives and national requirements.

Zarah Sultana:

[489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) role and (b) membership is of his Department's Gulf Advisory Committee.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence does not have a Gulf Advisory Committee.

Zarah Sultana:

[490]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what dates the Sultan's Privy Council in Oman was attended by a serving Chief of the Defence staff.

James Heappey:

I can confirm the dates a serving Chief of Defence staff attended the Sultan's Privy Council in Oman are:

2-5 January 2020

5-6 January 2019

6-7 January 2018

■ Armed Forces: Training

Dave Doogan: [\[441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what tank training operations take place in Scotland.

James Heappey:

There is no tank training planned to routinely take place in Scotland. However, some development trials for the new Challenger 3 Main Battle Tank are planned to take place at Kirkcudbright and West Freugh.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[80\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many vehicles of the Ajax family have been accepted into service by the British Army.

Jeremy Quin:

A total of 14 non-turreted Capability Drop 1 AJAX vehicles have been delivered. 12 turreted AJAX vehicles are currently going through General Acceptance Testing.

■ Army: Deployment

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish details of the overseas (a) exercises and (b) deployments undertaken by the British Army in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021.

James Heappey:

The below tables show the overseas exercises in which the British Army have deployed on during the period 2019 – 2021, including those that are ongoing. Please note that the tables below do not include sub-unit training that takes place outside of the United Kingdom. Activity in 2020 is significantly lower due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EXERCISE NAME	LOCATION	DURATION (INCL DATES)		PURPOSE
2019				
ASKARI STORM 1/19	Kenya	28-Jan-19	08-Mar-19	Combined Arms Battlegroup exercise
DYNAMIC FRONT	Germany	12-Feb-19	12-Mar-19	Live Fire Exercise/Command Post Exercise. NATO, US and other nations conducting joint

EXERCISE NAME	LOCATION	DURATION (INCL DATES)		PURPOSE
				fires and interoperability training
ULCHI FREEDOM GUARDIAN	Republic of Korea	25-Feb-19	12-Mar-19	Command Post Exercise
KHANJAR EDGE 19	Oman	01-Mar-19	15-Mar-19	Combined Arms Battlegroup exercise
ASKARI STORM 2/19	Kenya	04-Mar-19	12-Apr-19	Combined Arms Battlegroup exercise
CITADEL GUIBERT 19	France	04-Mar-19	29-Mar-19	To train and evaluate France and US Divisions
AUSTERE CHALLENGE (JVAC19)	Germany	13-Mar-19	22-Mar-19	Divisional Level Training exercise with US European Command (USEUCOM)
OF6 TEG SOR (JVAC 19)	Germany	13-Mar-19	22-Mar-19	Combined Arms Battlegroup training
WARFIGHTER 19.4	USA	28-Mar-19	15-Apr-19	Command Post Exercise (CPX) to train and develop bilateral interop of UK Division into a US Corps.
JOINT WARFIGHTER ASSESSMENT	USA	22-Apr-19	10-May-19	US Force development and interoperability activity.
PRAIRIE STORM 1/19	Canada	28-Apr-19	03-Jun-19	Combined Arms Battlegroup training
Ex ASKARI SPEAR 3/19	Kenya	20-May-19	07-Jul-19	Specialised Infantry combined arms

EXERCISE NAME	LOCATION	DURATION (INCL DATES)		PURPOSE
				sub-unit exercise in preparation to deploy on operations.
SWIFT RESPONSE	Romania	08-Jun-19	26-Jun-2019	Command Post Exercise / LIVE USEUCOM multi-national Airborne interoperability exercise
PRAIRIE STORM 2/19	Canada	28-Jun-19	05-Aug-19	Combined Arms Battlegroup training
ASKARI STORM 4&5/19	Kenya	23-Sep-19	01-Nov-19	Combined Arms Battlegroup exercise
TRACTABLE	Europe	25-Sep-19	30-Nov-19	Lead Armoured Task Force deployment test
CITADEL BONUS 19	Poland	27-Nov-19	13-Dec-19	Interoperability exercise

EX NAME	LOCATION	DURATION (INCL DATES)		PURPOSE
2020				
ASKARI STORM 1/20	Kenya	27-Jan-20	17-Mar-20	Combined Arms Battlegroup exercise
MAYAN WARRIOR 19-2 (now 20-1)	Belize	03-Feb-20	01-Mar-20	Jungle training
ASKARI SPEAR 2/20	Kenya	05-Mar-20	24-Apr-20	Specialised Infantry combined arms exercise

EX NAME	LOCATION	DURATION (INCL DATES)		PURPOSE
2021				
TALLINN DAWN 3/20	Germany	11-Jan-21	14-Feb-21	Mission Specific training
MAYAN SPEAR 21	Belize	09-Jan-21	10-Mar-21	Specialised Infantry combined arms exercise
ASKARI STORM 1-21	Kenya	08-Feb-21	28-Mar-21	Combined Arms Battlegroup exercise
DEFENDER 21	Various	01-Mar-21	14-Jun-21	US led multi-national exercise
SWIFT RESPONSE 21	Estonia	01-Mar-21	14-Mar-21	Command Post Exercise / LIVE USEUCOM multi-national Airborne interoperability exercise.
Warfighter 21-4	USA	13-Mar-21	23-Apr-20	Command Post Exercise (CPX) to train and develop bilateral interop of UK Division into a US Corps.
NOBLE JUMP DEPLOY EX	Romania	10-May-21	18-Jun-21	UK commitment dependant on NATO Response Force commitment.
ASKARI SPEAR 21-2	Kenya	14-Jun-21	01-Aug-21	Specialised Infantry combined arms sub-unit exercise in

EX NAME	LOCATION	DURATION (INCL DATES)	PURPOSE
			preparation to deploy on operations

The table below shows the British Army's overseas operational deployments during the period 2019 – present day:

OPERATION	LOCATION	DATES	PURPOSE
CABRIT	Estonia and Poland	Jan 2019 – Present	The UK contribution to NATO enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic states and Poland
ELGIN	Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo	Jan 2019 – Present	Support to NATO and EUFOR (until the end of the EU transition period on 31 Dec 2020)
FIRIC	Falkland Islands	Jan 2019 - Present	The British Army's contribution to British Forces South Atlantic Islands (BFSAI) through the provision of the Falkland Islands Roulement Infantry Company (FIRIC).
ORBITAL	Ukraine	Jan 2019 – Present	Capacity Building of the Ukrainian Armed Forces
NEWCOMBE	Mali	Dec 2020 -Present	UK contribution to United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).
SHADER	Iraq	Jan 2019 - Present	UK contribution to operations against Daesh.

OPERATION	LOCATION	DATES	PURPOSE
TRENTON	South Sudan	Jan 2019- Mar 2020	UK contribution to the United Nations Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS).
TORAL	Afghanistan	Jan 2019 - Present	UK contribution to NATO Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT.
TOSCA	Cyprus	Jan 2019 - Present	UK contribution to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

■ Army: Employment

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his announcement of 22 March 2021 on the reduction of the full-time army personnel to 72,500 by 2025, what methodology was used to calculate that number; and who carried out that calculation.

James Heapey:

Calculations regarding the size of the Army were considered in the overall context of the Integrated Review and were carried out jointly by MOD Head Office and the Army. The size, or shape, or mix will constantly evolve as we modernise and adapt to get and stay ahead of the threat.

■ Challenger Tanks

Dave Doogan:

[\[440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the new Challenger 3 tanks will be based.

Jeremy Quin:

The new fleet of Challenger 3 Main Battle Tanks will be predominantly based with the armoured regiments in Tidworth. Some of the fleet will be held in other Defence sites to support training.

■ Chinook Helicopters: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[1010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the purchase of extended-range Chinook helicopters was previously rejected by the Investment Appraisals Committee.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[1011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where depth maintenance will be carried out for the UK's 14 new extended-range Chinook helicopters.

Jeremy Quin:

The Investment Appraisals Committee did not previously reject the Ministry of Defence's proposals to purchase the 14 Chinook H-47 Extended-Range helicopters.

The maintenance philosophy for the new H-47(ER)s forms part of the programme delivery and is currently under review. A project is underway to determine the support solution and no decisions have yet been made.

■ **European Fighter Aircraft: Exports**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment has he made of future export opportunities for Typhoon.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) continues to work with industry and other Eurofighter nations to identify possible Typhoon export opportunities. Most recently, MOD and BAE Systems submitted a Best and Final Offer to Finland at the end of April on behalf of the Eurofighter consortium

■ **European Fighter Aircraft: Training**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of Typhoon flying hours have been dedicated to training foreign air forces in the last 12 months.

James Heappey:

The Typhoon Force currently trains pilots from partner nations. In Financial Year 2020-21 approximately 7% of Typhoon flying hours was used to train pilots from these partners.

■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement**

Gavin Robinson: [\[749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress his Department is making on the awarding of the contract for the Fleet Solid Support ships.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar), on 16 April 2021, in response to Question number 174726.

Attachments:

1. 174726 - Fleet Solid Supports Ships; Procurement [174726 - Fleet Solid Support Ships.docx]

■ Military Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for Tempest to operate at sea.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK's Combat Air strategy operates across a broad force mix. The maritime combat air role is undertaken by the UK's F35B Lightning aircraft from the UK's Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The Future Combat Air System (FCAS), seeks to replace Typhoon once it retires from service and provide an international next generation Combat Air System, and high tempo military capabilities for decades to come.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[84\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to begin the concept and development phase on Tempest; and if he will publish a timeframe for further progression of that aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The Concept & Assessment phase is vital to the Future Comdat Air System Programme, as we conduct the work needed to provide evidence for the evolution of the project

We are on track to launch the Concept and Assessment phase later this year and continue to target an Initial Operating Capability by the mid-2030s.

■ Ministry of Defence: Mass Media

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[86\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to assess the restrictions placed on the Minister for Defence People and Veterans in respect of speaking to the media.

Mr Ben Wallace:

All Ministerial engagement with the media is coordinated and agreed in accordance with the Ministerial Code as part of normal routine business. There were no more restrictions placed on the Minister for Defence People and Veterans than any other Minister.

■ Ministry of Defence: Motor Vehicles

Martin Docherty-Hughes: [\[271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) electric, (b) hybrid or (c) internal combustion, non-combat motor vehicles his Department purchased for the use of personnel in each of the last three years; and what the cost to the public purse was of each type of vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence no longer purchases commercial, non-combat motor vehicles but leases them through a Fleet Management Service contract known as Phoenix II. In each of the last three years, the number of new vehicles leased in each of the three categories is as detailed in the table below. These leases are competitively tendered to ensure that Defence receives value for money.

Vehicle Type	YEAR		
	2018	2019	2020
Electric	Nil	Nil	232
Hybrid	2	Nil	96
Internal combustion	3754	2353	911

■ **Oman: Official Hospitality**

Kenny MacAskill:[\[459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish the (a) items and (b) value of hospitality received by the (i) Chief of the Defence Staff and (ii) his predecessor in connection with attendance at the Sultan's Privy Council in Oman on (A) 5 and 6 January 2019, (B) 6 and 7 January 2018 and (C) 7 and 8 January 2017.

James Heappey:

Transparency guidance for Senior Officials from the Cabinet Office states that Hospitality provided by overseas governments should not normally be included in published returns. Consequently, the information is not held centrally and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Shipping: Carbon Emissions**

Stephen Morgan:[\[424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support maritime decarbonisation and (b) encourage further private investment in green vessel propulsion and port infrastructure.

Jeremy Quin:

The Royal Navy will produce a Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy during 2021. This will outline our long-term intentions with regards to maritime decarbonisation and how we will play our part in enabling the Ministry of Defence to reach Net-Zero Carbon by 2050. The Department is part of a Cabinet Office lead initiative, working with UK Government Investment and other Government Departments, to unlock and mobilise private sector capital for investment in renewable energy generation on the public estate.

■ Shipping: National Skills Academies

Stephen Morgan:

[425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a national maritime skills academy.

Jeremy Quin:

We are currently refreshing our National Shipbuilding Strategy, which will outline how the Government will help to set the conditions for a globally successful, innovative and sustainable UK shipbuilding enterprise. This will include how Government can work with industry to develop a pipeline of skills for the future. A National Skills Academy for Maritime (Shipbuilding) is part of this consideration, but no decision has yet been taken.

■ Unmanned Air Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[630]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to (a) test and (b) purchase unmanned aerial vehicles for use on aircraft carriers.

Jeremy Quin:

Autonomy and uncrewed systems are at the forefront of our developmental thinking, and of the Future Maritime Aviation Force. The intent is to expand experimentation of Uncrewed Air Systems with Royal Navy vessels, including the Queen Elizabeth Class carriers, in the coming years.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Sir Mike Penning:

[135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will extend eligibility of the £1.57 billion rescue package for the arts and entertainment sector announced on 5 July 2020 to (a) sound system and set build providers and (b) other supply chain businesses in that sector.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises the severe impact the pandemic has had on supply chain businesses for the events sector. Supply chain organisations were eligible for - and many were successful in securing from - the first and second rounds of Culture Recovery Funding. They are recognised as a critical part of the sector.

An announcement on the additional £300 million provided to the Culture Recovery Fund announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the recent Budget will be made in due course.

Sajid Javid: [199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to implement an age verification process for access to legal online pornography.

Caroline Dinenage:

Protecting children is at the heart of our online harms agenda and wider government priorities. The strongest protections in the online safety legislation will be for children.

Under our now-published draft Online Safety legislation, we expect companies to use age verification technologies to prevent children from accessing services which pose the highest risk of harm to children, such as online pornography.

The online safety regime will capture both the most visited pornography sites and pornography on social media, therefore covering the vast majority of sites where children are most likely to be exposed to pornography. Social media platforms will need to put appropriate systems and processes in place to prevent children viewing pornography on their services.

The draft Online Safety legislation will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny in this session. We are also working closely with Ofcom to ensure that the implementation period, that will be necessary following passage of the legislation, is as short as possible.

Grahame Morris: [212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will prohibit the use of wooden telegraph poles for communication cabling where a less visibly obtrusive alternative, such as underground cabling, is available.

Matt Warman:

The Electronic Communications Code gives Code Operators the rights to install apparatus for the purposes of providing electronic communication networks. The apparatus installed is subject to commercial considerations and any relevant planning requirements. Operators are also expected to adhere to the [Cabinet and Pole Siting Code of Practice](#) to ensure new apparatus is installed sensitively.

Chris Elmore: [395]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure the protection of children's personal data online.

Chris Elmore: [396]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the protection of children's data online.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government is committed to making sure that we have high data protection standards and that people of all ages are confident that their personal data will be protected and used in an appropriate way.

All organisations in the UK that process personal data have to comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). Any use of children's data must be lawful, fair and transparent. Children should be given clear information about how their data will be used and they have the same rights as adults to access their data; request rectification; object to its processing or have it erased. Organisations offering online services directly to children must seek parental consent to process the personal data of children under the age of 13.

The DPA requires the Information Commissioner, the independent data protection regulator, to publish an Age Appropriate Design Code. The Code sets out standards of age appropriate design that companies will need to implement to ensure their services appropriately safeguard children's personal data and process children's personal data fairly. The Code came into force in September 2020 with a 12 month transition period for industry. It will play a key role in delivering protections for children ahead of and alongside the government's new online safety regulatory framework. Organisations will need to conform by 2nd September 2021.

The ICO has committed to providing a package of support to organisations during the transition period to support conformance to the Code, with all guidance contained in a Children's Code Hub on the ICO's website at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/childrens-code-hub/>. The ICO is ensuring they engage with experts, children and parents when developing guidance, and has recently launched a Children's Advisory Panel to support the implementation of the Code.

The ICO has also advertised for transparency champions to submit privacy information designs so that children can easily understand how, when and why services use their data.

Discussions about data protection and online safety are held regularly across government.

Kate Osborne:

[488]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support he plans to provide to bingo clubs for their reopening on 17 May 2021 to help those clubs deal with the financial pressure they have faced during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises that the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be extremely challenging for businesses, including in the Bingo sector. In recognition of the impact of requiring some businesses to remain closed for a longer period, we have introduced an enhanced package of support, including Restart Grants of up to £18,000 per premises, specifically for those which have been required to remain closed beyond Step 2. The package also includes extensions to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, with further discretionary funding for Local Authorities.

Bingo clubs have accessed £44m of government support via the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (£26.8m), Eat Out to Help Out (£600k), Business Rates Relief (£15.9m) and Grant funding (£1.6m). We are continuing to work with organisations in the land-based gambling sector to understand the impacts and how we may be able to support them.

■ Events Industry: Insurance

Owen Thompson: [\[808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to introduce Government-backed covid-19 cancellation insurance for the live events sector.

Caroline Dinenge:

This Government recognises the importance of the UK's live events sector and has provided significant financial support including an additional £300M to the Culture Recovery Fund. The Culture Recovery Fund as a whole also included £188 million for the devolved administrations via the Barnett formula including £97 million for Scotland.

We are aware of the wider concerns about securing indemnity for live events and we continue to assess all available options to provide further support to the sector within the public health context. We also need to be confident that any investment or intervention would lead to an increase in activity: for instance we understand the constraints imposed by social distancing remain a further barrier for many live events restarting.

■ Non-governmental Organisations: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement of 8 April 2021 on the allocation of £750 million of funding for civil society organisations in response to the covid-19 outbreak, how much of that funding has been returned to the Exchequer.

Rachael Maskell: [\[352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to his announcement of 8 April 2021 on the allocation of £750 million of funding for civil society organisations in response to the covid-19 outbreak, how much of the underspend of that allocation (a) has been submitted and (b) he estimates will be submitted to his Department.

Matt Warman:

The £750 million sector funding package offered unprecedented support to allow charities and social enterprises to continue their vital work and adapt their service delivery to support our national response to the pandemic.

The financial reconciliation for the financial year ending 31 March 2021 is currently being completed. This process will determine any underspends on the VCSE Covid-19 Support Package which may need to be returned to the Exchequer.

Over the past year, DCMS has been as flexible as possible under the terms of the grant agreements to allow charities to repurpose or reprofile funding in order to meet the needs of their communities arising from the pandemic, and minimise potential underspends.

■ Pigeon Racing

Conor McGinn:

[781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to (a) support and (b) promote the sport of pigeon racing.

Nigel Huddleston:

Pigeon Racing is not listed under Sport England's list of recognised sports, which can be viewed [here](#). DEFRA have issued full guidance here on gatherings concerning Columbiformes [here](#).

■ Recreation Spaces: Exercise

Seema Malhotra:

[250]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to support the early return of park runs as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Nigel Huddleston:

Government has prioritised the safe return of sport including team sports, contact combat sports and organised sports participation events. Organised outdoor sport, such as Parkrun, is exempt from legal gathering limits and can take place with any number of participants, as long as undertaken in line with published COVID-secure guidance. As such, Parkrun has been able to take place since 29 March as part of Step 1 of the government's response to the Covid-19 Roadmap.

We are aware of issues at local levels around this, which is why I met with ParkRun on the 21 March to discuss the issues regarding their return. I am committed to supporting them to return as soon as possible.

■ Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus

Jane Stevenson:

[446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his policy is on outdoor stadia returning to full capacity for spectators as covid-19 restrictions ease; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government recognises the importance of spectators to competitive sport and remains committed to working towards their full return to stadiums as soon as it is safe to do so.

We published the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' setting out the roadmap out of the lockdown restrictions for England, and which explains how restrictions will be eased over time. It is now confirmed that Step 3 of the roadmap will go ahead as planned on Monday 17 May which will see fans return to stadia, albeit under capacity caps.

We further welcome the return of spectators at selected events as part of the science-led Events Research Programme (ERP). The ERP is currently running its first phase of April and May pilot events to inform decisions around the safe removal of social distancing at Step 4 of the roadmap. The pilots are running across a range of settings, venues, and activities, so that findings support the full reopening of similar settings across multiple sectors.

As stated in the Roadmap, the government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact later this summer, no earlier than 21 June. This will be subject to the outcomes of the 4 government-led reviews, including the ERP.

■ Wrecks**Tim Loughton:****[584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the same principles of heritage management will be applied to significant heritage assets located beyond UK Territorial Waters but within the UK Marine Area as are applied to such assets located within UK Territorial Waters.

Caroline Dinenage:

The policies relating to heritage assets that are set out in the UK Marine Policy Statement apply equally to those located in UK Territorial Waters and those located beyond UK Territorial Waters but within the UK Marine Area. These policies inform delivery of the Marine Management Organisation's responsibilities - including the development of Marine Plans and the determination of applications for marine licences. The Marine Management Organisation routinely consults Historic England.

Tim Loughton:**[585]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking (a) to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets located beyond UK Territorial Waters but within the UK Marine Area and in particular the sites of (i) the Galloper wreck, (ii) HMS Victory of 1744 and (iii) HMS Gloucester of 1654 and (b) to provide ongoing funding for that purpose; and what evidence his Department is using to monitor for any substantial loss or harm to those sites.

Caroline Dinenge:

Under customary international law, naval warships, state vessels, aircraft and associated artefacts enjoy protection through Sovereign Immunity wherever in the world they lie. This means that they are not subject to the jurisdiction of any other State. Sovereign Immune vessels cannot have salvage services conferred upon them without the consent of the Flag State. The UK is of the view that Sovereign Immune wrecks should be left in situ and undisturbed.

Where applicable, some wrecks are afforded additional protection through the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986

In order to sustain these particular wrecks, the Government is monitoring all three sites.

Tim Loughton:[\[586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that some of the income raised by The Crown Estate from seabed licensing is returned to the marine environment to further the management of significant heritage assets located within the UK Marine Area and in particular for the sites of (i) the Galloper wreck, (ii) HMS Victory (1744) and (iii) HMS Gloucester (1654).

Caroline Dinenge:

The Department has no current plans. Her Majesty The Queen surrenders the revenue from The Crown Estate (which she owns as reigning Monarch) to the Government. As a result, over the last ten years, The Crown Estate has returned a total of £2.9 billion to the Exchequer. The Crown Estate revenues are not hypothecated and have been invested in vital public services such as the NHS, transport, schools and defence, which benefit the UK as a whole.

Tim Loughton:[\[587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the assistance provided to the Government by the marine archaeology community in formulating a strategy for management of significant heritage assets within the UK Marine Area; and if he will meet with representatives of that community to discuss further improvements to that strategy.

Caroline Dinenge:

No such formal assessment has been made, however the advice provided over a number of years by the marine archaeology community, generally and in relation to specific wreck sites, has been invaluable to decision making and understanding these sites. There are no plans at this time to meet with representatives of the marine archaeology community.

EDUCATION■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Robert Halfon: [22]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date his Department plans to publish the data from the national school census for autumn 2020.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not routinely publish data from the autumn school census.

The school census collection takes place termly, but not all of the information is collected on a termly basis. We publish a routine annual summary of school census data based on spring census figures, which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>. The next release, relating to January 2021, will be published in June 2021.

Rachael Maskell: [340]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his most recent assessment is of the effectiveness of pupils wearing face masks in (a) classrooms and (b) corridors and other shared indoor areas in preventing the transmission of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

Following my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's announcement on Step 3 on 10 May 2021, the Department published updated guidance for schools, which included updated advice on face coverings in line with Step 3 of the roadmap. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

As the guidance outlines, based on the current state of the COVID-19 outbreak and the positive progress being made, it is no longer necessary to recommend the additional precautionary face coverings measures put in place from 8 March.

From 17 May, in line with Step 3 of the roadmap, face coverings will no longer be recommended for pupils and students in classrooms or communal areas in schools. Face coverings will also no longer be recommended for staff in classrooms. This is supported by Public Health England (PHE).

In all schools we continue to recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible.

When the policy was introduced, it was an appropriate additional safety measure while rates of infection were high in the community. Now that the four tests have been met, and rates are continuing to fall, the balance has shifted, and it is an appropriate time to remove the recommendation.

While this recommendation moves children towards a greater sense of normality, measures within the PHE-supported system of controls remain very important to

reduce transmission schools, for example, social distancing and regular hand washing. Regular rapid testing will also continue to help find and isolate asymptomatic cases when they do occur, and we continue to encourage everyone to play their part and test themselves twice each week.

The reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern. In all cases, any educational drawbacks should be balanced with the benefits of managing transmission. The Local Action Committee structure (bronze/silver/gold) should be used in such circumstances to re-introduce the use of face coverings. Immediate outbreak response (at the level of individual settings or a cluster of settings) remains for local directors of public health to advise on.

There are local areas in all nations where the number of new infections is increasing. Some local areas have had continued rapid growth in variants, and of particular concern is the B.1.617.2 variant (a variant first identified in India, where it is now widespread). There are now multiple fast-growing clusters of this variant in the UK, with the largest in the North West of England.

Where head teachers have concerns about the use of face coverings in response to a particular local outbreak or variant of concern, they should seek the advice of their local Director of Public Health who will advise on whether the reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be needed for a temporary period.

Our policy on face coverings and the system of controls is kept under review and is informed by the latest scientific and medical advice from PHE. Further information on the use and effectiveness of face coverings can be found at: <https://phe.koha-ptfs.co.uk/cgi-bin/koha/opac-retrieve-file.pl?id=9adedb17d5622f9cd7e42febcbdb19ad> and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963639/DfE_Evidence_summary_COVID-19_-_children_young_people_and_education_settings.pdf.

Rachael Maskell:

[341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will consider a sectoral solution to ensure that no further education institutes are negatively affected as a result of the effect of covid-19 on enrolments; and what comparative assessment he has made of that approach with each institution having to make a separate application for special interventions to be made.

Gillian Keegan:

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the department has moved quickly to support the further education (FE) sector to manage and ensure, as far as possible, that adults and young people could still access education.

We have not considered mitigations from a sectorial perspective but have instead provided additional funding to support colleges such as enhanced 16 to 19 in year growth funding, the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund, funding for high value courses for 18 and

19-year-old school and college leavers, and the increased funding for traineeships. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) continued to pay 16 to 19 grant funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for both the 2019/2020 and 2020/21 financial years.

We have sought to align this support with the normal business processes of colleges but, because these measures had to be established quickly and with appropriate steps to get value for public money, some have involved separate application processes.

Our aim is to minimise the burden on FE colleges and to enable them to meet the needs of learners and we will keep the position under review.

We are aware that adult college enrolments in some areas for particular provision may be adversely impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and to mitigate this, we are lowering the reconciliation threshold for ESFA grant funded Adult Education Budget (AEB adult skills including non-formula funded community learning and 19-24 Traineeships) and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary fund providers for 2020 to 2021, from 97% and 100% respectively to 90%. We announced this change in March 2021, to help providers plan their provision better for the remainder of the 2020/21 academic year.

For those providers who are eligible and are at risk of insolvency, they would be referred to the Insolvency Regime or Emergency funding process.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to prevent the risk of grade inflation in school exams in summer 2021.

Nick Gibb:

Due to the ongoing disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government announced on 6 January that GCSE, AS and A level examinations will not go ahead as planned this summer. On 25 February, it was confirmed that pupils would receive grades awarded by their teachers, who had the flexibility to use a range of evidence.

Parents and pupils can have confidence in the grades awarded this summer. Clear guidance has been provided to teachers, who will make evidence-based judgements on the grade at which their pupils are performing. Exam boards have also provided grade descriptors and exemplar materials to support teachers. These are broadly pegged to performance standards from previous years.

During the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, teachers are best placed to understand the content pupils have covered, their pupils' performance, and how they compare to other pupils this year and in previous years. Teachers will already have a good understanding of their pupils' performance which they can continue to develop throughout the time remaining supported by the resources and guidance issued to them by Awarding Organisations and the Joint Council for Qualifications. One of the requirements is that centres consider their historic awarding in the most recent

examinations actually taken. This is one of the ways that grade inflation should be kept in check.

A robust quality assurance process will also be in place to support teachers in ensuring internal quality assurance processes have been effectively implemented. This will also reduce the risk of any malpractice.

■ Adoption

Rachael Maskell:

[803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to safeguard adopted children who have contact with their birth parents outside of formal contact arrangements.

Vicky Ford:

Local authorities have a legal duty to provide a comprehensive adoption service.

This specifically includes “Assistance, including mediation services, in relation to arrangements for contact between an adoptive child and a natural parent, natural sibling, former guardian or a related person of the adoptive child.”.

We will be working with local authorities and Regional Adoption Agencies to improve support around contact with birth relatives, including that which has started via social media.

■ Arts and Music: Higher Education

Dr Rupa Huq:

[820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to reverse the proposed reductions in funding for music and arts courses at Higher Education level in England.

Michelle Donelan:

The Strategic Priorities Grant, formerly referred to as the Teaching Grant, plays an important role in supporting providers and students to develop the skills and knowledge needed locally, regionally, and nationally to support the economy.

We have asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the Grant for the 2021-22 financial year. These reforms include the reallocation of high-cost subject funding towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, high-cost STEM subjects, and subjects meeting specific labour market needs.

One of our proposals is for a 50% reduction in the rate of high-cost subject funding, which is one element of the wider Strategic Priorities Grant, for some subjects in order to enable this reprioritisation. This will help to correct discrepancies which have been seen, for example, media studies funded at a higher rate than mathematics or history.

It is important to note that the Strategic Priorities Grant accounts for a relatively small proportion of the total income of higher education providers today. For the providers losing funding due to this reallocation, the income lost would account for

approximately 0.05% of their estimated total income, based on the latest data available.

This important reprioritisation of taxpayers' money does not mean this government is devaluing the arts or social sciences. High-quality provision in a range of subjects is critical for our workforce, and our public services, and is culturally enriching for our society.

That is why, as part of the same reform programme, we have asked the OfS to invest an additional £10 million in our world-leading specialist providers, many of which specialise in arts provision. We want to ensure that our specialist providers receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students.

The OfS has now publicly consulted on these proposals, and responses from universities, students and others will be taken into account before any final decisions on allocations are made.

■ Assessments

Munira Wilson: [\[469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish arrangements for (a) SATS, (b) GCSE, (c) A-level and (d) BTEC examinations in the 2021-22 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

It is the Government's policy that GCSE and A level examinations should go ahead in summer 2022. Examinations and assessments for vocational and technical qualifications should also take place, in line with the latest public health guidance, throughout the 2021/22 academic year. The Department recognises that students who will be taking examinations and assessments next year have had significant disruption to their education this year, and we will continue to support students in the face of any further disruption. We are considering with Ofqual, the awarding organisations, and wider stakeholders what we need to do to ensure that students are able to sit examinations and other assessments safely and receive grades that are fair, even if further disruption does occur. Whilst the Department remains committed to exams going ahead in 2022, we will also work with Ofqual on a range of contingencies. The Department will announce further details as soon as possible.

The Department is also planning for a full programme of primary assessments to take place in the 2021/22 academic year, and we will confirm full details for 2021/22 primary assessments in due course.

■ Assessments: Standards

Dean Russell: [\[923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on exam standards of Ofqual's decision to release optional exam board materials in advance to students.

Nick Gibb:

The optional sets of questions provided by the exam boards are intended to be a helpful tool for teachers to use, if they choose, in gathering evidence to determine their pupils' grades this year. They are one element of the overall approach to assessing pupils' performance. These sets of questions are not exams and pupils across the country may complete them at different times or in different formats. They are openly published to ensure there is equality of access to the materials for all pupils at the same time – an approach supported by 66% of respondents to the Department's and Ofqual's joint consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021.

As well as the sets of questions and other support materials, the exam boards have provided grade descriptors to exemplify the established performance standard that is to be applied in grading judgements this summer.

The materials derived from examinations are, thereby, part of a package of measures designed to deliver fairness for pupils given differential teaching experiences caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Children**Sarah Olney:**[\[821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which member of the Cabinet has responsibility for representing the needs of babies and young children.

Vicky Ford:

Members of the Cabinet have responsibility for representing the needs of babies and young children within their individual department remits. For example, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has responsibility for Childcare and Early Education and children's social care.

■ Children in Care: Human Rights**Paul Bristow:**[\[500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish a Child Rights Impact Assessment of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

Paul Bristow:[\[501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish an Equality Impact Assessment of The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

Vicky Ford:

The department completed both an equality impact assessment and a Children's Rights Impact Assessment before introducing the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which will ban the

placement of children under 16 in independent and semi-independent settings from September. We can confirm that the government will publish both documents shortly.

■ Education: Children

Sarah Olney: **[400]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support children who have fallen behind in school as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government recognises that extended school and college restrictions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education and are committed to helping pupils make up education lost due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

To address this challenge, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, committed to working with parents, teachers, and education providers to develop a long-term plan to help education settings to support pupils make up their education over the course of this Parliament.

In June 2020 we announced a £1 billion catch-up package including a National Tutoring Programme and a Catch-up Premium for this academic year. In February 2021 we committed to further funding of £700 million to fund summer schools, expansion of our tutoring programmes and a Recovery Premium for next academic year. Funding will support pupils across early years settings, schools, and providers of 16 to 19 education.

The Department has appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner to advise on the development of the long-term recovery plan. Sir Kevan will engage with parents, pupils, and teachers in the development of this broader approach and review how evidence-based interventions can be used to address the impact the COVID-19 outbreak has had on education. We will share further details in due course.

■ Home Education: Standards

Derek Twigg: **[618]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure the quality of education for children who are home-schooled.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has substantially strengthened its guidance to local authorities on exercising their powers in relation to elective home education. The revised guidance, which was published in April 2019, sets out the steps that local authorities should take to satisfy themselves that the education provided by parents at home is suitable, and the actions that they can take if they are not satisfied.

In the spring of 2019, a consultation was held on proposals for:

- a mandatory register of children not attending state or registered independent schools to help local authorities carry out their responsibilities in relation to children not in school.
- a duty on parents to register their child with the local authority if not registered at specified types of schools.
- a duty on proprietors of certain schools or colleges to respond to enquiries from local authorities.
- a duty on local authorities to provide support to parents who educate children at home.

The consultation closed on 24 June 2019, with nearly 5000 responses. The Department remains committed to a registration system for children not in school. Further details on this will be in the Government response to the consultation, which will be published in due course.

■ Overseas Students: Quarantine

Matt Western:

[\[827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the cost of quarantine for international students returning from covid-19 red countries.

Michelle Donelan:

I speak regularly with my counterparts across government about how various COVID-19 policies may affect students with a view to minimising burdens for students while maintaining public health, and I have remained in close contact with Department for Health and Social Care ministers responsible for the Managed Quarantine Service.

Hotel quarantine is in place to prevent the spread of potentially harmful COVID-19 variants in the UK, and there is a need to have strict rules in place to prevent the vaccine effort from being undermined.

The costs of quarantine are borne by the traveller – these costs are the same for any individual arriving in the UK from, or via a red list country.

However, we have worked closely with the sector and colleagues across government to ensure that UK residents, including international students due to their visa status, that are facing significant financial hardship will have the opportunity to apply for a deferred repayment plan when booking their managed quarantine hotel room.

Travellers who access hardship will be referred to a government debt collection agency (“Qualco”), who will perform an independent financial assessment and determine an appropriate payment plan.

Any student who is experiencing financial hardship can speak with their provider about support. We have made an additional £85 million of student hardship funding available to higher education providers in the 2020/21 academic year. This is in addition to the £256 million of government funded student premium funding already available to higher education providers to draw on for this academic year, 2020/21,

and this support can include help for students, including international students and postgraduates. International students can be confident in expressing these concerns to their provider without any impact on their immigration status.

■ Pioneer Academy: Complaints

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has received any complaints about the Pioneer Academy.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has not received any complaints about The Pioneer Academy trust. We occasionally receive complaints about individual schools within trusts which are investigated and/or shared with the appropriate bodies.

■ Pioneer Academy: Finance

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial assistance his Department has provided to the Pioneer Academy following that academy's agreement to sponsor Moulsecomb Primary School.

Nick Gibb:

The Pioneer Academy has not yet received any financial assistance following their agreement to sponsor Moulsecomb Primary School.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much total funding his Department has awarded to the Pioneer Academy.

Nick Gibb:

The Pioneer Academy has previously received capacity funding to support it to grow. The academy trust received £75,000 in financial year 2014-15 and £70,000 in financial year 2016-17 from the Regional Academy Growth Fund, and £85,400 from the Multi-Academy Trust Development and Improvement Fund in financial year 2018-19.

The academy trust has also received funding for the schools it has sponsored. This is in line with the following guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sponsored-academies-funding-guidance-for-sponsors>.

Academies within trusts are funded via general annual grant payments made by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Information on the trust's income and expenditure, as well as individual schools, is available on the Department's 'school financial benchmarking' website here: <https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/Trust?companyNo=7691324>.

■ Pupil Exclusions

Munira Wilson:

[474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of children who have been taken off the school roll since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested about pupils being taken off the school roll is not held by the Department and cannot be estimated from current data sources.

■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment

Fleur Anderson:

[493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide clear facemasks to enable lip reading for deaf children in schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

On 10 May, the Department published updated guidance for schools, which included updated advice on face coverings in line with step 3 of the roadmap. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

As the guidance outlines, based on the current state of the COVID-19 outbreak and the positive progress being made, it is no longer necessary to recommend the additional precautionary face coverings measures put in place from 8 March.

From 17 May, in line with step 3 of the roadmap, face coverings will no longer be recommended for pupils in classrooms or communal areas in schools. Face coverings will also no longer be recommended for staff in classrooms. This is supported by Public Health England.

In all schools the Department continues to recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible.

The reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern. In all cases, any educational drawbacks should be balanced with the benefits of managing transmission. The Local Action Committee structure (bronze/silver/gold) should be used in such circumstances to re-introduce the use of face coverings. Immediate outbreak response (at the level of individual settings or a cluster of settings) remains for local directors of public health to advise on.

Where face coverings are recommended, our guidance remains that some individuals, including those who rely on visual signals for communication and those who communicate with or provide support to those who do, are exempt from wearing

face coverings and the Department expects staff and pupils to be sensitive to those needs.

Where our guidance recommends face coverings, transparent face coverings can also be worn. Transparent face coverings may be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. However, the evidence to support this is currently very limited. Face coverings (whether transparent or cloth) should fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth and be made with a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles.

The main benefit from a transparent face covering is that they can aid communication, for example enabling lip-reading or allowing for the full visibility of facial expressions, but this must be considered alongside the comfort and breathability of a face covering that contains plastic, which may mean that the face covering is less breathable than layers of cloth.

Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and students to support them to access education successfully. The Department has made this point clear in guidance.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Helen Hayes:

[370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Department for Education's press release, £79 million to boost mental health support for children and young people, published on 5 March 2021, what plans his Department has to provide mental health and wellbeing support to schools that will not be covered by one of the new mental health support teams.

Vicky Ford:

Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is priority for the department and we have a long-term joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England - introducing new mental health support teams linked to schools and colleges and incentivising all schools and colleges to identify and train a senior mental health lead.

The £79 million is additional NHS England funding for children and young people's mental health support, which will include increasing the number of Mental Health Support Teams. The support will grow from the 59 set up by last March to around 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3 million children. This increase, on top of the investment in NHS mental health services set out in the 10-year plan, means that millions of children and young people will have access to significantly expanded mental health services.

Alongside this, we have now confirmed that up to 7,800 schools and colleges in England will be offered funding worth £9.5 million to train a senior mental health lead from their staff in the next academic year, which is part of the Government's commitment to offering this training to all state schools and colleges by 2025. Training will provide senior leads with the knowledge and skills to develop or

introduce a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing in their setting, which encourages staff to develop their own understanding of issues affecting their pupils, giving young people a voice in how their school or college addresses wellbeing and working with parents and monitoring pupils where appropriate.

Information on this is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958151/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_emotional_health_and_wellbeing_a_whole_school_and_college_approach.pdf/.

We will also fund an adapted 'Link' programme which is designed to improve partnerships between health and education leaders in local areas, raise awareness of mental health concerns and improve referrals to specialist help when needed.

The support schools are providing to their pupils following the return to face-to-face education should include time devoted to supporting mental health and wellbeing, which will play a fundamental part in supporting recovery. The return to education settings is being supported by a £700 million package, which includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This will help schools to provide their disadvantaged pupils with a one-off boost to the support, both academic and pastoral, that has been proved most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and can be used for mental health and wellbeing support.

We have supported schools to put the right pastoral support in place through the Wellbeing for Education Return scheme in the 2020/21 academic year, which provided free expert training, support and resources for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional pressures from the last year – including trauma, anxiety, or grief.

The department has convened its Mental Health in Education Action Group, to look at the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities, as well as considering what additional support is required. The action group highlighted that schools and colleges need help to understand, navigate and access the range of provision available locally, so as a first step we are providing £7 million additional funding to local authorities to provide further expert support to do this through the Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme.

Munira Wilson:

[461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Department of Education's press release, Schools and colleges to benefit from boost in expert mental health support, published on 10 May 2021, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) schools and (b) students in London that will have access to a mental health support team as a result of the announcement of that funding.

Vicky Ford:

According to 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial year programme data up to March 2020, in London a) 600 education settings had signed up to work with Mental Health

Support Teams (MHSTs) and b) 340,825 pupils were therefore estimated to have access to those teams. Please note that the education settings data includes further education providers, whereas the pupils data does not. These figures are based on education settings reported to the Department for Education as enrolled in the programme as of March 2020, and pupil number data accessed via Get Information About Schools (GIAS) at the same time. These figures are also based only on those settings reported as enrolled that could be matched via their Unique Reference Number to data in GIAS.

The Department for Education announcement on 10 May references MHSTs, in line with the NHS England and Improvement announcement on 5 March of a £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support, which will include increasing the number of MHSTs. There are now over 280 teams set up or in training across the country. 183 of these are operational and ready to support children and young people in around 3,000 education settings, covering 15% of pupils in England. A further 103 MHSTs are in development with more to be commissioned by NHS England and Improvement this year, which will deliver the NHS Long Term Plan commitment to reach 20 – 25% of pupils a year early (by March 2022). 35% of pupils in England (almost three million) are expected to have access to a MHST by 2023.

Please note that the estimates pertaining to London (first paragraph) are based on the first 2 years of the MHSTs programme, to March 2021, whereas the national coverage estimates cover at least 3 years of the programme, to March 2022 and 2023.

Munira Wilson:

[462]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Department of Education's press release, Schools and colleges to benefit from boost in expert mental health support, published on 10 May 2021, what plans his Department has to provide mental health and wellbeing support to schools that will not be covered by one of the new mental health support teams referenced in that press release.

Vicky Ford:

Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing is a priority for the department, and with the Department for Health and Social Care and wider health partners we are delivering our long-term commitments made in the 'Transforming children and young people's mental health provision: a green paper'. This includes introducing new Mental Health Support Teams linked to schools and colleges, incentivising all schools and colleges to identify and train a senior mental health lead, piloting a four week waiting time for access to specialist NHS children and young people's mental health services, and offering the Link Programme to help improve joint working locally between education settings and mental health service providers.

An additional £79 million NHS England funding was confirmed on 5 March 2021 for children and young people's mental health support, which will include increasing the number of Mental Health Support Teams. The number of support teams will grow from the 59 set up by last March to around 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3

million children. This increase, on top of the investment in mental health services set out in the NHS 10-year plan, means that millions of children and young people will have access to significantly expanded mental health services.

Alongside this, we confirmed on 10 May 2021 that up to 7,800 schools and colleges in England will be offered funding worth £9.5 million to train a senior mental health lead from their staff in the next academic year, which is part of the Government's commitment to offering this training to all state schools and colleges by 2025. Training will provide senior leads with the knowledge and skills to develop or introduce a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing in their setting, which encourages staff to develop their own understanding of issues affecting their pupils, giving young people a voice in how their school or college addresses wellbeing and working with parents and monitoring pupils where appropriate. Information on this is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958151/Promoting_children_and_young_people_s_emotional_health_and_wellbeing_a_whole_school_and_college_approach.pdf.

We will also fund an adapted 'Link' programme which is designed to improve partnerships between health and education leaders in local areas, raise awareness of mental health concerns and improve referrals to specialist help when needed.

The support schools are providing to their pupils following the return to face-to-face education should include time devoted to supporting mental health and wellbeing, which will play a fundamental part in supporting recovery. The return to education settings is being supported by a £700 million package, which includes a new one-off Recovery Premium for state primary, secondary and special schools to use as they see best to support disadvantaged students. This will help schools to provide their disadvantaged pupils with a one-off boost to the support, both academic and pastoral, that has been proved most effective in helping them recover from the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and can be used for mental health and wellbeing support.

We have supported schools to put the right pastoral support in place through the Wellbeing for Education Return scheme in 2020/21 academic year, which provided free expert training, support and resources for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional pressures from the last year – including trauma, anxiety or grief.

The department has convened its Mental Health in Education Action Group, to look at the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges, and universities, as well as considering what additional support is required. The action group highlighted that schools and colleges need help to understand, navigate and access the range of provision available locally, so as a first step we are also providing an additional £7 million funding to local authorities to provide further expert support to do this through the Wellbeing for Education Recovery programme.

Munira Wilson: [\[463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what number and proportion of schools in the trailblazer areas piloting Mental Health Support Teams have an (a) Inadequate, (b) Requires Improvement, (c) Good and (d) Outstanding Ofsted rating.

Munira Wilson: [\[464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what number and proportion of schools in the trailblazer areas in London piloting Mental Health Support Teams have an (a) Inadequate, (b) Requires Improvement, (c) Good and (d) Outstanding Ofsted rating.

Vicky Ford:

According to financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 programme data up to March 2020, and Ofsted rating data from Get Information About Schools at the same time, nationally:

- a) 17 (0.6%) education settings enrolled to work with Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) had an Inadequate Ofsted rating;
- b) 306 (10.4%) had a Requires Improvement rating;
- c) 1,794 (60.9%) had a Good rating; and
- d) 398 (13.5%) had an Outstanding rating.

In total, 423 schools (14.4%) did not have an Ofsted rating.

According to financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 programme data up to March 2020, and Ofsted rating data from Get Information About Schools at the same time, in London:

- a) 0 (0%) education settings enrolled to work with MHSTs had an Inadequate Ofsted rating;
- b) 19 (3.2%) had a Requires Improvement rating;
- c) 371 (61.8%) had a Good rating; and
- d) 143 (23.8%) had an Outstanding rating.

In total, 64 schools (10.7%) did not have an Ofsted rating.

Please note that the figures are based on education settings reported to the department that have enrolled in the programme as of March 2020, and Ofsted data accessed via Get Information About Schools (GIAS) at the same time. These figures are based only on those education settings reported as enrolled that could be matched via their Unique Reference Number to data in GIAS. As the programme progresses, and the number of MHSTs and therefore participating education settings increase, these numbers will vary. It is also important to note that participating education settings' Ofsted inspection ratings will also change throughout the programme, depending on scheduled inspections and resulting reports.

■ Special Educational Needs

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are registered as having SEND; how many children with SEND are enrolled in schools; and what information his Department holds on attendance rates of children with SEND.

Vicky Ford:

The department collects data on school children who have special educational needs (SEN), but does not collect data on those with disabilities specifically.

We publish annual figures on the number of children and young people (aged 0 to 25 years) for whom local authorities have issued education, health and care (EHC) plans, available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans>. Data relating to January 2021 was published on 13 May 2021.

We publish annual figures on school pupils with SEN based on January school census data, which is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>. Data relating to January 2021 will be published in June 2021.

Our routine absence statistics include figures for pupils with SEN at state-funded schools.

The most recent full-year absence statistics are for academic year 2018/19 and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>. The most recently published part-year absence statistics are for autumn term 2019 which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term>. Data relating to autumn term 2020 will be published on 27 May 2021.

Data on the attendance of pupils with EHC plans during the COVID-19 outbreak has also been collected on a daily basis via the Education Settings Survey and published weekly at the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

■ Sports: Finance

Sir Mike Penning:

[637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to announce Sports Premium funding for 2021-22.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is considering arrangements for the Primary PE and sport premium for the 2021-22 academic year and will confirm the position as soon as possible.

■ Timothy Rowe**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has received any correspondence on the appointment of Timothy Rowe as regional director of the Pioneer Academy.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has not received any correspondence on the appointment of Timothy Rome as regional director of The Pioneer Academy.

Trusts are not required or expected to provide the Department with this information.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Dame Diana Johnson:****[138]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to (a) set targets for the reduction of plastic pollution, (b) publish a strategy and annual reports on plastic pollution reduction and (c) establish an advisory committee on plastic pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Bill requires the Government to set at least one long-term, legally binding target in four of the highest priority areas for environmental improvement, including Resource Efficiency and Waste Reduction. These targets will be set following a robust, evidence-led process that includes seeking independent expert advice, a role for stakeholders and the public, and approval from Parliament. We prefer to set a wider Resources and Waste target to ensure a holistic approach to all materials, not just plastics, to ensure we achieve the best environmental outcome.

As to a strategy, annual reports and an advisory committee on plastic pollution reduction, the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042. In December 2018 we published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how we want to achieve this and move towards a circular economy, effectively providing a strategy for plastic pollution reduction. The Environment Bill will enable us to significantly change the way that we manage our waste and take forward a number of the proposals from the Resources and Waste Strategy. The Bill contains powers to create extended producer responsibility schemes; introduce deposit return schemes; establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better control the export of plastic waste; and give us the power to set new charges for other single-use plastic items. All these measures will effectively contribute to reducing plastic pollution.

The Government are currently consulting on policy proposals for extended producer responsibility for packaging, a deposit return scheme and more consistency in recycling collections.

We also support the UK Plastics Pact (UKPP), which produces an annual report on the progress to plastic waste reduction targets in 2025. The Pact is a collaborative initiative of over 120 business members, representing retail, manufacturing, hospitality, the plastic supply sector, plastic recycling and resource management.

Neale Hanvey:

[481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals similar to those recently brought forward by the French Government to require that all new washing machines are fitted with microfilters to help prevent synthetic microfibres from entering rivers and oceans and consequently entering the food chain.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government currently has no plans to require manufacturers to install microplastic filters on new washing machines. We are working with industry to encourage improved environmental outcomes and reduce water pollution on a voluntary basis. We will continue to assess new and emerging evidence and consider the need for legislation in the future if the current approach is not successful.

Water infrastructure is recognised as an important pathway for contaminants, including microplastics, to the wider environment. The Government is working with the industry and scientific community to focus on research which addresses the evidence gaps in knowledge of the issues and the real world impacts these materials are exerting on our ecosystems and people.

Defra has published the outcome of research - [*Investigating the sources and pathways of synthetic fibre and vehicle tyre wear contamination into the marine environment*](#). The report highlights the prevalence of tyre-wear particles and fibres from clothing in air/water and storm drain pathways to the marine environment. A key conclusion from this research was that there are many textile fibres in the air close to roads, particularly those with pedestrians, which would settle into waterways. Comparatively, there were fewer fibres entering the marine environment from wastewater treatment plants. Before considering options to prevent microfibres entering the water environment, such as washing machine filters, there needs to be more certainty about the impacts of policy measures designed to reduce microplastic fibres entering freshwater and marine environments.

Dame Angela Eagle:

[69]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the creation of smallholder and community-led horticulture jobs in (a) England, (b) the North West, (c) Wirral and (d) Wallasey.

Rebecca Pow:

As set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan this Government will provide funding to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access land, infrastructure and support to establish successful and innovative businesses including in horticulture. These could involve business models such as Community Supported Agriculture and small holdings.

The details and eligibility criteria of the new entrant scheme are being developed through a consultative co-design process with stakeholders.

The co-design steering group includes representatives of local authorities with council farm estates, new entrant farmers, providers of innovation support for young farmers, cooperative and community land organisations and private landowners. We are also engaging a wider range of stakeholders to help us design the scheme. We will report more details of the scheme this summer and aim to launch the scheme in 2022.

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Luke Pollard: [\[437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what total investment industry stakeholders have contributed to the Pick for Britain campaign.

Luke Pollard: [\[438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total budget was of the Pick for Britain campaign; and how much in funding (a) industry stakeholders and (b) the Government contributed to that total budget.

Luke Pollard: [\[439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many workers in total were recruited as a result of the Pick for Britain campaign.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra does not hold any information on the investment made, or any funding contributed to the budget, by industry stakeholders to the *Pick for Britain* campaign.

The *Pick for Britain* campaign was a joint industry-Government initiative with co-investment from partners, which ensured that the successful campaign was at little direct cost to the Government. £29,830 was spent by Defra on the *Pick for Britain* campaign in 2020.

The *Pick for Britain* website did not actively register or recruit workers. It was a platform to advertise the websites of growers who were recruiting, as well as other resources such as official/industry-led guidance.

We are not able to share any information about specific vacancies, interviews or people in jobs as that information is commercially sensitive and is not held by Defra. As such, we are unable to provide a figure on the number of people who were recruited as a result of the *Pick for Britain* campaign.

Luke Pollard: [\[840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many British workers were recruited to agricultural jobs via the Pick for Britain scheme.

Luke Pollard: [\[841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many applications per job available were received through the Pick for Britain scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

The *Pick for Britain* website did not actively register or recruit workers. It was a platform which advertised the websites of growers who were recruiting, as well as other resources such as official and industry-led guidance.

The 'Jobs' page on the *Pick for Britain* website had a significant number of hits after its launch on 17 April, but this does not indicate the number of job seekers with an interest in taking up these roles.

We are not able to share any information about specific vacancies, applications, interviews or people in jobs as that information is commercially sensitive and is not held by Defra. As such, we are unable to provide a figure on the number of British workers who were recruited to agricultural jobs via of the *Pick for Britain* campaign, or the number of applications that were received through the *Pick for Britain* campaign.

■ Batteries: Recycling

Sir Greg Knight: [\[70\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has in place to ensure adequate UK recycling capacity for obsolete batteries used in electric vehicles from 2030 onwards; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009 ban the disposal of industrial, including electric vehicle, and automotive batteries to landfill and their incineration. Under producer responsibility requirements, the regulations also obligate those placing these types of batteries on the market to take them back at end of life and provide for their appropriate treatment. We are currently reviewing these regulations, with a consultation on proposals due to be issued by the end of this year, and this will consider the implications of the growing numbers of electric vehicle (EV) batteries.

The Government has committed £318m into the Faraday Battery Challenge to support the research, development and scale-up of world leading battery technology in the UK. The innovation strand is supporting several business led collaborative R&D projects on reuse and recycling of EV batteries.

UK Research and Innovation has also recently invested £22.5m in interdisciplinary circular economy centres to explore how reusing waste materials, including rare metals, in the textiles, construction, chemical and metal industries could deliver huge environmental benefits and boost the UK economy.

■ Birds of Prey: Licensing

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[72\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the decision to issue a licence for white-tailed eagles to be introduced into England on the risks posed to (a) livestock and (b) domestic pets; what consultations have taken place with farming groups and their representatives on that matter; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Natural England examined the diet and feeding behaviour of white-tailed eagles elsewhere in continental Europe and found no evidence of predation of livestock or pets. The evidence strongly suggests it is most likely that the birds will feed on a range of wild prey and carrion – fish, birds, rabbits and hares - usually around the coast or waterbodies. The areas surrounding the proposed release site will provide ample wild prey for the birds. There appears to be no evidence of livestock or pet predation elsewhere in Europe with the exception of some lamb predation in Scotland where husbandry conditions are very different to East Anglia and there is a lower abundance of wild prey.

Natural England also looked at evidence from the Isle of Wight reintroduction project which has closely monitored all of the GPS tagged birds including studying their diets. Some of these birds have spent time on livestock farms in Norfolk and have been shown to feed only on wild prey. In the unlikely event of livestock predation occurring, it is most likely to be localised, rare and perpetrated by just one or two eagles and there is a conflict management plan and exit strategy to address any concerns.

The licence applicants consulted a number of farming organisations including the National Farmers Union (NFU) and representatives of the sheep, pig and poultry industries. They also participated in a webinar organised by the NFU for livestock farmers in the East Midlands and East Anglia and wrote directly to a number of local farms and estates. A web based survey was conducted in which 63% of 216 farmers expressed support for the project.

■ Crops

Luke Pollard:

[\[436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to help (a) ensure that crops are picked and (b) reduce crop wastage in 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working closely with industry and other Government departments to understand labour supply and demand, and to help our world-leading growers access the labour they need to ensure our crops are picked and not wasted.

The Seasonal Workers Pilot has been expanded for one year, with 30,000 visas granted for workers to come to the UK, from EU or non-EU countries, for a period of up to six months to pick and package fruit and vegetables on our farms.

In 2021 and beyond, food and farming businesses will continue to be able to rely on EU nationals living in the UK with settled or pre-settled status – almost 4.8 million EU citizens and their families have been granted settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and the application deadline is 30 June 2021. EU nationals who have settled status can continue to travel to the UK to do seasonal work in 2021.

The Government is encouraging the horticulture sector to make employment more attractive to UK domestic workers through offering training, careers options, wage increases and to invest in automation technology.

To help with these efforts, Defra will build on the success of last year's domestic recruitment campaign and work with industry and DWP to raise awareness of career opportunities within the horticulture sector to help attract domestic workers, and we will explore the potential for automation to meet future labour demands of the sector.

Defra is leading a Government review of automation in horticulture to understand what is required to accelerate the development and uptake of automation technologies in both the edible and ornamental sectors, in England, with the view to reducing the sector's long-term dependency on seasonal migrant labour. The review's final report will be published in the summer of 2021 and inform a range of policy decisions regarding automation and seasonal labour from 2022 onwards.

■ **Farms: Local Government Finance**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what financial support the Government is providing to local authorities to establish new county farms.

Victoria Prentis:

As set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan this Government will provide funding to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access land, infrastructure and support to establish successful and innovative businesses. These could include support for local authorities to invest in county farms.

The details and eligibility criteria of the new entrant scheme are being developed through a consultative co-design process with stakeholders.

The co-design steering group includes representatives of local authorities with council farm estates, new entrant farmers, providers of innovation support for young farmers, cooperative and community land organisations and private landowners. We are also engaging a wider range of stakeholders to help us design the scheme. We will report more details of the scheme this summer and aim to launch the scheme in 2022.

■ **Fisheries: Quotas**

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 25 April 2021 to Question 180947 on fishing quotas, what (a) allocation of the quota, (b) tonnage and (c) species will be allocated to Scotland.

Victoria Prentis:

As annual negotiations to set fishing opportunities have not yet concluded the final quota allocations for each administration are not yet finalised.

On 22 April Defra published the [UK quota management rules](#) which set out how quota will be split across the UK. On 14 April we published the provisional quota for all parts of the UK in the [Secretary of State determination](#).

The final allocations will be published on gov.uk once negotiations have concluded.

Flood Control**Emma Hardy:****[839]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Public Accounts Committee Forty-Fifth Report, Managing flood risk, including that Committee's request for a reply by April 2021 setting out (a) the findings of his Department's research into non-take up of insurance, (b) how his Department plans to ensure that remaining obstacles to obtaining affordable insurance are tackled and (c) what steps he is taking to overcome the obstacles to households implementing property-level flood resilience measures.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government will respond to the Public Accounts Committee Forty-Fifth Report on managing flood risk via Treasury Minutes which is due to be published on 17 May on the Government website. The Government also wrote to the Committee in April setting out its response to non-take up of flood insurance. This response letter and further detail will be provided within the Treasury Minute on gov.uk.

Incinerators**Beth Winter:****[921]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the incineration of waste on the Government's climate objectives.

Rebecca Pow:

Incineration of fossil derived waste is a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Total greenhouse gas emissions from waste incineration accounted for around 1.4% (6.47 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent) of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions in 2019. Of this, about 6.19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent was emitted from Energy from Waste plants. It is clear that we will need to reduce that impact. That is why the Government continues to take action, including through our Environment Bill measures, to reduce, re-use and recycle more of our waste and to move to a circular economy.

In assessing the effect of waste incineration on meeting climate objectives and deciding on what further action is needed, the Government is considering the recommendations of the independent Climate Change Committee. Defra is also seeking to strengthen its own evidence base around the environmental impacts of

managing residual waste including incineration of municipal waste. This information will be taken into account in the Government's assessment of the future infrastructure needed for treating residual waste, to be published over coming months, and will inform direction setting to meet our climate goals.

■ Shellfish: Animal Welfare

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including decapod crustaceans in the forthcoming Animal Sentience Bill.

Victoria Prentis:

There is clear evidence that animals with a backbone (vertebrates) are sentient and this is reflected in the Government's Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill introduced to the House of Lords on 13 May 2021. However, the Bill also gives the Secretary of State a power to extend the recognition of sentience to particular invertebrates in future on the basis of evidence.

Defra has commissioned an independent review of the available scientific evidence on sentience in decapod crustaceans such as crabs and lobsters, as well as sentience in the class, Cephalopoda, which includes octopus, cuttlefish and squid. The review will report shortly.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take in response to recent increased levels of unrest between Palestinians and Israelis.

James Cleverly:

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop. Every effort must be made to avoid loss of life, especially that of children. The Prime Minister has called for an urgent de-escalation of tensions. The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in his calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 11 May, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London on the 11 May to urge them to de-escalate and restore calm. We have also engaged the UN Security Council, calling for measures to reduce further violence. UK embassies throughout the Middle East are engaging regional partners, and we remain in close contact with the US administration and European allies.

Stephen Crabb:

[162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will issue a condemnation of the reported anti-Semitic rhetoric used at (a) the 2001 World Conference Against Racism held in Durban and (b) subsequent commemorative events of that conference.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Stephen Crabb:

[163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will join the United States, Canada and Australia in opposing events to make the twentieth anniversary of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) issuing localised travel advice for Greece and (b) putting its different regions into different travel categories in response to the variation in covid-19 rates across that country.

Wendy Morton:

FCDO travel advice differentiates within countries - including islands - where there is sufficient data to justify communicating specific, localised advice. Travel advice reflects assessments from Public Health England (PHE) and the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC), the organisations mandated to provide health advice to British nationals travelling overseas, and who assess the risk to an individual of exposure to COVID-19 in each country. Currently, the FCDO advises against all but essential travel to Greece, except for the islands of Rhodes, Kos, Zakynthos, Corfu and Crete, based on the current assessment of COVID-19 risks. FCDO travel advice remains under constant review and is separate from the Department for Transport's Red, Amber and Green list rules for entering England as it also provides guidance on wider issues beyond COVID-19.

John Howell:

[176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of resolution 2369 on the strategic priorities of the Council of Europe passed on 20 April 2021; and whether the Government plans to take steps following the passing of that resolution.

James Cleverly:

The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's strategic reflection is a welcome and important one. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is considering the strategic direction of the Council of Europe following the Secretary General's report. I will represent the UK at the Council of Europe Ministerial on 21 May, which will be an opportunity for the Committee of Ministers to determine the medium term direction of the institution. The Assembly's views will of course be included in these considerations. The Assembly plays a vital role as the parliamentary and consultative arm of the Council of Europe, and the UK is proud to contribute a committed and active delegation to this work.

John Howell:

[178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the speech made by the German Minister, Michael Roth, at the Council of Europe on 22 April 2021 on the accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Nigel Adams:

I welcome Minister Roth's address to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 22 April, and wish to thank him for the German Chairmanship's efforts and leadership during this particularly difficult time. The UK advocates strongly for the

Council of Europe to remain focussed on the core tasks of promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law; we will continue to work with incoming Chairmanships on this important task.

We welcome the intention of EU accession to the ECHR to strengthen and enhance human rights protections in Europe, whilst protecting the integrity of the Council of Europe and the ability of the European Court of Human Rights to operate. The Court is an essential part of the system for protecting human rights across Europe. We will continue to engage proactively in negotiations with these principles in mind.

Andrew Percy:

[195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on events marking the 20th anniversary of the World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban in 2001.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Andrew Percy:

[196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the upcoming events marking the 20th anniversary of the World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban in 2001.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Bob Blackman:

[213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the Government's policy is on participating in the Durban IV commemorative events at the UN General Assembly in September 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Bob Blackman:

[214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the text of the agreed Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism constituted a breach of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my

opposition to anti-semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

John Howell: [23]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the speech made by the President of Moldova at the Council of Europe in April 2021; and whether the Government plans to take steps following that speech.

Wendy Morton:

The UK welcomes President Sandu's focus in her 19 April speech on the importance of political, economic and judicial reforms to Moldova's future stability and prosperity. I was pleased to have the opportunity to discuss these issues with President Sandu and others during my recent visit to Moldova. During my visit, I underlined the UK's continued support for efforts to combat corruption, and to develop a professional, independent, impartial and transparent judiciary, in line with international rules and norms. This included the announcement of a new UK project, which will provide support to the Presidential Administration on developing anti-corruption and judicial reform strategies and initiatives. The UK's work in this area is well-aligned with the Council of Europe Action Plan for Moldova.

Catherine McKinnell: [235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of the risk of parental child abduction to Japan.

Nigel Adams:

Our Travel Advice for Japan covers Japanese family law and we have also published guidance specifically on child abduction to Japan on GOV.UK. These were revised in February of this year to clarify the differences in Japan's family law and consular support the FCDO is able to provide towards child abduction cases to Japan. I raised the issue of Japan's custody laws with the then Japanese Ambassador to the UK in December 2020 and we will continue to engage Japan on these issues at appropriate opportunities.

Catherine McKinnell: [236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Japanese counterpart on cases of parental child abduction to Japan.

Nigel Adams:

Our Travel Advice for Japan covers Japanese family law and we have also published guidance specifically on child abduction to Japan on GOV.UK. These were revised in February of this year to clarify the differences in Japan's family law and consular support the FCDO is able to provide towards child abduction cases to Japan. I raised the issue of Japan's custody laws with the then Japanese Ambassador to the UK in

December 2020 and we will continue to engage Japan on these issues at appropriate opportunities.

Patricia Gibson: [\[308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps the Government plans to take in response to reports that human rights violations against the people of Colombia are increasing.

Patricia Gibson: [\[309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take in response to the reports of unrest and human rights abuses in Colombia.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains concerned about reports of human rights violations in Colombia. We have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors over the past two weeks, and will continue to do so. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of abuse. We will continue to work closely with the UN Office of the High Representative for Human Rights in Colombia, and the wider international community to reduce tensions.

Colombia is a UK Government 'Human Rights Priority Country,' and we look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any excessive use of force, and take appropriate action against those responsible. The fundamental human right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed.

Stephen Timms: [\[34\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on recent attacks on Hindu communities in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The UK government is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities.

Bangladesh is a human rights priority country for the FCDO. Ministers and our High Commission in Dhaka regularly raise human rights concerns as part of continued dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh. The UK supports community leaders in Bangladesh to address the causes and effects of inter-religious, ethnic and political conflict. Our development programming supports citizen groups in 31 districts across the country to come together to resolve grievances, mitigate religious violence and advocate for inclusive and peaceful co-existence.

Damien Moore:

[433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to send representatives to events marking the 20th anniversary of the World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Damien Moore:

[434]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will continue his policy of not participating in events commemorating the 2001 Durban Declaration.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Sarah Owen: [\[479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recent incident at the al-Aqsa mosque, Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop. We call on all sides to reduce tensions, restore calm and avoid provocation. Violence against peaceful worshippers of any faith is unacceptable. Respect for the historic status quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is important at all times, especially during religious festivals such as Ramadan. Our priority now is to secure an immediate de-escalation on all sides.

Sarah Owen: [\[480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the obligations of that country under international law in respect of the planned evictions of Palestinian refugee families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

James Cleverly:

We regularly make clear our concerns about the evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London on the 11 May, to urge them to de-escalate, restore calm and to reiterate our position on this issue. I tweeted on the 8 May outlining our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

Steve McCabe: [\[53\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government plans to send representatives to the Durban IV conference in September 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I, raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020.

We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Steve McCabe:

[54]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the UK joining the US, Australia and Canada in boycotting the Durban IV conference in September 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Steve McCabe:

[55]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it is the Government's policy to boycott the Durban IV conference in September 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

Nicola Richards: [\[563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the upcoming events marking the 20th anniversary of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, what steps the UK is taking to prevent antisemitism within the United Nations.

Nicola Richards: [\[564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will issue a condemnation of the planned Durban IV proceedings in September 2021 at the United Nations General Assembly, marking the 20th anniversary of the World Conference Against Racism held in Durban in 2001.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

The Foreign Secretary recently reaffirmed the UK's condemnation to anti-Semitism during a debate in the House of Commons on 20 April 2021, and I raised my opposition to anti-Semitism during a Westminster Hall Debate on 26 November 2020. We also delivered a statement at the United Nations General Assembly in November expressing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination in the wake of Covid-19.

■ Alan Duncan

Navendu Mishra: [\[922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Sir Alan Duncan attended the Sultan's Privy Council in Oman in early January 2011 when he was Minister of State for International Development.

James Cleverly:

Sir Alan Duncan visited Oman in January 2011 in a private capacity as declared in the Parliamentary Register.

■ Bahrain: Political Prisoners

Brendan O'Hara: [\[750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the visit made by the UK Ambassador to Bahrain to Jau Prison in Bahrain on 3 May 2021, whether the UK Ambassador raised issues of human rights including the (a) enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention of over 50 inmates following

police violence on 17 April 2021 and (b) cases of high profile political prisoners including (i) Sheikh Ali Salman, (ii) Abdulhaldi AlKhawaja, (iii) Hassan Mushaima and (iv) Dr Abduljalil AlSingace.

Brendan O'Hara: [751]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the (a) United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights' statement that there was unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by police against inmates in Jau Prison on 17 April 2021, (b) publication from Amnesty International on 9 April 2021 which stated that authorities failed to respect minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners in Jau Prison and (c) Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy report that stated over 50 political prisoners were subjected to enforced disappearance following the 17 April 2021 police attack on Jau Prison, on what basis the UK Ambassador to Bahrain stated on 6 May 2021 that Jau Prison in Bahrain is a well-run facility.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO considers a range of information regarding human rights in Bahrain. The visit to Jau prison on 3 May enabled the UK Ambassador and other international representatives to see the facilities at Jau prison first hand, understand the Covid-19 measures implemented, and raise human rights matters with the government of Bahrain. We continue to raise specific cases as and when we have concerns.

Brendan O'Hara: [752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what most recent date the UK Government held discussions with its Bahraini counterparts on allowing the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture access to (a) Bahrain and (b) Jau Prison in Bahrain.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises human rights matters with the Government of Bahrain, including at senior levels. We encourage the Government of Bahrain to engage with interested parties.

Brendan O'Hara: [753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 185912 and with reference to the (a) findings of the United Nations Committee Against Torture that Bahraini oversight bodies are (i) not independent and (ii) not effective and (b) 9 April 2021 publication from Amnesty International which stated that Bahraini oversight bodies are ineffective in safeguarding human rights and punishing violations, what assessment the UK Government has made of the efficacy and independence of Bahraini oversight bodies' investigations into the 17 April 2021 incident at Jau Prison in Bahrain.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO considers a range of information regarding human rights in Bahrain, including reports by the United Nations Committee Against Torture and Amnesty International. We welcome action taken by the Ombudsman to investigate

allegations, including the Ombudsman's unannounced visit to Jau prison in May 2021 and subsequent report. We continue to encourage the oversight bodies in Bahrain to carry out thorough and swift investigations into any, and all, such claims.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Government plans to begin sharing surplus covid-19 vaccine doses through the COVAX facility in 2021.

Wendy Morton:

As the multilateral mechanism set up to support international co-operation on vaccines, and to ensure that the most vulnerable countries have access, COVAX remains best-placed to allocate any surplus doses that the UK may have where they are most needed, and will be most effective. However, it is too early to determine how many doses of the vaccines that the UK has ordered will not be needed for the UK population. This is under constant review.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on sharing surplus covid-19 vaccine doses through the COVAX facility in 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, treatments, and tests globally. The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, and I continue to speak to our international counterparts, discussing the shared fight against coronavirus.

For example, at the recent G7 Foreign and Development Ministerial Meeting, we agreed a statement on Equitable Access and Collaboration that recognised COVAX as "the key mechanism for global sharing of vaccines...to enable the rapid equitable deployment of vaccines." We committed to supporting access to safe, effective vaccines, with distribution guided by principles of equity and public health data.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether covid-19 vaccine dose-sharing will count towards the Official Development Assistance budget for 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a founding member, and one of the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, contributing £548 million for global equitable access. This £548 million spend, and the vital work it supports, has been assessed as ODA eligible, and will be met under our commitment to spend 0.5% of UK GNI on ODA.

■ COVAX: Finance**Dr Philippa Whitford:** [\[771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to allocate additional funding to the COVAX facility in 2022.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are among the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), committing £548 million, which leveraged \$1 billion from other donors through match funding in 2020. This support to COVAX has been critical in supplying COVID-19 vaccines to over 120 countries and economies. The Prime Minister has also committed to sharing the majority of any surplus vaccines with COVAX.

The UK is committed to our G7 Presidency championing equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics to help the world fight COVID-19, and build back better from this pandemic. We are engaging, including with our G7 partners, on COVAX's approach for 2022, and beyond, and continue to advocate for further financial contributions to COVAX to support equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

■ Global Partnership for Education: Finance**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will pledge £600 million to the Global Partnership for Education over the next five years.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister and President Kenyatta of Kenya will co-host the Global Education Summit: Financing the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in London in July 2021. No decision has yet been taken on the UK's next contribution to GPE, and details will follow in due course.

As co-hosts of the Summit, we are using all the means at our disposal to help the GPE in securing its five-year rolling financing target of up to \$5 billion (2021-2026). A well-funded GPE will be central to delivering the two ambitious global objectives endorsed by the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers in London on 5 May of getting 40 million more girls in school, and 20 million more girls reading by age 10 in the next 5 years.

■ India: Coronavirus**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has raised the issue of vaccine pricing in India with his Indian counterpart in their most recent discussions.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to his counterpart, the Indian Minister of External Affairs Dr Jaishankar, on 6 May, where they agreed on the need for swift and equitable access to vaccines around the world.

The Government of India continues to provide free of cost vaccinations to defined vulnerable categories of the population, including health and frontline workers, and all those above 45 years of age.

India: Overseas Aid**Mrs Pauline Latham:**[\[223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 187201 on India: Overseas Aid, what strategies are considered when allocating UK aid to non-Governmental programmes in India; and what non-Governmental programmes in India receive UK aid.

Nigel Adams:

In January this year, the Foreign Secretary led a cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations across all geographies, to maximise the Government's strategic focus in the use of ODA next year. In completing this process, officials considered any impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities and people from other protected groups, when developing advice to Ministers.

Information on our programmes in India, including our implementing partners, is published online and can be viewed on devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk.

Islamic State: Genocide**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**[\[331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the conclusions of the UNITAD investigations led by Karim Khan QC, if the Government will use the term genocide in connection with atrocities perpetrated by ISIL against Yazidis and other minorities in Northern Iraq and Syria.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government's long standing policy is that any determination of genocide should only be made by competent courts, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies.

In order to support the prosecution of Daesh crimes in Iraq, the UK has contributed nearly £2 million to the UN Investigative Team for the Accountability of Daesh (UNITAD) and is encouraging close co-operation between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq to achieve justice for Daesh's victims.

■ Israel: Gaza**Layla Moran:** [\[426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Israeli F-35 aircrafts, of which each plane includes a 15 per cent UK work share, are being used in the air strikes on Gaza; and what steps he has taken to determine whether planes being used in the air strikes in Gaza include UK components.

James Cleverly:

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop. We urge all parties to de-escalate. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties.

All UK arms export licences are assessed thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and we keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Sam Tarry:** [\[526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he will take to pressure the Israeli Government to end the eviction of Palestinians from their homes and adhere to international law.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises forced evictions of Palestinians from property with the Government of Israel. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace.

I tweeted on the 8 May outlining our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions. UK Officials at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv continue to raise the issue regularly with the Israeli Authorities.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to make representations to his Israeli counterpart on holding criminal investigations into the reported death of children as a result of Israeli police and military personnel actions.

James Cleverly:

The UK has been clear that we need an immediate de-escalation on all sides, and an end to targeting of civilian populations. The UK offers our condolences to the families of those civilians killed. Civilian deaths, both in Israel and Gaza are a tragedy.

Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We call on all sides to reduce tensions, restore calm and avoid provocation.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to prevent escalation of the recent violence in (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent an escalation of intercommunal violence in Israel.

James Cleverly:

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop. Every effort must be made to avoid loss of life, especially that of children. The Prime Minister has called for an urgent de-escalation of tensions. The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in his calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 16 May, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London on the 11 May to urge them to de-escalate and restore calm. We have also engaged the UN Security Council, calling for measures to reduce further violence. UK embassies throughout the Middle East are engaging regional partners, and we remain in close contact with the US administration and European allies. We call on all sides to reduce tensions, restore calm and avoid provocation.

Hywel Williams: [\[75\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the prosecution of Palestinian children by Israeli military courts.

James Cleverly:

We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. Officials from the British Embassy in Tel Aviv last raised the issue of Palestinian children in detention on 19 March with the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children.

Sam Tarry: [\[934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to deescalate the growing conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Sam Tarry: [\[935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will condemn the violence in Gaza.

Sam Tarry: [\[936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will condemn the actions of the Israeli military in Gaza in response to the recent deaths of 28 Palestinians.

James Cleverly:

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop. Every effort must be made to avoid loss of life, especially that of children. The Prime Minister has called for an urgent de-escalation of tensions. The Foreign Secretary delivered messages of de-escalation in calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 16 May, and Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and Palestinian Head of Mission in London on 11 May to urge them to de-escalate and restore calm and reiterate our position on this issue. We have also engaged the UN Security Council, calling for measures to reduce further violence. UK embassies throughout the Middle East are engaging regional partners, and we remain in close contact with the US administration and European allies.

■ Jerusalem: Armed Conflict

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the situation in East Jerusalem; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop. We call on all sides to reduce tensions, restore calm and avoid provocation. The Prime Minister has called for an urgent de-escalation of tensions. The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in his calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 16 May, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. We have also engaged the UN Security Council, calling for measures to reduce further violence.

As the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have made clear, this cycle of violence must stop, and every effort must be made to avoid loss of life. We urge all sides to refrain from any kind of provocation so that calm is restored as quickly as possible. The UK will continue to support that goal.

■ Jerusalem: Palestinians

Sam Tarry:

[525]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will condemn the storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound by Israeli forces, including (a) the attack on worshippers and (b) threatened evictions of Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah.

James Cleverly:

Violence against worshippers of whatever faith is unacceptable. It is important that policing is particularly sensitive around religious holy sites in Jerusalem, and particularly so during religious festivals like the holy month of Ramadan.

We remain concerned over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[655]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the proposed eviction of Palestinian residents from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises forced evictions of Palestinians from property with the Government of Israel. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace.

I publicised on the 8 May outlining our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions. UK Officials at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv continue to raise the issue regularly with the Israeli Authorities.

■ Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

Ms Lyn Brown:

[661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterparts on the entry of armed Israeli police into the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary delivered messages of de-escalation in calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 16 May, and Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and Palestinian Head of Mission in London on 11 May to urge them to de-escalate and restore calm and reiterate our position on this issue.

The UK is clear that the violence against peaceful worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque was unacceptable. Attacks on peaceful worshippers must stop. We call on all sides to reduce tensions, restore calm and avoid provocation. Violence against peaceful worshippers of any faith is unacceptable. Respect for the historic Status Quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is important at all times, especially during religious festivals such as Ramadan. Our priority now is to secure an immediate de-escalation on all sides.

■ Mauritania: Slavery

Helen Hayes:

[\[372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the the prevalence of slavery in Mauritania; and what steps the Government is taking to help prevent slavery in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK is committed to the eradication of all forms of modern slavery, forced labour and human trafficking by 2030, as unanimously adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in 2015. As such, we hold all countries, including Mauritania, to account for their human rights records. At the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Mauritania in January 2021, the UK highlighted Mauritania's failure to fully implement its anti-trafficking national action plan, and pressed the Government to increase its efforts to end all forms of slavery and discrimination, especially based on caste or ethnicity, and to investigate and prosecute traffickers. The British Embassy in Nouakchott maintains a dialogue with the Government of Mauritania on human rights issues, including efforts to combat modern slavery, working in co-ordination with like-minded Embassies, including the US and European partners. The UK Government remains committed to supporting the Mauritanian Government's efforts to improve the overall human rights situation in the country, including by implementing its UPR recommendations.

■ Palestinians: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on ensuring access to covid-19 vaccines in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

James Cleverly:

The British Embassy Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General Jerusalem are in regular contact with the parties and will continue to raise the issue of timely access to vaccines. The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. We are pleased that the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) were among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with delivery of over 61,000

doses that arrived on 17 March. A second shipment of 72,000 doses from COVAX arrived in the OPTs on 19 April with more due later in May.

■ **Russia: Ukraine**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[817]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the reported continued Russian military presence on Ukraine's borders.

Wendy Morton:

There has been regular senior level engagement with the Government of Ukraine and with our allies on this issue. The Foreign Secretary spoke to the Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on 2 April and the Prime Minister had discussions with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine on 5 April to assure them of the UK's support and our solidarity with the government and people of Ukraine. On 12 April, the Foreign Ministers of the G7 issued a joint statement, in which they called on Russia to cease its provocations and reaffirmed our unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

Russia's build-up of military forces near the Ukrainian border and within illegally annexed Crimea indicates a troubling escalation in its ongoing campaign of aggression towards Ukraine and its militarisation of the illegally annexed peninsula. The restraint shown by Ukraine, including efforts to deescalate and commitment to finding a diplomatic solution to this conflict, are to be commended.

We note Russian Defence Minister Shoigu's announcement on 22 April that Russian troops will return to their bases. We continue to carefully monitor the situation and work with international partners to continue to de-escalate and reassure all sides.

■ **Said Odeh**

Mr Clive Betts:

[614]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will (a) raise with his Israeli counterpart the death of Said Odeh and (b) seek assurance that there will be a criminal investigation into his death.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the reports surrounding the death of Said Odeh. Officials from the British Embassy Tel Aviv raised the case with the Israeli Ministry of Defence on 7 May. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we continue to urge Israel to ensure that its investigations are transparent, swift and comprehensive. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

■ Saudi Arabia: Human Rights**Sarah Champion:** [\[741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Saudi counterpart on the cases of (a) Samar Badawi, (b) Nassima al-Sadah and (c) other women's rights activists detained in Saudi Arabia; and if he will call for their immediate and unconditional release.

James Cleverly:

In September 2020, the UK signed a UN Human Rights Council statement calling for the release of all political detainees. On 29 November 2020, the UK Ambassador for Human Rights and six European counterparts released a joint statement reiterating our call for the release of all political detainees, including women's rights defenders. Our position on this is well known within the Saudi system. In February and March 2021, the Foreign Secretary and Lord Ahmed raised the continued detention the women's rights defenders with the Saudi Foreign Minister and the Human Rights Commission respectively.

■ Switzerland: Clothing**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 180565 on Switzerland: Clothing, when he last held formal discussions with his Swiss counterpart; and whether he raised the vote in Switzerland on 7 March 2021 to ban face coverings in public in those discussions.

Wendy Morton:

We note the outcome of the vote in Switzerland on 7 March in a referendum to ban face coverings in public. Ministers regularly speak to their Swiss counterparts on a broad range of issues. We know that human rights protection in Switzerland is strong, and that its domestic legal and administrative systems are fully capable of dealing with any human rights-related issues on this or any other matter, should they arise.

■ Tanveer Ahmed Rafique**Sarah Owen:** [\[876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2021 to Question 186035, if he will publish an update on support provided to Tanveer Ahmed Rafique.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO continues to have regular contact with prison authorities in Pakistan to check on Mr Rafique's welfare and have sought assurances that medical staff will continue to monitor his health. His family are being kept informed of all developments and we continue to speak to Mr Rafique, his friends and lawyers. Whilst prison visits are suspended due to the pandemic, we continue to arrange telephone calls with Mr Rafique to discuss any welfare and health issues. Mr Rafique's lawyers are

supporting him through the next stages of his legal case. We regularly raise at a senior level our concerns about the human rights situation with the Government of Pakistan. On 20 February, the Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, discussed our human rights concerns with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights.

■ UN Commission on the Status of Women: Iran

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[\[332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the UK's policy position as was one of the UN Economic and Social Council member states on electing Iran to the Commission on the Status of Women.

James Cleverly:

We have serious concerns about Iran's human rights record, including with respect to women's rights. We regularly raise human rights directly with the Iranians at all levels as well as in multilateral fora, including at the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly. We continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues. The UK has a long-standing policy of not revealing how we have voted in international elections.

■ UN Population Fund

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what impact assessment he has undertaken on the 85 per cent reduction in UK aid to the United Nations Population Fund; and if he will publish that assessment.

Nigel Adams:

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to make tough but necessary decisions, including temporarily reducing the amount we spend on foreign aid. We are now working through the implications of this change for individual programmes so I am unable to comment on the UK's funding to UNFPA at this time.

The UK's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with our key strategic priorities. Standalone impact assessments were not carried out for individual programmes given the multiple overlapping scenarios, but officials carefully considered the impact of all funding decisions when developing advice to Ministers. We are now working with partners to help them assess and manage the impact of UK funding reductions on individual programmes and we will share further details on this in due course.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Dame Diana Johnson: [142]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the current efficacy of the NHS Test and Trace scheme.

Jo Churchill:

In February 2021, the Government published an assessment of the impact of testing, tracing and self-isolation on COVID-19 transmission.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-r-m-model-technical-annex>

Rosie Cooper: [159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the number of patients that have waited 12 hours or more from the time of arrival in emergency departments to being seen by an accident and emergency professional in 2021.

Edward Argar:

Data on 12 hour waiting times in accident and emergency departments in 2019-20, the latest data available, is published at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/hospital-accident--emergency-activity/2019-20>

Henry Smith: [207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that heart failure data collection includes (a) primary and community care services, (b) the underlying cause of heart failure, (c) whether genetic testing has been considered and (d) the rehabilitative and long term support that has been put in place.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England's Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) includes data on heart failure collected in primary care and community care services. In April 2020, the QOF was updated to support moves towards earlier diagnosis and management. This encourages general practitioner surgeries to capture data confirming heart failure diagnosis. Cardiovascular disease encompasses a range of conditions extending from heart attacks to congenital heart disease and stroke many of which are heritable. Research is being undertaken on personalised medicine to detect genes that make people more vulnerable to heart attacks and strokes

The National Institute for Cardiovascular Outcomes Research collects data through the National Cardiac Audit Programme, which helps the National Health Service improve the quality of care by ensuring that heart failure data collection covers the most appropriate areas, including whether the patient has been referred to a rehabilitation programme following hospital episode.

Henry Smith: [\[208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the (a) variation between hospitals in the provision of specialist care for heart failure patients and (b) rate at which people with heart failure are readmitted to hospital after their first admission.

Henry Smith: [\[209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase (a) access to and (b) uptake of cardiac rehabilitation for heart failure patients.

Henry Smith: [\[210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that primary care networks improve heart failure prevention.

Jo Churchill:

Heart failure is a key priority in the NHS Long Term Plan. The Plan sets out a number of key ambitions to improve care and outcomes for those individuals with cardiovascular disease (CVD), including enhanced diagnostic support in the community, better personalised planning and increasing access to cardiac rehabilitation. NHS England and NHS Improvement are investing £4.5 million in 2012/22 to support whole pathway improvements in cardiac networks and to reduce variation in care across the service.

To reduce readmissions, the National Health Service is supporting patients to better understand their condition, so that they can be supported to self-manage at home. The NHS Long Term Plan will provide for greater awareness of the symptoms of heart failure and to ensure early and rapid access to diagnostic tests and treatment. Greater access to echocardiography in primary care will improve the investigation of those with breathlessness - a key heart failure symptom.

Those people with heart failure and heart valve disease will be better supported by multi-disciplinary teams as part of Primary Care Networks (PCN). Development of a PCN Directed Enhanced Service for CVD prevention and diagnosis is ongoing and will be implemented in 2021/22.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of people in community substance misuse treatment who have or continue to experience mental illnesses.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England's latest annual report on alcohol and drug misuse treatment in England found that in 2019 to 2020, 59% or 77,815 of adults starting substance misuse treatment in England said they had a mental health treatment need.

Catherine McKinnell:[\[234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of eligible claimants claimed Healthy Start vouchers in (a) the North East and (b) each local authority area in the North East in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

The following table shows the percentage of eligible claimants who claimed Healthy Start vouchers in the North East and each local authority area in the North East in each of the last five years.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
County Durham	75%	72.6%	70.7%	63.4%	57.9%
Darlington	74%	70.3%	69.2%	64.4%	57.6%
Gateshead	76.3%	74.2%	73.9%	64.2%	59.3%
Hartlepool	76.7%	81.4%	78.3%	59.4%	58.6%
Middlesbrough	78%	77.2%	74.1%	74.8%	61.4%
Newcastle upon Tyne	79.2%	80.8%	78.9%	63.4%	57.7%
North Tyneside	72.7%	69.5%	68.9%	64.1%	55.4%
Northumberland	73.2%	70.8%	69.9%	70.8%	61.6%
Redcar and Cleveland	79.5%	78.3%	74.9%	77.3%	65.8%
South Tyneside	76.7%	75.7%	72.8%	70.4%	63%
Stockton-on-Tees	74.3%	73.5%	70.1%	67.3%	59.3%
Sunderland	76%	73.5%	70.5%	67.1%	58%
Total North East (average)	76%	74.5%	72.4%	66.8%	59.3%

Dr Julian Lewis:[\[25\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance the NHS has given to General Practitioners on the (a) necessity of and (b) timetable for reinstating face-to-face meetings with NHS patients; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

General practice is open and has been throughout the pandemic. Practices must ensure they offer face to face appointments and respect patient preferences for face

to face care where clinically appropriate, in line with the NHS England and Improvement letter to general practice on 13 May 2021.

Sir Edward Leigh:

[56]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answers of 16 February 2021 and 8 February 2021 to Questions 151601 and 150684 respectively, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the disposal of human remains in the sewage system since the temporary measure to allow home abortions in March 2020 on people working in (a) sewage and (b) waste disposal; and if the Department will consider making such an assessment.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made and there are no plans to do so.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[560]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) help tackle obesity and (b) encourage people to live healthier lives.

Jo Churchill:

We published 'Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives' in July 2020. The strategy demonstrates an overarching campaign to reduce obesity, takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan and sets out measures to get the nation fit and healthy, protect against COVID-19 and protect the National Health Service.

In July 2020, Public Health England launched the Better Health Campaign which promotes evidence-based tools and advice to help people look after their mental and physical health. The campaign shows adults the simple steps they can take to eat more healthily, increase their physical activity, care for their mental wellbeing and quit smoking. Change4Life and Start4Life programmes support families to eat well and move more with resources to motivate and encourage behaviour change including simple healthy eating messages, recipes and more.

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards

Justin Madders:

[298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish his response to the consultation on replacing the four-hour accident and emergency target.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement will publish the response to the recent consultation on emergency care standards in due course.

■ Air Pollution

Geraint Davies: [588]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on health of indoor air pollution resulting from cooking; and what steps he is taking to reduce pollution resulting from cooking.

Jo Churchill:

Indoor air pollution is caused by a wide range of sources. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines on indoor air quality at home highlight the link between gas cooking and pollutant levels. Pollutant levels are generally higher in the kitchen while cooking without using an extractor fan, than outdoor levels. Evidence also showed that cooking activity increases moisture and creates damp conditions.

NICE guidelines advise that mechanical ventilation or extractors should be used, or windows opened if possible and safe when using cookers, especially gas cookers. The NICE guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng149>

The Department continues to engage with colleagues across Government to coordinate work in this area and develop the evidence base around the health impacts of air pollution.

Geraint Davies: [589]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will conduct an equalities impact assessment on the effect of (a) race and (b) gender on air pollution related illnesses.

Jo Churchill:

PHE has developed a five-year cleaner air programme which aims to reduce people's exposure to air pollution and achieve better outcomes for all, particularly for the most vulnerable groups such as those with pre-existing respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, older people, pregnant women and children.

■ Alzheimer's Disease

Jim Shannon: [728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's by (a) age and (b) gender in each of the last three years.

Helen Whately:

The data is not available in the format requested.

■ Babies: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney: [824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will fund catch-up support targeted at babies born (a) during and (b) soon before the outbreak of

covid-19 to (i) enable additional contact with families with very young babies, (ii) fulfil health visitor and GP appointments that have been missed and (iii) identify risks, issues and offer support.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning early years public health services to meet local needs, which can include such catch-up support.

■ **Children: Coronavirus**

Sarah Olney:

[\[822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the development of children aged 2 years and under.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Medical Treatments**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has commissioned research into the lightning process for people who have myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) or chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS).

Edward Argar:

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR has not funded specific research into the lightning process for people with myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome.

■ **Contact Tracing: Computer Software**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that incorrect covid-19 alerts are not sent out from the NHS Test and Trace app.

Jo Churchill:

NHS COVID-19 app users will only be advised to self-isolate if their phone has been in 'close contact' with the phone of someone else who has later tested positive for COVID-19.

The app uses Bluetooth Low Energy to understand the distance, over time, between app users. If a user tests positive for COVID-19, the app's risk-scoring algorithm uses this data, along with the individual's infectiousness, to make precise calculations about risk to determine whether a user has had a 'close contact' and should get an alert. The algorithm has been optimised by scientific experts, based on the functionality provided by V1.6 of Google's and V2.0 of Apple's Application Programming Interface. It is kept under constant review.

■ Coronavirus: Children**Justin Madders:** [292]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the review by the Early Years Health Advisor on the lessons learned from the covid-19 outbreak and the effect on very young children.

Jo Churchill:

'The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days' was published on 25 March. This was the report from the first phase of the Early Years Healthy Development Review, led by the Early Years Health Advisor and includes lessons learned from the experiences of the coronavirus pandemic. Officials will now start implementation of the action areas set out in the document.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**Dame Diana Johnson:** [639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of localising contact tracing and giving local authorities control of covid-19 test and trace.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Test and Trace and local authorities already work within a joint framework focussed on preventing, identifying and managing local outbreaks and engage with local communities to support effective testing, contact tracing and self-isolation. Within this framework, local public health teams have more control through community-led testing, expanded local tracing partnerships and the sharing of data, insight and analysis used to identify clusters of new infections and potential local outbreaks.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Paul Bristow:** [498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has awarded to the University of Dundee to conduct research on whether ultraviolet-C light is effective against viruses which cause covid-19; and on what date the findings of that research will be reported to the Government.

Jo Churchill:

The University of Dundee is conducting trials on human skin safety and far-UVC light. For this trial a total of £160,049 has been awarded. Results are expected in Quarter 2 in 2022.

■ Coronavirus: Hospitals

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[31\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to release private hospitals from their obligations as contracted by the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

On 31 March 2021 the national contracts used during the height of the pandemic came to an end as they were no longer needed. From 1 April 2021 NHS England and NHS Improvement have returned to local commissioning arrangements.

■ Coronavirus: Travel

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the right standards are met when NHS track and trace phone calls are made to returning passengers into the UK.

Jo Churchill:

A quality assurance framework is in place against which call handlers are scored. Feedback is provided to the call handlers and additional coaching if required.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Justin Madders:

[\[302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) first and (b) second covid-19 vaccinations have been cancelled by the national booking system; and for what reasons.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not currently hold validated information on cancellations made by the National Booking System. Information regarding the reason for cancellation is not required or requested to cancel an appointment.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that pregnant women can access either a Pfizer or Moderna covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England currently advise pregnant women to speak to a healthcare professional before booking their first dose, so that they can be directed to a venue offering the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. The National Booking System has been updated to recommend that pregnant women should speak to a healthcare professional such as an obstetrician, midwife or general practitioner before booking their first dose appointment.

Rachael Maskell:

[798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether, in the event of an adverse reaction to the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine, it is possible for a person to have two further vaccines from either Moderna or Pfizer.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Medicines Healthcare and Regulatory products Regulatory Authority's guidance on the authorisation of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, last updated on 15 April, provides advice on the authorisation conditions of the vaccine. Its contra-indications advice states that people who experienced blood clots with low platelet counts after their first AstraZeneca dose should not receive their second dose.

Mixing vaccines is not advised at this time, as evidence on the effects of mixing a two-dose schedule of vaccines is still emerging. Subsequently offering a two-dose schedule of a different vaccine to patients who experienced such blood clots is not advised as the effects of adding such a schedule are unknown. Those who experienced blood clots with low platelet counts from their first AstraZeneca vaccination should talk to their doctor.

Sarah Owen:

[875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS England publication titled COVID-19 Vaccinations of NHS Trust Health Care Workers in the NHS Electronic Staff Record, that is contained within the COVID-19 weekly announced vaccinations data series, if he will publish the same data broken down by NHS Trust.

Nadhim Zahawi:

National Health Service staff vaccination data is currently published down to regional level. NHS England and NHS Improvement have no imminent plans to publish data on vaccinations by trust. The level of data published by NHS England and NHS Improvement is regularly reviewed.

■ Coronavirus: Vitamin D

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential benefits of Vitamin D in lowering the risk of covid-19 infections.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Public Health England and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition published a rapid guideline on vitamin D and COVID-19 in December 2020. This concluded that there is currently not enough evidence to support taking vitamin D solely to prevent or treat COVID-19.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Munira Wilson:

[477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an estimate of the cost of the input of Deloitte to written answers as a proportion of the total cost of answering written questions.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no such estimate.

■ Flour: Folic Acid

Carla Lockhart:

[559]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on its proposals to introduce the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid.

Jo Churchill:

The Department published a UK-wide consultation on the proposed mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid which ran from 13 June to 9 September 2019. A post consultation update was published on GOV.UK. Publication of the consultation response has been delayed due to the pandemic. We will publish the response as soon as possible.

■ Furs: Coronavirus

Tracey Crouch:

[202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the World Organisation for Animal Health's statement that susceptible animals, such as mink, could become a SARS-CoV-2 reservoir that could pose a continued public health risk and lead to future spillover events to humans, what assessment he has made of the disease risks associated with the global fur trade.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom has a well-established surveillance system to ensure that zoonotic infections in animal populations are isolated effectively. The probability of human infection with COVID-19 from animals such as mink in the UK is assessed to be very low for the general population but high for individuals who work in high density settings. The farming of fur has been banned in England since 2000 and therefore there are very few high-density settings in the UK and to date no infections have been reported in such premises.

However, the welfare conditions of animals farmed for their fur globally may not meet the UK's standards, which increases the risk to public health from high-density settings overseas. The Government is considering any further steps it could take in relation to this risk.

■ Health Services

Olivia Blake: [\[940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with representatives from (a) NHS England and Improvement, (b) medical royal colleges and (c) specialist societies on community diagnostic hubs.

Edward Argar:

There has been regular ongoing engagement between the Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement since the publication of 'Diagnostics: Recovery and Renewal. Report of the Independent Review of Diagnostic Services for NHS England' in October 2020. As part of the development of this work, NHS England and NHS Improvement have engaged extensively with a wide range of stakeholders including medical royal colleges and specialist societies.

Olivia Blake: [\[941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much additional funding has been allocated to establish community diagnostic hubs.

Edward Argar:

The 2020 Spending Review committed £325 million for diagnostics in 2021/22, including the development of community diagnostics hubs.

Olivia Blake: [\[942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to White Paper, Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all, what assessment he has made of the number of community diagnostic hubs that will support integrated care systems.

Edward Argar:

Professor Sir Mike Richards' review 'Diagnostics: Recovery and Renewal: Report of the Independent Review of Diagnostic Services for NHS England' proposes three community diagnostic hubs per million population as part of its five-year plan.

■ Hospitals: Admissions

Margaret Greenwood: [\[287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of patients who have been discharged using the Discharge to Assess model in pilot schemes since 2016 and (b) number of those patients who have been readmitted to hospital within 30 days.

Helen Whately:

Data is not held centrally as these pilots were locally implemented.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

Tim Loughton:

[32]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will implement the recommendations put forward by NHS Providers in April 2021 on reducing the backlogs in treatment and diagnosis for (a) heart valve disease and (b) other conditions accrued as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and with reference to those backlogs, if he will make it his policy for innovative treatments to be rapidly adopted to help (a) reduce the length of hospital stays and (b) increase treatment capacity.

Edward Argar:

While we have no plans to implement the specific recommendations made by NHS Providers, we are working to the same aims as we focus on restoring services. These ambitions, to increase capacity, invest in diagnostics, achieve efficiency and productivity gains, improve pathways, and use technology to improve patient care, are reflected in the National Health Service priorities and operational planning guidance for this year.

We are supporting a series of innovation initiatives to help reduce waiting list backlogs, including a pathway improvement programme, community diagnostic hubs and an elective accelerator programme. These innovations will help speed up diagnosis, increase capacity and reduce the length of hospital stays, with the latest data suggesting that 86.9% of procedures are carried out without an overnight stay. We hope to see further innovation delivered rapidly across NHS services to increase treatment capacity and improve patient experience, for those with heart valve disease and other conditions.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Neil Coyle:

[264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many health and social care workers who are required to register for the EU Settlement Scheme have not yet done so; and what estimate he has made of the number of people who are unlikely to do so before the deadline of 30 June 2021.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Malaria: Vaccination

Andrew Rosindell:

[107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the malaria vaccine produced by research at Oxford University on the spread of the disease worldwide.

Jo Churchill:

Results from the Phase IIb trial of the R21/MATRIX-m malaria vaccine produced by research at Oxford University, conducted in Burkina Faso, showed vaccine efficacy of

77% in a 12-month follow up period. The vaccine is the first to meet the World Health Organization's malaria vaccine group goal of at least 75% vaccine efficacy.

Recruitment for a large Phase III (Safety and Efficacy) trial in more than 4,000 children has now begun. The potential benefit from adding a highly effective malaria vaccine to these measures is substantial and Public Health England will continue to monitor its effect on malaria transmission.

■ **Medical Treatments Abroad: Coronavirus**

Nadia Whittome: [\[946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that patients who began medical treatment abroad are able to continue that treatment in the UK, particularly during the covid-19 pandemic.

Edward Argar:

A United Kingdom national travelling from this country should have appropriate travel insurance in place in the event that they become ill overseas and wish to be medically repatriated home to continue treatment. Once home, a patient would be treated as any other who is ordinarily resident in the UK and will be able to continue their treatment as appropriate.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr John Baron: [\[621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of the (a) 11 February 2021, transferred to his Department by the Treasury and (b) 11 March 2021 and 22 April 2021 on a constituent, reference JB31380.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 14 May 2021.

■ **Mental Health Services: Learning Disability**

Rachael Maskell: [\[796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he is providing to CCGs who are incorporating Learning Disability Services with Mental Health Services including on patients being placed on the same wards.

Rachael Maskell: [\[797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of delivering residential Learning Disability Services separately from Mental Health Services.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made and no specific guidance has been provided.

■ Mental Health Services: Schools

Helen Hayes:

[\[371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Department for Education's announcement of £79 million to boost mental health support for children and young people on 5 March 2021, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) schools and (b) students in London that will have access to a mental health support team following the announcement of that funding.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do not hold the information requested. NHS England and NHS Improvement are planning the allocation of 2021/22 mental health support teams and final numbers will be confirmed in the summer.

■ Mortality Rates: Learning Disability

Gareth Thomas:

[\[39\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has undertaken an assessment of the potential correlation between the (a) mortality rates of people with learning disabilities and (b) complaints from patients with those disabilities in each NHS trust.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Neuromuscular Disorders

Seema Malhotra:

[\[251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to increase awareness of the rare neuro degenerative conditions Corticobasal Degeneration (CBD) and Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) and to support increased research into improved treatments and a cure.

Edward Argar:

On 9 January 2021, the Government published the UK Rare Diseases Framework, outlining four key priorities to improve the lives of those living with rare diseases such as Corticobasal Degeneration and Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. This includes a priority around increasing awareness amongst healthcare professionals. Pioneering research is included as one of the five underpinning themes in the Framework. The Framework will be followed by specific action plans, detailing how each part of the United Kingdom will meet the shared priorities. The Government has spent £344 million on dementia and neurodegeneration research in the past five years and is currently working to further increase this research at all stages of the translation pathway including medical interventions.

■ NHS 111

Justin Madders: [\[295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have used the 111 First service in each month since its introduction.

Edward Argar:

NHS 111 First is not a separate service to NHS 111, therefore the data requested is not collected.

Justin Madders: [\[299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the findings of the 111 First pilots.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are unable to confirm when findings will be published as the evaluation of the programme is ongoing.

■ NHS Test and Trace: Fraud

Justin Madders: [\[305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent fraud in supply chains of mini umbrella companies employing workers engaged in NHS Test and Trace services.

Nadhim Zahawi:

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not currently hold validated information on cancellations made by the National Booking System. Information regarding the reason for cancellation is not required or requested to cancel an appointment.

■ Organs: Donors

Dan Jarvis: [\[737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Act 2019 in increasing the number of organs available for donation; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Initial data from NHS Blood and Transplant shows that in the first six months, 135 people donated their organs under deemed consent. This was 26% of all donations that took place during that time period, with a total of 341 organs transplanted.

Dan Jarvis: [\[738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to encourage people to better understand their organ donation choices in response to the implementation of the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Act 2019.

Dan Jarvis:[\[739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to encourage people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities to become organ donors in response to the implementation of the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Act 2019.

Helen Whately:

The Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Act 2019 introduced a new system of consent for organ and tissue donation in England, known as 'opt-out' or 'deemed consent, from 20 May 2020.

NHS Blood and Transplant launched a public awareness campaign in April 2019 to inform the public about the law change and the choices available to them. A second public awareness campaign in autumn 2020, reached 18 million people. In February 2021, NHS Blood and Transplant launched its Leave Them Certain campaign, to encourage people to talk to their family about organ donation. The campaign includes specific community media for black and South Asian audiences. In addition, NHS Blood and Transplant committed £600,000 in 2020-2021 to run the Community Investment Scheme for a third year, which has funded 35 projects to raise awareness of blood and organ donation in black and Asian communities.

■ Out-patients: Learning Disability**Gareth Thomas:**[\[41\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has undertaken an assessment of the potential correlation between the number of (a) failed and cancelled appointment in outpatients with learning disabilities and (b) learning disability nurses in each NHS trust.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Patients: Learning Disability**Gareth Thomas:**[\[40\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has undertaken an assessment of the potential correlation between the (a) lengths of stay for patients with learning disabilities and (b) number of learning disability nurses in each NHS trust.

Helen Whately:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Phenylketonuria**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[82\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has undertaken an assessment of the potential effect of fast food outlets selling only sugar free and diet drinks on people suffering from Phenylketonuria (PKU).

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has made no such assessment.

■ Social Services: Mental Health**Barbara Keeley:**[\[175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 22 April 2021 to Question 181225 on Mental Health Services: Social Services, what the cost to the public purse has been of providing mental health support to the social care workforce during the covid-19 outbreak to date.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally. Several Government funds can be used for mental health support for social care workers which are non-ringfenced, to give flexibility to providers, local authorities and partners such as Skills for Care on how they choose to meet COVID-19 priorities.

■ Social Services: Protective Clothing**Martyn Day:**[\[811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 187279, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the provision of personal protective equipment free of charge to the care sector beyond March 2022.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans to extend the offer of free personal protective equipment beyond March 2022.

■ Speech and Language Therapy: Finance**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide ringfenced funding for local authorities to support early years speech and language therapy.

Jo Churchill:

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning early years speech and language therapy services, as they are best placed to make individual funding decisions based on local need.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists**Philip Davies:**[\[165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many urgent operations have been cancelled since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak in the UK in March 2020.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held.

Yasmin Qureshi:[\[671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of emergency care demand on tackling the elective procedures backlog.

Edward Argar:

No specific assessment has been made.

Travel: Quarantine**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review Government guidance on exemptions to covid-19 hotel quarantine rules for people (a) in exceptional circumstances and (b) on compassionate grounds.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has currently contracted hotels across the United Kingdom where people can undertake their mandatory quarantine. These facilities are staffed to help people serving quarantine, including assisting with any exemption requests.

Sam Tarry:[\[522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a UK national returning to the UK from a country that is on the red list for travel is required to quarantine for 10 days in a covid-19 hotel; and what guidance his Department has published on measures in place for those travelling to the UK (a) to visit a family member who is currently in palliative care and (b) for other emergency reasons.

Jo Churchill:

United Kingdom nationals returning to the UK who have been in or transited through a country on the red list in the past 10 days are required to book into managed quarantine facility to quarantine for 10 days.

Individuals entering a managed quarantine facility will only be able to leave their room, other than for daily exercise, in very limited circumstances. This includes visiting a close family member who is dying and for medical assistance. Further guidance is provided at GOV.UK.

Sam Tarry:[\[523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason UK residents returning from abroad are required to pay for the two compulsory covid-19 tests that are required during the 10-day quarantine period.

Jo Churchill:

All international arrivals including United Kingdom residents travelling from outside the Common Travel Area are required to book a testing package before travelling to England. UK residents pay for the costs of their travel, which This includes paying for

tests to protect themselves and the public, reducing the incursion of COVID-19 and variants of concern.

HOME OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many complaints against police officers have been referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct for investigation, by each police force in England and Wales in each year from 2015 to date.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold data on IOPC investigations. The Independent Office of Police Conduct will write to my hon. Friend and I will place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many investigations into police officers conducted by the Independent Office for Police Conduct have taken longer than 12 months from initial complaint to completion, by each police force area in each year from 2015 to date.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office does not hold data on IOPC investigations. The Independent Office of Police Conduct will write to my hon. Friend and I will place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of her Department's 2017 Drugs Strategy.

Kit Malthouse:

We know there is more to do to tackle drugs and the harms they cause, which is why the Home Office commissioned a major independent review, led by Dame Carol Black, to examine these issues. Part one of the Review was published in February 2020 and provided a detailed analysis of drug supply and demand. In July last year, DHSC announced the second part of the review led by Dame Carol to look at prevention, treatment and recovery which will be published later this year.

A number of initiatives which have been implemented under the 2017 Drug Strategy have been subject to assessment or evaluation, including;

- The UK Government appointed Dr Ed Day as the Government's Recovery Champion to provide national leadership around key aspects of the drug recovery agenda and advise the Government on where improvements can be made. His first annual report was published in January 2021, which includes an assessment of the

current system. It can be found here; [UK government Drug Recovery Champion annual report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/521122/UK-government-Drug-Recovery-Champion-annual-report-2019-2020.pdf)

- In 2019, Public Health England and the Home Office published a report on a deep dive to understand the rise in crack cocaine use in six areas of England. [PHE publish investigative report on increasing crack use - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/521122/UK-government-Drug-Recovery-Champion-annual-report-2019-2020.pdf)
- The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs continues to carry out in-depth reviews on issues relating to drugs and drug harms. Its website includes reviews on the ageing cohort of drug users, on custody to community transitions and on homelessness and drug use for example.
- Other projects within the 2017 Drug Strategy, such as the Holme House 'drug recovery prison' pilot and the Jobcentre Plus Individual Placement and Support (IPS) trial to support those with substance use dependence back into employment, are subject to ongoing evaluation.

The Government continues to go further than the Drug Strategy 2017. In January, the Government announced a £148 million new investment to cut crime and protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs including;

- £80 million for drug treatment services right across England – representing the largest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years.
- £28 million for Project ADDER – a new intensive approach to tackling drug misuse, which combines targeted and tougher policing with diversionary schemes and enhanced treatment and recovery services.
- £40 million to tackle drugs supply and county lines and surge our activity against these ruthless gangs This will allow us to expand and build upon the successful results of our £25 million county lines programme which since November 2019 has seen more than 3,400 people arrested, more than 550 lines closed, drugs with a street value of £9 million and £1.5 million cash seized, and more than 770 vulnerable people safeguarded.

Together the funding represents a comprehensive drive by the Government to build back safer from the pandemic by helping people break free from the scourge of drug use and cutting drug-fuelled crime and violence.

Julian Sturdy:

[224]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of trends in pet theft in 2020 and 2021; and what steps her Department is taking to tackle that crime.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the distress pet theft causes will consider the evidence and what more could be done to prevent these cruel crimes. That is why we launched the Pet Theft Taskforce on 8 May. The Taskforce will:

- Work with police, law enforcement, and experts to understand and tackle pet theft.

- Consider the issue from end to end, including causes, prevention, reporting, enforcement and prosecution.
- Make clear and timely recommendations on ways to reduce pet theft.

Further information about the Pet Theft Taskforce, including its full terms of reference, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/taskforce-launched-to-investigate-reported-rise-in-pet-thefts>

Stuart C McDonald: [283]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether observations by staff conducting medical assessments of a person seeking asylum can be used as evidence to determine the admissibility of that person's asylum claim.

Stuart C McDonald: [284]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether observations by (a) security and (b) other ancillary staff at facilities where asylum seekers are being held may be used as evidence to determine the admissibility of asylum claims.

Chris Philp:

Our expectation is that in almost all cases, admissibility considerations will be informed by evidence obtained by officials, usually through physical evidence found or submitted by an applicant, or disclosed to them by an applicant at first contact or in subsequent interviews or meetings. International data-sharing may also provide relevant information. There may conceivably be cases where third party evidence is relevant and valuable to such considerations - it would depend on the specific nature of the information and the circumstances in which it was obtained, recorded and passed to the Home Office. Any such evidence and its provenance would always be carefully scrutinised by officials. Where the evidence was material to the decision and contentious, an applicant would have the opportunity to address this before any action to remove proceeded.

Information provided in confidence to medical professionals would not ordinarily be used by officials when making inadmissibility decisions. However, applicants may choose to ask for such information to be considered and provide it to caseworkers themselves, or consent in writing to disclosure.

Stephen Timms: [36]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people living in the UK without leave to remain who entered the UK legally; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

By its very nature, it is not possible to know the exact number of the illegal population and so we do not seek to make any official estimates on this. The Government's New Plan for Immigration will make it harder for people to enter and live in the UK illegally, whilst ensuring that those who do have the right to reside in the UK can do so.

The vast majority of people leave the UK on time, in line with the expiry of their visa or leave to remain. However, those who have no right to remain in the UK and do not return home voluntarily should be in no doubt of our determination to remove them.

Stephen Timms:

[37]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants report, We Are Here, published April 2021, what steps victims of domestic abuse should take who are without leave to remain and who are unwilling to report the abuse for fear of deportation.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government is committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of their immigration status. Victims of crime are treated first and foremost as victims and are encouraged to report crimes to the police. If in doing so an individual is found to have no status in the UK, we carefully consider the individual's circumstances before determining whether enforcement action is appropriate.

We undertook to review our overall response to migrant victims of domestic abuse in response to the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill.

It is clear from the review that we need a better evidence base before we can make robust policy decisions about the longer-term support group of victims. That is why the Government has launched the £1.5m Support for Migrant Victims Scheme which will be run by Southall Black Sisters and their delivery partners. This scheme will provide accommodation and support for migrant victims of domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds, as well as providing wrap around provisions, including emotional support, and more practical support such as immigration advice. Additionally, it will provide the data required to inform subsequent policy decisions.

Already, we offer support to migrant victims of domestic abuse on certain spousal visas through our Destitute Domestic Violence Concession, which enables individuals to access public funds for three months and can be used to fund safe accommodation. Furthermore, victims can apply for the Domestic Violence Indefinite Leave to Remain route (DVILR).

Gill Furniss:

[387]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of covid-19 travel restrictions in respect of red list countries on a potential applicant's ability to apply for a EU Settlement Scheme family permit within the application window.

Kevin Foster:

The EU Settlement Scheme family permit is open for eligible family members of a relevant sponsor to apply. Individuals in red list countries can apply in the normal way.

If their application is successful, they will not be prevented from travelling to the UK, as they have residence rights, but like all travellers to the UK must comply with the

prevailing border health measures, including the managed quarantine service where relevant.

Alex Sobel: [\[427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people will receive new ASPEN cards as part of the contract transition; and how many will be without access to any funds for themselves and family members during the weekend blackout window during that transition.

Alex Sobel: [\[428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with voluntary sector organisations on the ASPEN card transition for asylum support payments.

Kevin Foster:

Since January the project team has collaborated with voluntary sector partners through existing and well-established channels such as Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) and the National Asylum Stakeholder Forum (NASF). The team have built close links with the SMP and attends quarterly forums with NASF to provide updates on project progress, taking and answering questions.

Early this month, an ASPEN transition update, Q&A session and workshop was held with NASF attendees.

As well as verbal engagement with the voluntary sector, the ASPEN project team has been committed to keeping third sector partners informed of progress via email. Regular written updates, information packs and all service user communication outputs have been shared with voluntary partners.

The project team has an open communication channel with all stakeholders via a specific project team e-mail inbox. Voluntary sector partners have been encouraged to submit any queries or questions relating to the ASPEN transition to the project inbox, which a project team member will monitor every day and provide responses to.

c43,000 new payment cards have been dispatched to date. Comprehensive, translated advice has accompanied the cards including guidance in relation to the transition over the weekend of 21st May- 23rd May.

Longstanding arrangements for the provision of Emergency Cash Payments (ECPs) will not be affected by the period of transition and will remain available throughout. We have also planned to manage any increased need for ECPs should this be required.

■ **Agriculture: Seasonal Workers**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the seasonal agricultural workers scheme to ensure

sufficient workers are available for the 2021 poultry season in the run up to Christmas 2021.

Kevin Foster:

There are currently no plans to expand the scope of the Seasonal Workers Pilot beyond the edible horticulture sector.

UK employers should in the first instance look to the domestic labour market before looking to facilitate recruitment from overseas.

■ **Asylum: Finance**

Alex Cunningham:

[232]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the ability of people in receipt of asylum support to access funds during the three days within the ASPEN card transition.

Alex Cunningham:

[233]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the availability and accessibility of voluntary sector organisations and foodbanks to people in receipt of asylum support during the ASPEN card transition period.

Kevin Foster:

A necessary period of disruption to the outgoing provider's service from 5pm on Friday 21st May 2021 is required to enable the process of transferring card balances to the new provider ready for use on Monday 24th May 2021 at 9am. Throughout this period of service disruption over this weekend, service users will be unable to use their ASPEN card.

c43,000 new payment cards have been dispatched to date. Comprehensive, translated advice has accompanied the cards including guidance in relation to the weekend of 21st May. To prepare for this period of service disruption, we have advised service users to withdraw funds or make purchases needed for the weekend prior to its commencement.

We have been communicating with service users directly, indirectly via our strategic delivery partners and numerous stakeholder representatives to alert them of the forthcoming period of disruption. We are also working with the voluntary sector to minimise disruption to the people we support during the period of service disruption.

Longstanding arrangements for the provision of Emergency Cash Payments (ECPs) will not be affected by the period of transition and will remain available throughout. We have also planned to manage any increased need for ECPs should this be required.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of matching the £20 universal credit uplift for people seeking the asylum support allowance.

Kevin Foster:

Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute are provided with furnished accommodation with utilities provided free of charge and a weekly cash allowance. The level of the allowance is reviewed each year to ensure it remains sufficient to meet their essential living needs (the legal test). Currently, the standard allowance is £39.63 per week for the asylum seeker and each of any dependants in their household. The allowance is reduced if the individual is accommodated in a full-board facility where food and other essential items are provided free.

There are no plans to provide an additional £20 or to link the level of the allowance with the level of Universal Credit. Those receiving Universal Credit generally incur expenses asylum seekers are not required to meet, including paying for utilities and travel and other expenses incurred in looking for work.

■ Asylum: Housing

Mike Kane:

[\[747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the need for contingency asylum accommodation contracts to include training for frontline staff to understand the vulnerabilities of people seeking asylum.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: To ensure staff working in all asylum accommodation have the skills and experience for the role the providers have a training programme as required by the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC). Additionally, employees are subject to pre employment checks.

The contracts are published and the requirements of the contract are set out in the Statement of Requirements, this includes provisions around training and the training programme for those with face-to-face contact with our customers.

The Provider must fully equip and train staff (including volunteers) to ensure they are able to fulfil their roles and ensure appropriate and sufficient security provisions are made for all staff undertaking face-to-face activities. Those with face to face contact must cover the following:

- Ethnic diversity and cultural awareness
- Suicide and self-harm awareness and prevention
- Basic First Aid
- Gender based violence
- Fire Safety

- Health and Safety
- Vicarious Trauma
- Unconscious Bias
- Counter Terrorism
- Modern Slavery

As a minimum, provider staff should receive refresher training on the requirements listed above annually (i.e. refresher training completed every twelve (12) months), or more regularly if required.

Mike Kane:

[748]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the need for staff working in contingency asylum accommodation to have relevant experience for that role.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: To ensure staff working in all asylum accommodation have the skills and experience for the role the providers have a training programme as required by the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC). Additionally, employees are subject to pre employment checks.

The contracts are published and the requirements of the contract are set out in the Statement of Requirements, this includes provisions around training and the training programme for those with face-to-face contact with our customers.

The Provider must fully equip and train staff (including volunteers) to ensure they are able to fulfil their roles and ensure appropriate and sufficient security provisions are made for all staff undertaking face-to-face activities. Those with face to face contact must cover the following:

- Ethnic diversity and cultural awareness
- Suicide and self-harm awareness and prevention
- Basic First Aid
- Gender based violence
- Fire Safety
- Health and Safety
- Vicarious Trauma
- Unconscious Bias
- Counter Terrorism
- Modern Slavery

As a minimum, provider staff should receive refresher training on the requirements listed above annually (i.e. refresher training completed every twelve (12) months), or more regularly if required.

Bail

Mr David Davis: [609]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people currently being held on police bail have been so held for over (a) one year, (b) two years, (c) three years, (d) four years and (e) five or more years.

Mr David Davis: [610]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions individuals have been held on police bail for over 12 months in the last (a) one year, (b) two years, (c) three years, (d) four years, (e) five years and (f) six or more years.

Mr David Davis: [611]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions individuals have been held on police bail for over three years in the last (a) one year, (b) two years, (c) three years, (d) four years and (e) five years.

Mr David Davis: [612]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions individuals have been held on police bail for over five years in the last (a) one year, (b) two years, (c) three years, (d) four years and (e) five years.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collect and publish data on use of various police powers, including pre-charge bail. Information has been collected on the number of individuals on pre-charge bail and the length of pre-charge bail since April 2017. The data are published as part of the annual 'Police Powers and Procedures' statistical release, available in Annex B: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales>

However, data on other types of police bail are not available.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Migrants

Stephen Timms: [594]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the end of the furlough scheme on people with leave to remain but no recourse to public funds; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-employed Income Support Scheme have been extended to the end of September 2021 to recognise some industries will return no earlier than 21 June.

Immigration status holders who do not return to work because they have lost their employment will need to check the conditions attached to their leave. Where their immigration status is linked to a particular job, they may need to find alternative

employment or another basis of stay, and make a further application if they wish to remain in the UK.

People with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have their NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if they are destitute or at risk of destitution, or if the welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income. NRPF 'change of conditions' applications are prioritised and dealt with compassionately.

Data published in February 2021 for quarter 4 of 2020 shows the average time taken to make a decision on change of condition cases is 18 days. Of the decisions taken in the same period, 86% were granted. More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-protection-data-february-2021>.

Other support available to people with an NRPF condition, such as contribution-based benefits, will continue to be available for those who meet the other eligibility criteria.

■ Criminal Investigation

Mr David Davis: [\[613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long on average a National Crime Agency investigation takes before a charging decision is made in cases where a suspect has been released on bail.

Kit Malthouse:

The amount of time taken for an investigation and a charging decision to be reached can vary depending on the case and its complexity. The NCA will always look to complete work as quickly as possible. However, NCA cases are by their very nature complex and the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill specifically recognises this in Schedule 4 of the Bill. It makes amendments relating to pre-charge bail and several of the amendments have the effect of recognising NCA cases as 'exceptionally complex' and increasing the time limits on pre-charge detention before authorisation must be sought for extensions.

■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to provide accommodation for women released from Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre to continue their asylum claims.

Kevin Foster:

Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute can make an application for support and accommodation whilst their application for asylum is being considered.

All asylum seekers have access to a 24/7 AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) service provided for the Home Office by Migrant Help where they can raise

any concerns regarding accommodation or support services, and they can get information about how to obtain further support.

Mary Kelly Foy: [864]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to undertake an equality impact assessment for the Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre.

Mary Kelly Foy: [866]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria her Department used to select Hassockfield as the site for a new immigration removal centre; and which other sites were considered for that planned centre.

Chris Philp:

The immigration removal estate is kept under ongoing review to ensure that the Home Office has sufficient resilience, geographical footprint and capacity for the men and women it proves necessary to detain for the purposes of removal, while providing value for money.

As part of its plans to manage the closure and return of the Morton Hall immigration removal centre to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, the Home Office considered a number of sites for a new immigration removal centre (IRC). Specifically, sites such as the former Campsfield IRC were considered and the Home Office also engaged in discussions with the Ministry of Justice on the availability of surplus sites.

Given the timescales and value for money considerations, acquiring the vacant Hassockfield site to open as an IRC for women was considered the most cost-effective option for maintaining immigration detention capacity.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed for opening of Hassockfield IRC in line with Public Sector Equality Duties. To ensure that decisions about the development of the site have due regard to eliminating discrimination and inequality, the EIA for Hassockfield will remain ongoing as plans progress to completion. The Home Office will publish the completed EIA in due course.

■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre: Airports

Mary Kelly Foy: [865]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which airports her Department plans to use to deport women who have been detained at Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre.

Chris Philp:

Most enforced immigration returns are undertaken using scheduled flights, alongside fare-paying passengers from airports around the UK based on a case by case assessment of the individuals needs and to best meet operational needs and maximise value for money.

This Government's priority is keeping the people of this country safe, and we make no apology for seeking to remove dangerous foreign criminals and other immigration offenders.

■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre: Employment

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much per hour women detained at Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre are planned to be paid for the work they carry out.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether organisations external to her Department will be able to contract the women detained at Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre to carry out work.

Chris Philp:

Hassockfield immigration removal centre (IRC) will be operated in accordance with the Detention Centre Rules 2001, in addition to published Operating Standards for IRCs and Detention Services Orders (DSO).

Rule 17 of the Detention Centre Rules permits those in detention to engage voluntarily in paid activities. These activities are provided to meet the recreational and intellectual needs of detained individuals. In accordance with Rule 17, pay rates are determined by the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The currently approved rates of pay are £1 per hour and, for specified projects, £1.25 per hour, as set out in the published Detention Services Order 1/2013 'Paid Activities'.

External organisations are not permitted to use the paid activity scheme to contract people in immigration detention to carry out work.

■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre: Operating Costs

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the cost per year of running Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre at maximum capacity.

Chris Philp:

The costs of the contract to run Hassockfield immigration removal centre are currently commercial in confidence. The Home Office will publish a contract award notice in line with the statutory timelines within the Public Contract Regulations 2015, which will detail the full cost of running the centre.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Jonathan Edwards: [\[197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on supporting the use of the EU Settled Status app by Polish workers.

Kevin Foster:

The 'EU Exit: ID Document Check' app allows applicants to prove their identity remotely using their biometric identity document and a smartphone device. Millions of applicants have used the app to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme over the last two years, including over 900,000 Polish nationals.

In early 2021 we were made aware the new Polish passport, issued from late 2020 onwards, contained an advanced security protocol, Password Authenticated Connection Establishment (PACE), which was not supported by our app. We have now made the necessary changes to our app to support this new security protocol and are now in the final stages of testing with a view to releasing the upgrade by the end of May.

The vast majority of Polish passports are not affected by this issue and thousands of Polish nationals are still using the app every week to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. Any applicant who is unable to use the app to verify their identity can still apply to the scheme by completing an online application and sending their identity document through the post.

Neil Coyle:[\[265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that all of the 320,000 pending applications for the EU Settlement Scheme are resolved before the deadline of 30 June 2021.

Kevin Foster:

We are committed to ensuring our operational teams have the resources they need to run an efficient and effective system, and we actively monitor workflows to ensure sufficient resources are in place to meet demand. We currently have 1,500 UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) European Casework staff in post.

Those who apply before the deadline, but whose application is not decided until after it, will have their rights protected pending the outcome of their application and of any appeal related to it.

Peter Grant:[\[336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 181333 on Immigration: EU Nationals, what her Department's policy is in circumstances where an individual who is required to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme is unable to prove that they had reasonable grounds for missing the 30 June 2021 deadline.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the general approach under the EU Settlement Scheme of looking to grant status, rather than for reasons to refuse, the Home Office will take a flexible and pragmatic approach to considering, in light of the circumstances of each case, whether there are reasonable grounds for an individual's failure to meet the 30 June 2021 deadline.

Non-exhaustive guidance on what constitutes reasonable grounds for missing the deadline can be found at pages 26 to 44 of the main caseworker guidance for the scheme, which is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-caseworker-guidance.

The guidance will underpin a flexible and pragmatic approach to considering late applications under the scheme, in light of the circumstances of each case.

■ **Marriage: Coronavirus**

Mr Mark Harper:

[R] [636]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many registrars are legally required to officiate at a marriage ceremony and what steps she is taking to address the backlog of marriages due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

In England and Wales a civil marriage requires two registration officers to attend; a superintendent registrar in whose presence the marriage must be solemnized and a registrar who is required to sign the marriage schedule. Delivery of the service falls to local authorities who are monitoring demand and managing requests within their respective geographical areas.

■ **Migrants**

Stephen Timms:

[591]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to change Rule GEN 1.11A of the Immigration Rules, in response to the decision in R (ST and VW) v SSHD [2021] EWHC 1085 (Admin) that the no recourse to public funds policy is unlawful.

Chris Philp:

The policy of No Recourse to Public Funds has been upheld by successive governments and maintains that those seeking to establish their family life in the UK must do so on a basis that prevents burdens on the taxpayer and promotes integration.

In the case of ST vs SSHD the High Court dismissed five of the six grounds raised by the claimant challenging the lawfulness of the policy. We are currently reflecting on the judgment in relation to our child welfare responsibilities.

People with leave under family and human rights routes can already apply, free of charge, to have the no recourse to public funds condition lifted.

Stephen Timms:

[592]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people her Department has on record as being in the UK with leave to remain but no recourse to public funds in each year since 2010.

Chris Philp:

The no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition applies to millions of people, the vast majority of whom are visitors or other temporary migrants who have no need for public funds during their stay. It also applies to those without status, many of whom may not be in touch with the Home Office. We are not able to produce estimates of the total population present in the UK who are subject to NRPF

We do, however, publish quarterly immigration statistics on the number of entry clearance visas granted outside the UK almost all of whom will be travelling to the UK under the NRPF condition, and the latest figures for the year ending December 2020 can be found here: [Entry clearance visa applications and outcomes \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The immigration statistics data for in-country extensions from 2010 to year ending December 2020 can be found here: [Extensions \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The Home Office's Chief Statistician wrote to the Office for Statistics Regulation last July to explain why the Home Office is not able to provide a figure for the total number of people currently in the UK to whom the NRPF condition applies. His letter can be found at: <https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/response-from-daniel-shaw-to-ed-humpherson-parliamentary-question-response/>

Since this letter was published, the Home Office has begun to publish statistics on the numbers of people on the family and human rights routes who apply to the Home Office to have the NRPF condition lifted, and these are available in the Home Office transparency data relating to Changes of Condition, published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-protection-data-february-2021>

■ Offences against Children

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure the collection of adequate data on child sexual abuse that is comparable across police forces.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of collecting ethnicity as part of child sexual abuse data.

Victoria Atkins:

Child sexual abuse is an abhorrent crime and we will leave no stone unturned to prevent and pursue offenders, protect children and young people, and support victims and survivors from all backgrounds.

All police forces routinely collect data on recorded child sexual abuse offences, including offences related to indecent images of children. These figures are published quarterly by the Office for National statistics, and are broken down by offence types and police force areas. In the most recent data, published 13 May 2021, there were

nearly 90,000 CSA offences recorded, an increase of nearly 300% since 2013. [Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

The Government is clear that understanding possible drivers of crime is key to developing ways to prevent offending and better support victims. That is why the Home Secretary introduced a new requirement for police forces to collect ethnicity data for those arrested and held in custody as a result of their suspected involvement in group-based child sexual exploitation in March 2021. Complying with the requirement will be voluntary for one year to allow forces to update their systems, after which it will become mandatory. This follows the Government's commitment in the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy (January 2021) to improve the quality of data collected on the characteristics of offenders.

Police forces have a duty to collect this data through the Annual Data Requirement (ADR) as set out in the Police Act 1996. The ADR is reviewed on an annual basis, and the Home Office will continue to consider data requirements in relation to child sexual abuse, ensuring that all proposals for new data collections are consulted on with the police to ensure that such requests are proportionate, and do not place unnecessary burdens on police forces.

Additionally the Government is constantly striving to better understand the nature of child sexual abuse through the work of the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, which it established in 2017, and the insight of other experts including the ONS and the Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse, who have produced research on ethnic minority victims of CSEA.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Ian Blackford:

[278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has plans to review the metrics used in the (a) Levelling Up Fund and (b) Community Renewal Fund; and when his Department plans to publish the consultation to review those metrics.

Luke Hall:

We have shaped the methodologies for the UK Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund to reflect their individual and distinct objectives and policy goals. For example, the capital-focused Levelling Up Fund will invest in local transport and high street regeneration, and therefore includes metrics around local connectivity and commercial vacancy rates

By contrast, the revenue-focused UK Community Renewal Fund will look to invest across a range of smaller scale trial projects with the overall goal of supporting people and communities in need. For this reason it uses metrics which more broadly aim to assess a place's general economic resilience

Methodological notes explaining the two indices have been published and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prioritisation-of-places-methodology-note>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-additional-documents/levelling-up-fund-prioritisation-of-places-methodology-note>

Stephen Timms: [35]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Waking Watch services; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

Waking Watch, when operated in accordance with the Simultaneous Evacuation Guidance published by the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) is a legitimate risk mitigation measure in buildings which move from a stay put to simultaneous evacuation fire safety strategy. NFCC guidance recommends that a Waking Watch should only be in place for a short period of time and that the Responsible Person should move quickly to install a common fire alarm system as they are a more cost effective and reliable option.

We are aware that too many buildings are relying on Waking Watch for too long and that in many cases the costs are being borne by leaseholders. That is why we have provided £30 million to install common alarm systems in eligible buildings to replace expensive Waking Watch measures. No interim measures should be considered as a substitute for completing remediation as quickly as possible.

Dame Angela Eagle: [68]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to take steps to increase the public land available for community gardening projects in (a) England, (b) the North West, (c) Wirral and (d) Wallasey.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is taking a number of steps to ensure land is available for community needs such as community gardens. The National Planning Policy Framework already makes clear that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified health and wellbeing needs, for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure. The Government has also recently sought views on the draft the National Model Design Code, and supporting Guidance Notes which sets out how local design codes may specify levels of green infrastructure provision, including allotments and community gardens.

In addition to this, land can also be designated as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans which allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land is a matter for local

discretion, but the Government has set out in guidance that this could include green areas such as allotments.

■ Almshouses: Tenants' Rights

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to bring almshouse residents' rights in line with tenants' rights.

Christopher Pincher:

The legal position of residents of almshouses is that they have a licence to occupy rather than a tenancy. This was decided in the case of *Gray v Taylor* (1998) in which the Court of Appeal held that the resident in that case occupied an almshouse as the beneficiary of a charity. This meant that she was not a tenant and only had a licence to occupy. In the case of *Watts v Stewart and Ors*, 2016, the Court of Appeal followed the judgment in *Gray v Taylor* that almshouse residents have a licence to occupy and that the grant of a tenancy would be inconsistent with the performance of the duties of the trustees, as it would not be possible for them to ensure that only qualifying persons occupied the almshouses. The trustees could only properly discharge the trusts of the charity, which limited its objects to those in need, hardship or distress, if a personal revocable licence was granted. As occupants of almshouses are licencees, the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 will apply. This requires that 4 weeks' notice to quit must be given to the occupant.

Where almshouses are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, they must also comply with the regulator's standards framework. The Tenancy Standard (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419209/Tenancy_Standard_2015.pdf) compels Private Registered Providers to offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.

■ Avanton: Richmond upon Thames

Sarah Olney:

[399]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had contact with (i) Sir Michael Fallon, the Non-Executive Chairman of Avanton and (ii) other representatives of that company in connection with the Homebase Manor Road development proposals in Richmond since 1 December 2019.

Christopher Pincher:

No discussions have taken place with Ministers. Details of all Ministerial meetings are published online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956236/Ministerial_meetings_July_to_Sept_2020.csv/preview.

Officials in the Department were contacted in 2020 and January 2021 by planning consultants for the development seeking advice on timescales for the Department's consideration of the call-in requests.

■ Business: Rents

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of adopting an Australian-style business rent relief scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government has introduced a range of measures to protect commercial tenants who are struggling to pay their rent during the pandemic, including a moratorium on evictions where a tenant cannot pay rent and protection from insolvency and debt recovery methods. A voluntary Code of Practice for rent negotiations was also published and endorsed by a broad range of stakeholders, and further guidance to accompany this was recently published.

A call for evidence to inform next steps on these measures closed on 4 May. This set out a range of options Government could take if landlords and tenants do not find agreement on outstanding arrears, including some aspects similar to that found in other countries including Australia. Government is now analysing responses and the potential merits of different options; and will make an announcement in due course.

■ Community Champions Scheme

Conor McGinn: [\[782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the full criteria used to invite local authorities to apply for inclusion in the Community Champions scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

On 25 January £23.75 million funding was confirmed and allocated to 60 councils and two voluntary groups in England. The funding was to expand work to support those most at risk from COVID-19 and to boost vaccine take up through the Community Champions scheme. This was part of over £7.9 billion government funding provided to councils to help them support their communities during the pandemic. The scheme was specifically targeted at areas where challenges may be greatest due to the local combination of disproportionately impacted groups.

The list of local authorities who were invited to take part in the scheme drew upon a wide range of data sources, including DHSC/PHE long-term data on COVID-19 incidence; data on social integration; and evidence on the prevalence and specific support needs of disabled people in an area.

Conor McGinn:[\[783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, (a) how many and (b) which local authorities have (i) submitted bids for funding and (ii) have had bids for funding accepted under the Community Champions scheme.

Eddie Hughes:

65 areas were invited to submit an Expression of Interests to the Community Champions programme. 60 applied, of which all 60 were awarded funding.

■ **Devolution****Steve Reed:**[\[746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to bring forward proposals on further devolution.

Luke Hall:

We remain committed to devolving power to people and places across the country. Our plans for strengthening local leadership will be included in the Levelling Up White Paper which will be published in the Autumn.

■ **High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what additional steps he plans to take to protect leaseholders from costs arising from (a) the misuse of flammable cladding and (b) other unsafe structural design features used in the (i) construction and (ii) modification of the apartment blocks containing their flats.

Christopher Pincher:

Longstanding independent safety advice has been clear that unsafe cladding poses the greatest risk to buildings, because it can act as a fuel to a fire. Our approach prioritises action on the risks of unsafe cladding – the costs for remediating this are high, and the risks posed by it are also high. The Government has announced a globally unprecedented investment in building safety and hundreds of thousands of leaseholders will be protected from the cost of remediating unsafe cladding on their homes. On 10 February the Government announced it will provide an additional £3.5 billion grant funding for remediation of unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres, which brings the total investment in building safety to an unprecedented £5.1 billion.

Lower-rise buildings between 11 and 18 metres, with a lower risk to safety, will gain protection from the costs of cladding remediation through a generous financing scheme. As part of this financing scheme, no leaseholder will pay more than £50 per month towards the cost of cladding remediation. This builds on steps already taken to support leaseholders, including the £30 million waking watch fund to help end excessive costs and new legislation in the Building Safety Bill which will ensure homes are made and kept safer in future. We will publish more details on how the schemes will work as soon as we are in a position to do so.

■ Housing: Insulation**Neil Coyle:**[\[268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 175876 on fire safety costs, when information on the (a) eligibility, (b) application process and (c) timeframe for issuing loans to leaseholders for fire safety works in buildings under 18 metres will be published.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government will fund the remediation of unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres. In lower rise buildings of 11-18 metres, with a lower risk to safety, leaseholders will gain new protection from the costs of cladding removal through a financing scheme that will limit repayments so that leaseholders will never pay more than £50 a month. Further details of this scheme will be made available as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Neil Coyle:[\[269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to prevent the full cost of fire safety remediation works from being passed on to leaseholders who do not own 100 per cent of their home.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has recently announced a globally unprecedented investment in building safety under which hundreds of thousands of leaseholders, including shared owners, will be protected from the cost of removing and replacing unsafe cladding on their homes. We will provide over £5 billion in grant funding for the remediation of unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres, and we are establishing a generous finance scheme which will provide leaseholders in buildings of 11-18 metres with access to finance for cladding remediation costs. The monthly cladding repayment costs for these leaseholders will not exceed £50. We will publish more details on how these schemes will work as soon as we are in a position to do so.

We have also introduced a new model for Shared Ownership which will include a 10 year period during which the landlord will support with the cost of repairs in new build homes. The changes will prevent new shared owners from being faced with unexpected costs and will help to bridge the gap between renting and home ownership.

■ Local Government: Meetings**Nadia Whittome:**[\[948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of allowing (a) virtual and (b) part-virtual council meetings indefinitely.

Luke Hall:

On 25 March 2021 the Government launched a call for evidence on remote meetings and their use during the pandemic. This will inform any next steps on legislation or

guidance regarding their use in the future. The call for evidence closes on 17 June 2021. The Government will consider all responses carefully before deciding how to proceed on this issue in the longer term.

■ Planning

Zarah Sultana:

[\[882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government plans to publish its response to the Planning for the future consultation.

Christopher Pincher:

The consultation on the Planning for the Future White Paper closed in October 2020, and received around 44,000 responses – demonstrating just how important this is to people.

Given the number of responses, we are taking time to carefully consider the valuable feedback we received. We will publish the Government response to the White Paper ahead of introducing the Planning Bill to Parliament.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Steve Reed:

[\[744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether local authorities will be able to apply to use funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to provide business support that meets the needs of co-operatives and social enterprises.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The Government will develop a UK-wide framework for investment in places receiving funding and prioritising:

- investment in people and skills tailored to local needs, such as work-based training, supplementing and tailoring national programmes (e.g. the Adult Education Budget); and other local support (e.g. for early years).
- investment in communities & place including cultural and sporting facilities, civic, green and rural infrastructure, community-owned assets, neighbourhood and housing improvements, town centre and transport improvements and digital connectivity.
- investment for local business including to support innovation, green and tech adoption, tailored to local needs.

The Government will publish the UK-wide investment framework later this year and confirm the funding profile at the next Spending Review.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Mick Whitley: [\[448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government has plans to review its position on waiving intellectual property rights on covid-19 vaccines following the recent announcement by the US administration of its support for a waiver.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We are engaging with the US and other World Trade Organisation (WTO) members constructively on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver issue. Any negotiations in the WTO on a waiver will require unanimous support, which could take a significant amount of time. While we will constructively engage in the IP discussions, we have not seen evidence to demonstrate how any waiver will lead to an increase in Covid-19 supplies, so we continue to push ahead with action now, including voluntary licensing agreements for vaccines and support for COVAX.

■ **Arms Trade: Israel**

Hilary Benn: [\[66\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the use of UK arms exported to Israel; and whether she plans to review the licensing of such exports.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel. We have procedures in place to review licences – and suspend or revoke as necessary – when circumstances require. We consider all our export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard procedure.

HM Government takes its export responsibilities seriously and will continue to assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Caroline Lucas: [\[189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the recent decision of the United States Administration to support a temporary suspension of intellectual property rights for covid-19 vaccines; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave earlier today (UIN: 448).

■ Trade Agreements: Australasia

Emily Thornberry: [\[143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions negotiators from her Department have had with their counterparts from (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand on the inclusion of prohibition clauses on duty drawback and exemption in the proposed upcoming free trade agreements with those countries.

Emily Thornberry: [\[144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions negotiators from her Department have had with their counterparts from (a) Canada, (b) Mexico and (c) Turkey on the inclusion of prohibition clauses on duty drawback and exemption in the long-term trade agreements with those countries that will replace the interim agreements secured in December 2020.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government will carefully assess and negotiate the terms of future trade agreements with Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Mexico in order to secure provisions that benefit all of the United Kingdom, including producers in our new freeports.

Our trade deal with the EU contains no duty drawback prohibitions, nor does the agreement with Turkey now in force, which is closely based upon it.

Emily Thornberry: [\[148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the members of her Trade Advisory Group on Agri-Food have been consulted on the text of relevant chapters of her draft trade agreement with Australia.

Emily Thornberry: [\[150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the members of her Trade Advisory Group on Agri-Food have been consulted on the text of relevant chapters of her draft trade agreement with New Zealand.

Emily Thornberry: [\[152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the members of her Trade Advisory Groups on (a) Automotive, aerospace and marine, (b) Manufactured and consumer goods, (c) Chemicals and (d) Life sciences have been consulted on the text of relevant chapters of her draft trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand.

Emily Thornberry: [\[153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the members of her Trade Advisory Groups on (a) Telecoms and technology, (b) Creative industries, (c) Investment, (d) Transport services, (e) Professional advisory services and (f) Financial services have been consulted on the text of relevant chapters of her draft trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Trade Advisory Groups (TAGs) are a key forum for sharing sensitive information and their members are regularly consulted on trade agreements.

All TAG members have been consulted throughout Australia and New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations. Most recently, a debrief for all TAG members was held following the fourth round of negotiations with New Zealand on 27th April, where officials updated stakeholders and discussed key developments. All TAG members were given an update by the Chief Negotiator on the progress made on the United Kingdom-Australia FTA also, following the visit of the Australian Trade Minister to London on 4th May.

Additional updates were given at the previous TAG meetings below:

SECTOR:	UPDATE GIVEN:
Agri-Food	8 th February
Automotive, Aerospace and Marine	4 th March
British Manufactured and Consumer Goods	4 th February
Chemicals	28 th January
Creative Industries	16 th February
Financial Services	19 th January
Investment	29 th April
Life Sciences	13 th January
Professional Advisory Services	14 th January
Telecoms & Technology	25 th February
Transport Services	21 st January

Emily Thornberry:[\[158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to consult the members of her Strategic Trade Advisory Group on the text of relevant chapters of her draft trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG) has met twice this year already: on 22nd February and 26th April. On both occasions, both the Australia and New Zealand Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) were discussed.

Outside the regular STAG meetings, members of the STAG are invited to updates on trade negotiations regularly. Most recently, a debrief was held following the fourth round of negotiations with New Zealand on 27th April, where officials updated

interested parties and discussed key developments. STAG members were consulted and given an update on 4th May by officials on the progress made on the United Kingdom-Australia FTA also, following the visit of the Australian Trade Minister to London.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Emily Thornberry: [\[641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the 23 April 2021 Joint Statement on UK-Australia trade talks, what remaining issues are yet to be resolved in the proposed trade agreement with Australia.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Talks during Minister Tehan's visit were very positive and have moved negotiations closer to a high-standard Free Trade Agreement later this year. Consensus has been reached on the vast majority of the deal, including ambitious provisions on services, innovation and mobility. The UK and Australia have agreed to intensify negotiations with a view to reaching agreement in principle in June.

These are live negotiations; the Secretary of State and Minister Tehan are continuing to hold weekly calls in the run up to this June moment to make progress on outstanding issues.

Emily Thornberry: [\[642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the 23 April 2021 Joint Statement on UK-Australia trade talks, whether the UK and Australia have reached consensus on the UK's market access offer on agri-food products.

Greg Hands:

The UK and Australia continue to have discussions on market access, as both parties make progress with a view to reaching agreement in principle in June.

The Government's aim is to reach far-reaching liberalisation of tariffs, ensuring that this is balanced and mutually beneficial for UK firms and consumers, whilst taking into account specific product sensitivities.

■ TRIPS Agreement

Sarah Champion: [\[742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the UK has changed its position on the TRIPS waiver proposal at the WTO that would suspend global patent rules during the covid-19 pandemic in response to the US government supporting that proposal.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave earlier today (UIN: 448).

JUSTICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Dr Jamie Wallis:****[458]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the suitability of the (a) Atlantic Hotel site in Porthcawl and (b) Sunnyside site in Bridgend as locations for a Women's Residential Centre in South Wales.

Alex Chalk:

The Residential Women's Centre in south Wales will offer women an intensive residential support package in their own community to address the underlying causes of their offending.

Following an extensive search earlier this year, the Atlantic Hotel and Sunnyside House were two of the properties put on a shortlist of possible suitable sites for the Residential Women's Centre.

We have now completed further technical assessments of the Atlantic Hotel. Following consideration of the changes that would be needed to make it suitable for the vulnerable women with whom we will be working, we have decided the site is no longer an option for the residential women's centre.

We are still reviewing the results of the technical assessments of Sunnyside House.

■ **Courts: Video Conferencing****Ellie Reeves:****[408]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the rollout of section 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, how many cases have applied or used section 28 used since its rollout, by (a) court and (b) month.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS does not hold data on how many times the provisions of a section 28 special measure have been applied or used by (a) court and (b) month.

The information requested is not held centrally and can only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

■ **Euthanasia: Prosecutions****Andy Slaughter:****[R] [133]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of sections (a) 2(1) and (b) 2(A) of the Suicide Act 1961 between 1 April 2009 and 31 July 2020.

Alex Chalk:

The Government has not made, and has no plans to make, an assessment of the effectiveness of provisions in the Suicide Act 1961.

The Government's view remains that if there is a requirement for any change to the law in this area it must be for individual Parliamentarians to consider as an issue of conscience, rather than a decision for Government.

■ Prisoners' Transfers

Helen Hayes:

[373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) male and (b) women category D prisoners were waiting for transfer to an open prison on (a) 31 January 2020 and (b) 31 January 2021.

Alex Chalk:

The number of prisoners awaiting transfer is information that is only held at the level of each individual prison and the central team that co-ordinate prison transfers - Population Management (PMU) - does not have a centralised waiting list process. This is because there are complex and wide-ranging issues involved in transferring prisoners and allocation decisions must reflect both the specific needs and circumstances of the prisoner, as well as the operating environment and range of services at the receiving prison. Within the context of these often competing operational and logistical demands, PMU seeks to ensure that prisoners who have been accepted for transfer are moved as soon as is practical.

Swift and efficient transfers between prisons, particularly progressive transfers to open and resettlement prisons, are necessary and desirable because they ensure that space remains within local/reception prisons. They also ensure that prisoners are held in prisons providing an appropriate level of security as well as the appropriate interventions to allow them to progress with their sentence plan.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Government: Finance

Stephen Farry:

[553]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish the (a) criteria and (b) procedures applied by the New Decade New Approach Joint Board in relation to decisions to release funding under the NDNA agreement.

Stephen Farry:

[554]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will place the minutes of the New Decade New Approach Joint Board in the Library.

Mr Robin Walker:

The New Decade, New Approach Joint Board provides the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and other Ministers as appropriate, the opportunity to review the use of funding provided under the NDNA agreement. This is to:

- Support the Northern Ireland Executive in ensuring sound and stable governance that delivers for the people of Northern Ireland;
- Review funding provided by the UK Government to meet commitments set out in the NDNA agreement;
- Support transformation in health, education and justice through the NDNA funding package; and,
- Consider the effectiveness of infrastructure delivery, drawing on expertise from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority as appropriate.

The Terms of reference for the Joint Board are consistent with the New Decade, New Approach commitment that the Board has oversight for transformation in health, education and justice, where these draw on funding provided under the Agreement.

Whilst the Joint Board reviews the use of NDNA funding and related issues, it is not a decision-making body. As such, there are no criteria or procedures by which it reaches decisions.

The decision to release funding under the NDNA is a matter for the UK Government. The conditions of the UK Government's financial commitments under NDNA are set out in page 54 of the agreement document.

Minutes of the meetings are not published.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the Government's planned timescale is for bringing forward legislative proposals to address the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government has been clear that it will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations. We are engaging with a wide range of stakeholders as part of this process and are committed to making progress as quickly as possible.

■ Ulster Scots Language

Stephen Farry:

[\[555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the undertaking in paragraph 24 of Annex A to the New Decade New Approach document of 9 January 2020 that the UK will recognise Ulster Scots as a national minority under the Framework Convention for National Minorities, if he will confirm that it remains Government policy to continue to recognise Ulster Scots speakers as a linguistic minority.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government is continuing work to deliver on its commitment in New Decade, New Approach to recognise Ulster Scots as a national minority under the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The Northern Ireland Executive is primarily responsible for supporting and promoting language and culture, including Ulster Scots. To this end, the New Decade, New Approach agreement also contains important commitments from the Executive to progress. The Government welcomes the recent establishment by the Executive of the new Translation Hub in this regard.

We are continuing to work with the Executive to ensure the full delivery of the important New Decade, New Approach language, identity and culture commitments at the earliest possible opportunity.

SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION**■ Elections: Proof of Identity****Cat Smith:**[\[310\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for City of Chester, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, how many free local elector IDs were issued by Woking Council as part of the 2019 Voter ID trials.

Christian Matheson:

Woking Borough Council issued 24 free local elector cards in 2019, as part of its participation in the UK Government's voter ID pilot. It issued 63 cards in a similar trial held in 2018.

This information was collated as part of the Commission's independent evaluations of the pilot schemes conducted in 2018 and 2019.

TRANSPORT**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Sajid Javid:**[\[200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that driving test appointments can take place (a) quickly and (b) safely to reduce any backlogs resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has put in place a number of measures to increase practical driving tests. These include offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays). The DVSA is also running a recruitment campaign to increase the overall number of examiners.

The DVSA's aim is to increase testing capacity and reduce the backlog as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a COVID-secure service for customers and examiners. Standard Operating Procedures are in place at all test centres to ensure measures are in place to help stop the spread of coronavirus.

Henry Smith: [\[205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government is taking steps ahead of the UK's Presidency of the G7 in summer 2021 to ensure (a) the safe reopening of borders and (b) that the restart of international aviation is a priority of the G7.

Robert Courts:

The Secretary of State for Transport met with G7 Transport Leaders on 5 May to begin setting out a strategy for the safe reopening of international travel.

This will focus on the need for a coordinated and sustainable reopening of travel through a number of aligned international measures including best practice for sharing scientific data and promoting coordination on universally recognised travel certificates.

Carol Monaghan: [\[317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the level of additional demands on Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency testing facilities since those testing facilities have reopened in response to the easing of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Carol Monaghan: [\[318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help meet the additional demands on Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency testing facilities since those testing facilities have reopened in response to the easing of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Carol Monaghan: [\[319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has made an assessment of the potential merits of hiring larger halls to help meet the increased demand for driving theory tests after the extended suspension of the delivery of those tests in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) understands the effect that the pandemic has had on all those involved with driver training and testing. It is inevitable the demand for existing and new learners wanting to book theory and practical driving tests will be higher than usual.

The DVSA has put in place a number of measures to increase practical driving tests. These include offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays). The DVSA is also running a recruitment campaign to increase the overall

number of examiners. The aim is to increase testing capacity and reduce the backlog as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a COVID-secure service for customers and examiners.

The DVSA is aware there has been an unprecedented demand for theory tests in Scotland. The DVSA is working with its theory test provider, Pearson VUE, to explore ways in which it can increase theory test capacity in Scotland, including extending opening hours and running tests on extra days where possible.

The DVSA is continuing to work with the Scottish Government but as a result of the 2 metre physical distancing restrictions in Scotland, it is unable to increase the number of desks used to take tests.

The DVSA and its theory test contract provider, Pearson VUE, have explored the possibility of delivering the theory tests outside of existing sites, but this was found to be not suitable as it is dependent upon a physical infrastructure within the Pearson VUE network.

Gill Furniss:

[\[389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of the travel industry on (a) reducing the cost of covid-19 tests for international travel and (b) improving the length of time taken to receive the results of those tests.

Robert Courts:

We are working with the travel industry and private testing providers to see how we can further reduce costs for the British public while ensuring travel is as safe as possible. We are considering a range of options ahead of international travel re-opening on 17 May. The price of tests has reduced significantly in recent weeks, with providers offering testing packages for green arrivals starting at £20 and a single PCR test for £44.90.

We have established minimum standards for laboratories and testing providers, which cover turnaround times for Covid test evaluation, and providers that offer a sub-standard service are given 5 days to rectify the problem. Failure to do so means they are removed from the gov.uk list of providers.

Neale Hanvey:

[\[482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with his French counterpart on recognition for UK driving licences in France after 31 December 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

At the end of 2020, the Department for Transport had successfully agreed arrangements with all EU Member States - including France - for the mutual recognition of photocard licences. As such, UK photocard licence holders will not need to carry an additional International Driving Permit when driving in France – nor any EU Member State. We have also secured interim arrangements with the French authorities which will allow UK licence holders resident in France, to continue to use

their valid UK licence until 1 January 2022. We are working with the French Government to finalise a permanent licence exchange agreement.

Charlotte Nichols: [504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to respond to the consultation on Managing pavement parking which closed on 22 November 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is now analysing the high volume of responses to ensure that all views are captured and Ministers will be carefully considering the consultation findings before deciding the way forward.

We will publish a response to the consultation in due course and it will be available to view at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/managing-pavement-parking.

■ **A1 and A1 (M): Repairs and Maintenance**

Sir Greg Knight: [71]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to (a) resurface and (b) repair potholes on the A1 south of Newark; and whether his Department has plans to speed up repairs to the road surface on the A1 and A1(M).

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England's inspectors carry out weekly safety inspections of the A1. If any safety critical defects, including potholes, are identified, an instruction is given to mitigate any immediate safety issues within 24 hours. Repairs are carried out according to the severity of the defect, frequently within 28 days.

Highways England continues work to identify schemes for necessary resurfacing treatments and is committed to start resurfacing works on the A1 northbound carriageway between Wothorpe and South Witham at the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

■ **Air Pollution: Enfield**

Feryal Clark: [924]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department will take to measure the effect of pollution on Bullsmoor Lane as a result of the M25 junction development scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England's assessment of the impact of the scheme concluded that changes in air quality as a result of the scheme would be negligible. Air quality monitoring on Bullsmoor Lane is already being carried out by the London Borough of Enfield, as the relevant local authority. Since construction on the scheme has started, they have not notified Highways England of any exceedances recorded for any monitoring stations within the locality of Bullsmoor Lane. As this monitoring is already in place, Highways England has no plans to implement further monitoring in the locality.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney:

[\[401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring airlines to check passengers' coronavirus paperwork and to ensure they have booked testing packages for their return to the UK.

Robert Courts:

It is already a legal requirement for carriers to check these measures have been complied with, and there are financial penalties for operators and passengers for non-compliance.

We are working closely with airlines to ensure passengers are compliant with the requirements of passage to the United Kingdom. Airlines are in an excellent position to assist in ensuring compliance with the Passenger Locator Form (PLF) away from the border, facilitating a smoother arrivals process in UK ports. They are able to communicate with passengers at various stages of the journey, from booking passage to departure, ensuring passengers comply with their requirement to complete the PLF and that the relevant testing packages have been booked.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[42\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance his Department has issued to airports and airlines on ensuring that social distancing measures are implemented while passengers (a) enter and exit aircraft and (b) wait in airport waiting rooms and lounges; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The government has introduced a range of measures such as social distancing and the wearing of face coverings to help reduce the risk of transmission on aircraft and at airports, as well as issuing clear guidance for both passengers and operators.

Where social distancing is not possible, airlines are advised to carry out a risk assessment and implement appropriate risk controls. For example, wearing a face covering can play a role in helping us to protect other passengers, which is why it is mandatory to wear one on board aircraft.

Additionally, operators are encouraged to introduce clear signage and one-way passenger flows where appropriate. Arrangements may vary depending on the port or airport and the guidance is available to support port operators. The government continue to engage with the aviation sector to ensure they are supported in implementing best practices.

■ Blue Badge Scheme

Rachael Maskell:

[\[345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will liaise with local authorities to create a generic application process for Blue Badges.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department for Transport issues non-statutory guidance to local authorities to help them administer the Blue Badge scheme, this includes a model application form. We recommend the use of this form but it is a matter for individual local authorities to choose an assessment approach which best supports their Blue Badge decision making process.

79% of all Blue Badge applications are made through the Blue Badge Digital Service (BBDS). The BBDS undertakes a programme of continuous improvement looking at ways to ensure the online application form is as user-friendly as possible for all applicants.

■ Cycling: Safety**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[52\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to help cyclists to become more safety conscious when using the roads; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is committed by the end of this Parliament to providing cycle training to all children and to all adults who want it. The training will include a strong safety focus, which will give more people the knowledge and skills to cycle confidently and safely on the roads. The Department is already providing £18 million funding for Bikeability training for children and families in 2021/22: funding for cycle training in future years will be a matter for the Spending Review. The Department is also updating The Highway Code to improve safety for cyclists, and this will include strengthened advice on how to cycle safely.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points**Feryal Clark:**[\[925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make adequate funding available to Enfield Council to support the delivery of electric vehicle charging points to support residents in making the transition to electric cars.

Rachel Maclean:

Up to January 2021, specifically within the London Borough of Enfield, the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles has provided grant funding assistance for the installation of 481 chargepoints in drivers' homes and 31 chargepoints in workplaces as well as awarded funding for the installation of 12 public chargepoints on residential streets through the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS). The ORCS, worth £20million this financial year, is open to all UK local authorities to provide charging infrastructure for residents without access to private parking. This scheme is just part of a £1.3 billion Government investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including ongoing support for chargepoints in homes and workplaces, which complements growing private sector investment.

■ Electric Vehicles: Grants**Kerry McCarthy:** [\[127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide a breakdown per vehicle category of the £582 million allocated in Plug-In Grant funding in (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21.

Rachel Maclean:

£582 million has been allocated to the Plug-in vehicle grants covering the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23. The Plug in grants are demand led and the grant allocated to each vehicle category is kept under review.

■ Invalid Vehicles: Pilot Schemes**Rachael Maskell:** [\[353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to pilot or establish e-mobility scooter schemes for disabled people as part of his active travel policy.

Rachel Maclean:

I refer the honourable member to my Answer given to Question UIN 354.

Rachael Maskell: [\[354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether e-scooter pilot schemes are commissioned to provide accessible alternative scooters as part of the pilot programme.

Rachel Maclean:

I have taken a keen interest in the trials and how e-scooters may affect those with disabilities and accessibility needs. As e-scooters have the potential to offer an additional means of transport, we did allow seated e-scooters within the scope of the trials to enable people with certain mobility issues to use them. However, local authorities control how the trials run in their areas and appoint e-scooter operators and none of the local authorities or operators involved have chosen to trial a seated e-scooter model. One e-scooter operator is planning to trial a device adapted from an e-scooter to give wheelchair users access to the experience of using an e-scooter and will share results with the Department.

■ Joint Maritime Security Centre**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [\[258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which Government department holds responsibility for the (a) governance and (b) budget of the Joint Maritime Security Centre.

Robert Courts:

The Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) is the multi-agency organisation responsible for ensuring the UK maintains its understanding of the UK maritime domain and develops the cross-government coordination frameworks to respond to threats to security, law and order, and the marine environment. The Department for Transport, Ministry of Defence and Home Office are the major financial contributors

to JMSC but, mirroring its multi-agency remit, funding is also provided by a range of other Whitehall departments and agencies with maritime security interests. Cross-Whitehall governance structures are in place to oversee the strategic direction and financial management of JMSC at both official and Ministerial level.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how often the Ministerial Board of the Joint Maritime Security Centre has met since its creation; and which Ministers have attended each of those meetings.

Robert Courts:

The Maritime Security Ministerial Small Group meets regularly and has convened four times since Autumn. Meetings have been attended by Ministers from the Department for Transport, Home Office, Ministry of Defence, Cabinet Office and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Maritime security risk assessment, policy development and Ministerial oversight and engagement also continues outside of these meetings.

■ M1

Huw Merriman:

[\[316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what dates he plans to publish the outstanding Post Opening Project Evaluation reports for the smart motorway schemes at (a) M1 junctions 10 to 13, (b) M1 junctions 28 to 31 and (c) M1 junctions 32 to 35a.

Rachel Maclean:

Highways England produces Post Opening Project Evaluation (POPE) reports '1 year after' and '5 years after', following the opening of a road scheme. It is currently producing: a five-year POPE report on the M1 Junctions 10 to 13; and, 1-year POPE reports on the M1 junctions 28 to 31, and M1 Junctions 32 to 35a. These are expected to be published by Summer 2021.

■ Public Transport: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential for returnees from green and amber list countries to transmit covid-19 on public transport facilities; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of mandating green and amber list returnees to be picked up by car by someone in their household or by taxi.

Rachel Maclean:

The country lists have been informed by public health advice, including extensive data from the Joint Biosecurity Centre and are reviewed every three weeks. The Department for Transport recommends returnees only to use public transport to travel home or to where they plan to self-isolate if there is no other option. If they must travel by public transport, they should take all safety precautions including keeping their distance, wearing a face covering, regularly washing their hands and planning

ahead to avoid busy routes. They are advised, if possible, to download the [NHS COVID-19 app](#) before travelling, and to check in on the app where there are official NHS COVID-19 QR code posters along their route (such as stops to buy food or if they have to take a break) but otherwise minimise all stops on their journey. Returnees will also have undergone the required pre-departure tests before travelling.

■ **Railway Stations: Access**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[222]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the next round of Access for All bidding will commence.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I shall be bidding for further rounds of funding for Access for All schemes in the forthcoming Spending Review.

■ **Railways: Bedfordshire**

Sarah Owen:

[877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of (a) Thameslink and (b) East Midlands Railway on the use of coaches with Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations exemption certificates as part of rail replacement contracts in Bedfordshire.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

No specific conversations have taken place on this with either Thameslink or East Midlands Railway. We remain disappointed that fully accessible services cannot always be provided for rail replacement. As Rail Minister, I have set clear expectations on the train operating companies to source and use PSVAR compliant vehicles wherever possible in the first instance, and only use a non-compliant vehicle that has been granted a special authorisation when all other compliant options have been exhausted.

■ **Roads: Safety**

Conor McGinn:

[784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve road safety awareness among (a) young and (b) all drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department's THINK! campaigns play a vital role in reducing deaths and serious injuries on the road by changing the attitudes and behaviours that can lead to casualties.

2019 Reported Road Casualties show an 11% decrease in fatalities among 17-24 year olds and a 7% decrease in people of all ages killed in accidents involving a young car driver, compared with the previous year. This decrease comes during a

period when THINK! activity has focused on changing risky attitudes and behaviours among this demographic.

The Department also encourages road safety awareness for all road user groups, as outlined in our 2019 Road Safety Statement: A Lifetime of Road Safety. Road safety education begins at school age, with our THINK! Team delivering educational resources for children aged 3-16 years old.

We have also funded educational support for older drivers in recognition that knowledge, experience and skills develop and deteriorate based on age and experience.

Conor McGinn: [\[785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has allocated to (a) young drivers' awareness programmes and (b) safety campaigns in each year since 2010.

Rachel Maclean:

Road awareness education and safety campaigns are crucial to improving safety for all road user groups. Between 2010 and 2017, our campaigns targeted a wider audience of road users, including young drivers.

Since 2017 Departmental spend has been primarily focused on young driver road safety campaigns. In order to have the greatest impact, THINK! Campaign activity focuses on those at greatest risk: male drivers aged 17-24.

To that end, since 2010, the Department has invested £47.9 million into awareness programmes and safety campaigns.

■ Speed Limits: Urban Areas

Zarah Sultana: [\[881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a blanket 20mph speed limit across inner cities, towns and villages.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department published a comprehensive three-year evaluation of the effect of 20mph signed-only limits on 22 November 2018.

The research substantially strengthens the evidence base on perceptions, speeds and early outcomes associated with 20mph speed limits, and is the only major UK study to consider multiple case study areas and provide a national view.

The headline findings were:

- 20mph limits are supported by the majority of residents and drivers.
- There has been a small reduction in median speed (less than 1mph).
- Vehicles travelling at higher speeds before the introduction of the 20mph limit have reduced their speed more than those already travelling at lower speeds.

- There is insufficient evidence to conclude that there has been a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph limits in residential areas.
- In one city centre case study there has been a significant reduction in collisions and casualties.

■ Train Operating Companies: Coronavirus

Sam Tarry: [937]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total cost to the public purse was of covid-19-related emergency financial support provided to train operating companies since 1 March 2020, broken down by quarter.

Sam Tarry: [938]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total cost to the public purse was of all covid-19-related emergency financial support provided to train operating companies since 1 March 2020, by train operating company.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Train operators provide management accounts to the Government, and are paid by the Government, once per rail period and there are 13 such periods in each financial year. Therefore, reliable data cannot be produced on an exact quarterly basis as the dates do not align.

However, periodic data on operational support payments made to each franchised operator from 1 March 2020 to 6 February 2021, are published at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dft-payments-to-passenger-rail-operators-under-emergency-agreements>

■ Travel Restrictions: United Arab Emirates

Alex Cunningham: [706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish any representations he has received from Dubai Airport in relation to the UAE's classification on the red list.

Robert Courts:

Ministers and officials have engaged extensively with the aviation and travel industries throughout the pandemic, including with representatives from Dubai Airport and the UAE. We remain committed to an open engagement with the sector and continue to work with industry partners to share information with the aim of ensuring a safe return of international travel.

The government keeps the data for countries and territories under regular review and changes to the Red, Amber and Green lists will be implemented every three weeks, unless concerning evidence means we need to act faster to protect public health.

TREASURY■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Theresa Villiers: [129]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on members of ethnic minority communities of the changes to IR35 rules which came into effect in April 2021.

Jesse Norman:

The off-payroll working rules only apply to individuals who are working like employees under the current employment status tests, and do not apply to the self-employed.

The Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) published at Spring Budget 2021 set out that the reform of the off-payroll working rules is expected to affect up to 60,000 medium and large enterprises, about 180,000 individuals working through their own companies, and approximately 20,000 agencies nationally. The TIIN can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/off-payroll-working-rules-from-april-2021/off-payroll-working-rules-from-april-2021>.

As set out in the TIIN, the reform of the off-payroll working rules is not anticipated to have an impact on groups sharing protected characteristics.

Andrea Leadsom: [228]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the retrospective application of the Loan Charge with the standard principles of the UK's tax regime.

Jesse Norman:

The Loan Charge was legislated in Finance Act 2017, following the normal Parliamentary process.

The Loan Charge is not retrospective. It is a new charge on disguised remuneration loan balances outstanding at 5 April 2019 and was announced three years before the legislation took effect.

Lord Morse conducted an independent Review of the Loan Charge. His report was published in December 2019 and the Government welcomed his finding that the Loan Charge was a justified policy to draw a line under use of disguised remuneration tax avoidance.

The Government accepted all but one of the Review's 20 recommendations. This included a recommendation that the Loan Charge should only apply to disguised remuneration loans which were entered into after 9 December 2010.

Andrea Leadsom: [229]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason HMRC did not reject tax returns where loan charge schemes were listed in the most recent period for which data is available.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC cannot reject Self-Assessment tax returns on the basis of information contained within the returns, including information relating to the Loan Charge or disguised remuneration schemes. Self-Assessment is a process now, check later regime. A Self-Assessment tax return would only be rejected if it fails to satisfy the filing requirements to constitute a statutory return. The Self-Assessment regime also gives HMRC the powers to open an enquiry into a return up to the end of a period of 12 months if the return was filed on or before the statutory filing date.

HMRC have also recently provided guidance on GOV.UK for taxpayers following the outcome of the independent Loan Charge Review which includes information for those taxpayers who have filed or are yet to file their 2018-19 Self-Assessment tax return: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disguised-remuneration-independent-loan-charge-review/guidance>.

Andrea Leadsom:**[230]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the potential infringement of privacy as a result of amendments to HMRC's civil information powers.

Jesse Norman:

There are strong legal restrictions on HMRC's use of their civil information powers. These restrictions protect taxpayer privacy and have not been affected by the amendments to HMRC's civil information powers.

All HMRC requests for documents and information issued under these powers must adhere to strict criteria. These must be reasonably required for the purpose of checking the tax position or collecting a tax debt of a taxpayer. Safeguards introduced with the Financial Institution Notices ensure that HMRC will maintain this standard. For example, the notices must be approved by an authorised officer who must pass a test every three years to retain their status. Taxpayers and financial institutions can challenge HMRC's decision to issue a notice using the judicial review procedure. A review on the use of this power will also be reported annually to Parliament.

HMRC have consulted with the Information Commissioner's Office to ensure this legislative change complies with UK GDPR and identify and minimise any associated data protection risks.

■ Child Benefit**Claire Hanna:****[521]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge to remove the disparity between a household with two individual incomes of £49,000 that receives full child benefit entitlement and a single parent household income of £50,000 that is required to pay the High Income Child Benefit Tax Charge.

Jesse Norman:

The Government introduced the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) from January 2013 to ensure that support for families is targeted at those who need it most. The tax charge applies to anyone with an individual income over £50,000 who claims Child Benefit, or whose partner claims it.

HICBC is calculated on an individual rather than a household basis, in line with other income tax policy. Basing HICBC on household incomes would mean finding out the incomes of everyone in each of the 7.8 million households currently registered for Child Benefit. This would effectively introduce a new means test, which would be costly to administer and create burdens on the majority of families who receive Child Benefit.

The Government has no current plans to review HICBC but as with all elements of tax policy, keeps this under review as part of the annual Budget process.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Holiday Leave**Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[29\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what limitations are placed on holiday entitlement for people who have been on furlough.

Jesse Norman:

Employees can take holiday while on furlough. If an employee is flexibly furloughed, then any hours taken as holiday during the claim period should be counted as furloughed hours rather than working hours.

Employees should not be placed on furlough for periods simply because they are on holiday. This means that employees should only be placed on furlough because their employer's operations have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and not just because they are on paid leave. This also applies during peak leave periods such as late December and early January.

Existing legislation means that furloughed employees continue to accrue leave as per their employment contract. The employer and employee can agree to vary holiday entitlement as part of the furlough agreement. However, almost all workers are entitled to 5.6 weeks of statutory paid annual leave each year which they cannot go below; for workers who work a five-day week, this amounts to 28 days each year.

Working Time Regulations (WTR) require holiday pay to be paid at the employee's normal rate of pay or, where the rate of pay varies, calculated on the basis of the average pay received by the employee in the previous 52 working weeks. Therefore, if a furloughed employee takes holiday, the employer should pay them their usual holiday pay in accordance with the WTR. Employers will be obliged to pay additional amounts over the CJRS grant, although they will have the flexibility to restrict when leave can be taken if there is a business need. This applies for both the furlough period and the recovery period.

If an employee usually works bank holidays then the employer can agree that this is included in the grant payment. If the employee usually takes the bank holiday as leave then the employer would either have to top up their pay to their usual holiday pay, or give the employee a day of holiday in lieu.

During this unprecedented time the policy on holiday pay during furlough is being kept under review.

■ **Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation**

Neale Hanvey: [483]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) Ministers in his Department on (i) compensation and (ii) support for people affected by the Equitable Life scandal.

Neale Hanvey: [484]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take in 2021 to help people affected by the Equitable Life scandal.

Neale Hanvey: [485]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of payments made under the Equitable Life Payment Scheme.

Neale Hanvey: [486]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to (a) retain and (b) maintain data needed to make further payments to Equitable Life policy holders.

Neale Hanvey: [487]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making additional compensation payments to people affected by the Equitable Life scheme.

John Glen:

There are no plans to reopen the Payment Scheme or review the £1.5 billion funding allocation previously made to it. The Equitable Life Payment Scheme closed to claims in 2015 and further guidance on the status of the Payment Scheme after closure is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equitable-life-payment-scheme#closure-of-the-scheme>.

The methodology for calculating payments to Equitable Life policyholders was published in 2011 and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equitable-life-payment-scheme-design>.

I can assure the Hon Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath that relevant records are currently retained and will continue to be as long as it is legal to do so.

■ Musical Instruments: Customs

Catherine West: [384]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 13 April 2021 to Question 174927, whether there is a reciprocal exemption in place for musical instruments when leaving and entering the EU, so that musicians carrying portable musical instruments for professional purposes do not need (a) to make a customs declaration and (b) a carnet.

Jesse Norman:

The EU operates both a Temporary Admission procedure and a Returned Goods Relief. However, the management of EU import and export procedures is the responsibility of the customs authorities of its Member States so it is important that travellers/traders confirm the processes at their port of arrival and any conditions or procedures that may apply. Information can be found at https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/customs_en.

■ Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill: [826]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his oral contribution of 12 May 2021, Official Report, what assessment he has made of the level of UK (a) debt and (b) deficit as a share of GDP that would enable a return to spending 0.7 per cent of GNI on Official Development Assistance.

Steve Barclay:

The Government intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows. We cannot at this moment predict with certainty when the current fiscal circumstances will have sufficiently improved.

■ Sanitary Protection: VAT

Zarah Sultana: [884]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including reusable and environmentally sustainable menstrual products in sanitary products that are supplied at the zero rate of VAT.

Jesse Norman:

A zero rate of VAT has applied to women's sanitary products since 1 January 2021. This applies to those products which were previously subject to the reduced rate of 5 per cent, for example, tampons and pads, and also includes reusable and environmentally sustainable menstrual products, such as keepers.

The relief specifically excludes articles of clothing. Such exclusions are designed to ensure that the relief is properly targeted, since difficulties in policing the scope of the relief create the potential for litigation, erosion of the tax base and a reduction in revenue.

■ Self-employed: Government Assistance

Ed Davey:

[607]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to provide support for self-employed individuals who were not aware that late filing of 2019-20 tax returns would obstruct their access to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

At the Budget on 3 March, the Government announced the details of two further rounds of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Alongside this, the Government announced that HMRC will now use 2019-20 tax returns to determine the eligibility and award for the SEISS, provided these returns were submitted by 2 March.

This means that hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom became self-employed in 2019-20, may now be able to claim the fourth and fifth grants.

The Government has already given self-employed people more than a month after the statutory deadline to submit their returns. HMRC waived late filing penalties until 28 February. Self-employed individuals who did not file by 31 January will, where possible, have received a notification from HMRC that their return was late.

Allowing returns submitted after the terms and criteria of the SEISS grants were announced on 3 March would have created a significant incentive for fraud. The Government has a duty to protect the tax system from the small minority who would seek to exploit it. The 2 March cut-off point balances access for the vast majority of eligible self-employed individuals, with the Government's duty to protect the taxpayer against fraud.

The SEISS continues to be just one element of a substantial package of support to the self-employed. The Government has also provided a wide range of loan schemes, business grants, business rates relief, tax cuts, mortgage holidays, increased welfare support, and the Kickstart and Restart schemes.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Jessica Morden:

[160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have died whilst waiting for a decision on their personal independence payment claim in 2021.

Justin Tomlinson:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is claimed by people with a range of health conditions and disabilities, many of which are degenerative or life limiting and the Department treats the death of any claimant sympathetically. Claims made under Special Rules for Terminal Illness (SRTI) are fast tracked and are being cleared in 4

working days on average (as at the end of January 2021, the latest available published data).

The cause of death of claimants to PIP is not collated centrally by the Department.

390 people died whilst waiting for a decision on their PIP claim between 1st and 31st January 2021, the latest date for which published data is available. For context, 62,330 claims were submitted for PIP over the same period. Note that the stated number of deaths includes people who submitted claims before January 2021.

Notes:

Source: PIP ADS and Customer Information System

- These figures include claims made under normal rules and special rules for terminally ill claimants and include new claims and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to PIP reassessment claims.
- If a claimant dies before a decision is made on an outstanding claim, the Department establishes whether the claimant's representative or next of kin wishes to proceed with the claim. If not, the claim is withdrawn.
- This is unpublished data. It should be used with caution and it may be subject to future revision.
- PIP claimants are included if they died in January 2021 and a PIP claim was registered before their date of death and was cleared after their date of death.
- Claimants' dates of death are as recorded on the system at 11th May 2021 and may be subject to change.
- Data covers Great Britain only.

Under the Social Security (Notification of Deaths) Regulations 2012 and s125 of Social Security Administration Act 1992 date of death is provided to the Department for all registered deaths. Additionally, next of kin also provide information on the date of death of an individual and this information is used appropriately in the administration of Departmental benefits.

The PIP data includes claims made under normal rules and special rules for terminally ill claimants, as well as new claims and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to PIP reassessment claims.

Kate Osamor:

[381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of claimants who were offered an increased benefits award after lodging an appeal were provided with an interpreter in 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not available.

■ Bereavement Benefits

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 28 July 2020 to Question 76930, whether it remains her policy to extend eligibility for (a) widowed parent's allowance and (b) higher rate bereavement support payment to cohabitees with children.

Guy Opperman:

It remains our intention to take forward a Remedial Order that will extend eligibility for Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment to cohabitees with children. We are currently considering the detail and implementation of the draft Remedial Order, which will be laid before the House in due course.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Complaints

Peter Grant: [\[337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints were received by the Child Maintenance Service in (a) 2020 and (b) 2019.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has received CMS complaints in these years as follows:

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Caseload	475,200	515,600	548,400
Complaints	7,235	10,315	6,196

The data includes both Collect & Pay and Direct Pay. It should be noted that each case has at least two customers associated with it (Paying and Receiving parents) and on occasion, there may be two complaints relating to a single case.

■ Disability

Marion Fellows: [\[315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to publish its National Strategy for Disabled People.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to improving the lives of disabled people, and will publish the National Strategy for Disabled People in the coming months.

■ Disability: Public Consultation

Marion Fellows: [\[314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the Government plans to bring forward its Health and Disability Green Paper.

Justin Tomlinson:

Given the necessary focus on the departmental response to Covid-19, we are working to a longer timescale than previously anticipated. We are continuing engagement with disabled people and their representatives and plan to publish the formal consultation document in the coming months.

■ Employment: Disability**Jacob Young:**[\[900038\]](#)

What steps she is taking to ensure equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Justin Tomlinson:

This Government is committed to seeing 1 million more disabled people in work by 2027. The department delivers a range of initiatives which includes specialised employment support like the Work and Health Programme, local trials in partnership with health, Access to Work and Disability Confident.

■ Employment: Government Assistance**Simon Jupp:**[\[900041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that employment support is accessible in communities throughout the UK.

Mims Davies:

We want everyone to be able to find a job, progress in work and thrive in the Labour Market, wherever they live.

We are moving at pace to introduce new Jobcentres across the UK, with leases already secured on 111 additional temporary sites. To date, we have recruited over 14,600 additional Work Coaches.

Throughout the pandemic, Jobcentres remained open for anyone who needed face-to-face support. As of last month, all jobcentres in England, Scotland and Wales returned to their pre-lockdown opening hours.

■ Employment: Learning Disability**Helen Hayes:**[\[814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what employment support her Department is providing to people with learning disabilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP is providing a range of support to help people with learning disabilities secure and keep employment during the Covid period:

The increased number of work coaches will enable us to continue supporting those with complex needs, and to work with partners to ensure they get the help they need.

People in particular disadvantaged groups will continue to benefit from local support via the increased Flexible Support Fund and priority early access to the Work and Health Programme.

The Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme (IPES) provides highly personalised packages of employment support for disabled people who want to work but have complex needs or barriers and require specialist support to achieve sustained employment.

Access to Work funds tailored support to disabled people who are in work, including apprenticeships, or participating in DfE Traineeships or Supported Internships. AtW has recently introduced a new flexible offer to support disabled people to return to, move into and retain employment. This enables disabled people to receive in-work support to work in the workplace, at home or a combination of both.

■ **Employment: Sign Language**

Sarah Olney:

[\[397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that workplaces promote and facilitate the use of British Sign Language.

Justin Tomlinson:

Provision for accessing services by users of British Sign Language (BSL) are covered by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Equality legislation means that employers, service providers and public bodies have to provide services in BSL and other formats when it is reasonable to do so. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the needs of a range of protected characteristics, including disability.

■ **Jobcentres: Staff**

Neil Coyle:

[\[270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to ensure that Jobcentre users who are survivors of domestic abuse are able to choose the gender of their Work Coach.

Mims Davies:

It is standard practice in Jobcentres, that should a claimant request a Work Coach of a specific gender or to change their Work Coach for any reason, then this request should be acknowledged, with few, if any, questions being asked of the claimant.

■ **Kickstart Scheme**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart scheme placements have been (a) approved, (b) advertised and (c) started by young people.

Mims Davies:

Through the Kickstart Scheme, as of the 6th May 2021, there have been:

- Over 200,000 jobs approved;
- Over 108,000 jobs made available for young people to apply for;
- Over 20,000 young people starting jobs.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

Seema Malhotra: [253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department is making on the publication of constituency level data in relation to the Kickstart scheme.

Alison McGovern: [695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart placements have been (a) approved and (b) started in each parliamentary constituency.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions collects data on the uptake of the Kickstart Scheme. We have published information on the number of young people who have started in each region, here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/179100>, but we are unable to break this down below the regional level at present.

The need to deliver and operate the Kickstart scheme at pace has led to a current limited clerical data set which, in turn, makes it harder to accurately present a snapshot of a smaller geographical area, such as a Parliamentary constituency. Information is contained across multiple systems as more than one Jobcentre could cover a single constituency. Conversely, Kickstart placements and vacancies are not allocated to one JCP, so we have many vacancies which may be connected to a company based or headquartered in one area, but the vacancies can be filled from a wider geographical area.

As such, it is not currently possible to provide the data below the regional level. We are, however, continuing to develop our management information tools and data collection system which may help in sharing more localised information at a local authority level in due course.

The Government is monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart Scheme throughout its implementation, and will continue to evaluate the longer term outcomes and impact for Kickstart participants.

Seema Malhotra: [254]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 27 April 2021 to Question 186286 on the Kickstart Scheme, what steps she is taking to help

reduce the gap between the number of Kickstart (a) placements advertised and (b) jobs started in each sector.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions continues to work with employers to ensure their job vacancies are the right fit for the young people eligible for the Kickstart Scheme. Our work coaches are working hard to ensure quality referrals are made to Kickstart vacancies by engaging with young people to make sure that they are referred to a role that is suitable for them. Once a referral is made, the young person will need to apply for the job as detailed in the vacancy advert by the employer. The young person can access support at the application stage through their work coach if they require it. Employers will then shortlist and recruit successful young people into Kickstart jobs.

As of the 6th May 2021, 108,000 Kickstart jobs have been made available to young people eligible for the scheme. Over 20,000 young people have now started in a Kickstart job and over the last four weeks an average of 400 young people started in their Kickstart job each working day.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

Alison McGovern:

[\[696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of extending the Kickstart scheme beyond December 2021.

Mims Davies:

Our focus is on delivering Kickstart jobs for young people as soon as we can. Eligible young people will be able to start new Kickstart jobs until December 2021, meaning the final cohort of six-month jobs will end in Summer 2022. There are currently no plans to extend the Kickstart Scheme.

■ **Kickstart Scheme: Young People**

Matt Vickers:

[\[546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart scheme jobs have been (a) made available for young people to apply to and (b) started, (i) nationally, (ii) by region and (iii) by sector.

Alison McGovern:

[\[694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart jobs have been (a) approved and (b) started in each region of the UK.

Mims Davies:

As of the 6th May 2021, over 108,000 jobs have been made available for young people to apply for through the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Kickstart Scheme. This includes over 20,000 jobs started by young people.

There have been over 200,000 jobs approved by the scheme.

We are unable at present to provide data on the number of approved jobs by region, as at that stage in the process we do not hold information about the exact location of a job, only the head office of the employer. We do hold regional information on jobs made available for young people to apply for and for placements started, which is provided below.

The tables below show these figures split by location and sector, the data presented has been rounded according to DWP statistical rounding convention. Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

LOCATION	JOB ADVERTISED	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
East Midlands	7,270	1,120
East of England	8,240	1,320
London	22,740	4,500
North East	4,560	960
North West	13,560	2,840
Scotland	7,540	1,770
South East	12,320	2,350
South West	7,670	1,440
Wales	6,020	1,000
West Midlands	10,030	1,850
Yorkshire and The Humber	8,310	1,580

Figures may not add up to provided totals due to rounding. 1,000 non-grant funded jobs are included in Jobs Advertised but not included under Jobs Started. Total jobs started includes those which have been completed or ended early.

SECTOR	JOBS ADVERTISED	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
Administration	27,950	5,370
Animal Care	480	160
Beauty & Wellbeing	740	150
Business & Finance	4,040	750
Computing, Technology & Digital	8,490	2,110
Construction & Trades	3,600	700
Creative & Media	8,420	2,180
Delivery & Storage	3,320	670
Emergency & Uniform Services	230	10
Engineering & Maintenance	3,900	470
Environment & Land	2,140	360
Government Services	290	30
Healthcare	4,360	570
Home Services	800	80
Hospitality & Food	7,530	1,030
Law & Legal	260	90
Managerial	830	120
Manufacturing	2,650	600
Retail & Sales	17,120	3,680
Science & Research	450	80
Social Care	2,880	270
Sports & Leisure	2,350	410
Teaching & Education	4,720	760
Transport	400	40
Travel & Tourism	310	40

SECTOR	JOBS ADVERTISED	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
--------	-----------------	--------------------

Figures may not add up to provided totals due to rounding. 1,000 non-grant funded jobs are included in Jobs Advertised but not included under Jobs Started. Total jobs started includes those which have been completed or ended early.

■ Pensions: Personal Savings

Christian Wakeford: [\[900040\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the effect of pension auto-enrolment on levels of retirement savings among people in Bury South constituency.

Guy Opperman:

In Bury South, 10,000 employees now have an automatically enrolled workplace pension, saving 8% per annum and I would encourage more to do the same.

■ Poverty

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[900017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative assessment she has made of the effect on trends in the level of poverty among young parents of those in receipt of (a) universal credit and (b) legacy benefits.

Will Quince:

It is not possible to make meaningful comparisons between universal credit and legacy benefit claimants due to differences in the size, and composition of these caseloads.

Anyone on legacy benefits, who feels they would be better off on UC, can make a new claim to UC.

The Government encourages anybody to go on GOV.UK and use one of the independent benefit calculators to check carefully their eligibility, because on applying for Universal Credit, their entitlement to legacy benefits will cease and they will not be able to return to them in the future.

■ Poverty: Children

Ellie Reeves: [\[900015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress her Department has made on tackling child poverty.

Debbie Abrahams: [\[900018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress her Department has made on tackling child poverty.

Will Quince:

Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to protect incomes, including additional spending of over £7.4 billion last year, to strengthen welfare support for people of working age.

The evidence shows having parents in work is the most effective way of tackling child poverty, which is why we have invested £407 billion in protecting jobs throughout the pandemic, and why we are spending over £30 billion on a comprehensive plan for jobs to help people back into work

■ Poverty: Coronavirus**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[900019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on trends in the level of poverty among single-parent families.

Will Quince:

We have strengthened the welfare system, spending £7.4 billion on measures such as the Universal Credit uplift, on top of additional support such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

We have built on this extra support through the introduction of our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, now running to the 20th June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, backed by £220 million, has already provided support during the Easter holidays this year, and will continue to do so during the summer and Christmas holidays.

■ Public and Commercial Services Union**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has met representatives of the Public and Commercial Services Union since her appointment as Secretary of State.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has not personally held meetings with Public and Commercial Services Union.

However, officials from her Department continue to meet with PCS representatives on a regular basis.

■ Sign Language**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government has taken to legally recognise British Sign Language.

Sarah Olney:

[\[398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if the Government will recognise British Sign Language as an official language.

Justin Tomlinson:

On 18 March 2003 the UK government formally recognised that British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own right. Provision for accessing services by users of BSL are covered by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Existing equality legislation already means employers, service providers and public bodies have to provide services in BSL and other formats when it is reasonable to do so. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the needs of all those with protected characteristics.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**

Helen Hayes:

[\[813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of providing a £20 per week uplift to legacy benefits.

Mims Davies:

There are no plans to extend the temporary Universal Credit uplift to legacy benefits, and Parliament has voted to bring an end to legacy benefits in Great Britain. Natural migration to Universal Credit (UC) is required when a person needs to claim new support because of a change of circumstances.

Claimants on legacy benefits can voluntarily make a claim for UC if they believe that they will be better off. Claimants considering making a claim should check carefully their eligibility and entitlements under UC before applying, as legacy benefits will end when claimants submit their UC claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future. For this reason, prospective claimants are signposted to independent benefits calculators on GOV.UK. They can also get help through the government funded Help to Claim scheme as well as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Citizens Advice Scotland.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Disability**

Helen Hayes:

[\[812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish a timeline for publication of the Green Paper on Disability Benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

Given the necessary focus on the departmental response to Covid-19, we are working to a longer timescale than previously anticipated. We are continuing engagement with disabled people and their representatives and plan to publish the formal consultation document in the coming months.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Gordon Henderson: [\[900037\]](#)

What steps she is taking to ensure that assessments for health and disability benefits are conducted safely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

In March 2020, to ensure safety, we paused face-to-face assessments and assessed through paper-based review, telephone and video assessments. Working with providers and the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, we developed guidance to ensure the re-opening of assessment centres and resumption of face-to-face assessments can be conducted safely. Face-to-face will initially be for claimants unable to be assessed through other means.

■ Universal Credit

Helen Hayes: [\[815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the progress of the managed migration pilot for universal credit.

Will Quince:

The Pilot remains suspended as the Department continues to focus on delivering its part of the Government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Universal Credit (Managed Migration Pilot and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019 allow the Department to pilot moving claimants to Universal Credit from legacy benefits. Prior to its suspension, the emphasis of the pilot was not to focus on the number of people moved, but to assist with developing the design of the Move to UC service and its processes, to provide the best possible support for claimants who are moved to Universal Credit.

Suzanne Webb: [\[900028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support is available to people claiming universal credit for the first time to help ensure that they receive their first payment (a) on time and (b) in full.

Will Quince:

The Department has ensured high levels of payment timeliness with over 90% of new claims paid in full and on time as of October 2020; an increase from 88% in March 2020.

People receive support quickly, through the Universal Credit helpline and online. Additionally, we have provided funding to Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland, to deliver tailored and practical support to people making a claim to Universal Credit and receive their first full correct payment on time. This support has been bolstered by the announcement of a further 12 months of funding this year for Help to Claim.

Beth Winter: [\[919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the £20 uplift in universal credit on trends in the number of claimants using food banks.

Beth Winter: [\[920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) food poverty and (b) levels of food bank usage in Cynon Valley.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Food banks are independent charitable organisations and there is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level. Throughout this pandemic, this Government has delivered an unprecedented package of support to protect jobs and businesses alongside injecting billions into the welfare system.

We take the issue of food insecurity seriously, which is why we added internationally used food security questions to the Family Resources Survey in 19/20 and published the data in March this year. Food insecurity data from the Family Resources survey for 20/21 is not yet available. Data is not collected at constituency level.

■ Universal Credit: Appeals

Beth Winter: [\[917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of universal credit claimants have had their claim accepted at appeal following an initial rejection in (a) Cynon Valley, (b) Wales and (c) the UK in 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Universal Credit: Disqualification

Beth Winter: [\[918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit sanctions have been administered for failure to comply with work claimant commitments due to complying with covid-19 self-isolation requirements in (a) Cynon Valley, (b) Wales, and (c) the UK.

Mims Davies:

The information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Claimants who have been advised to self-isolate will not be required to conduct any work related activity outside the home but they may be required to complete work-related activity that it is safe and reasonable to do in their circumstances. Where a

claimant has failed to meet their requirements, we will look at any evidence of good reason, including whether they are self-isolating, when considering if a sanction is warranted.

■ **Universal Credit: Young People**

Alison McGovern:

[697]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the projected number of universal credit claimants aged 16-24 in each year for which that data has been projected.

Will Quince:

The Department does not have a projection.

Actual data on the number of people on UC is available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml>

Total UC caseload forecast can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2021>

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ NHS Test and Trace: Fraud

Justin Madders:

[\[305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent fraud in supply chains of mini umbrella companies employing workers engaged in NHS Test and Trace services.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 May 2021. The correct answer should have been:

Nadhim Zahawi Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not currently hold validated information on cancellations made by the National Booking System. Information regarding the reason for cancellation is not required or requested to cancel an appointment.

We are monitoring and reviewing specific fraud risks arising as a result of COVID-19, including in mini umbrella companies. We are developing advice on fraud prevention measures within our extensive supply chain.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS29\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy having drawn an advance from the contingencies fund totalling £3,380,663,000 to enable expenditure on Covid-19 support packages for business to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act.

The funding is required for the Restart Grant scheme.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £3,380,663,000 will be sought in a Main Estimate for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £3,380,663,000 has been met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advance will be repaid upon receiving the Supply and Appropriation Act.

■ Use of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for Coronavirus related assistance

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS30\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Hon. Members to bring to their attention spend under the Industrial Development Act 1982. In addition to the obligation to report on spend under the Industrial Development Act annually, the Coronavirus Act 2020 created a new quarterly reporting requirement for spend which has been designated as coronavirus-related under the Coronavirus Act. This statement fulfils that purpose.

The statement also includes a report of the movement in contingent liability during the quarter. Hon. Members will wish to note that measures such as Local Authority grants, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, and tax measures such as the suspension of Business Rates are not provided under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and hence are not included below.

This report covers the fourth quarter of 2020, from 1 October to 31 December 2020, in accordance with the Coronavirus Act. It also covers, for the first time, coronavirus-related spending of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

The Written Ministerial Statement covering the third quarter of 2020 was published on 9 March 2021.

Spend under the Coronavirus Act 2020

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, there is a requirement to lay before Parliament details of the amount of assistance designated as Coronavirus related provided in each relevant

quarter. In the period from 1 October to 31 December 2020, the following expenditures were incurred:

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT FROM 1 OCTOBER TO 31 DECEMBER 2020, INCLUDING EXPENDITURE BY DEFRA IN EARLIER QUARTERS NOT PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED.	£ 957,000,978
---	---------------

All expenditure of assistance provided by Her Majesty's Government from 25 March 2020	£ 1,651,946,560
---	-----------------

Expenditure by Department

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE FROM 1 OCTOBER TO 31 DECEMBER 2020 PROVIDED BY:

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	£ 943,967,558
Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, including expenditure in earlier quarters not previously notified	£ 13,033,420

First inclusion of Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs spend under the Coronavirus Act 2020

Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, there is a requirement to lay before Parliament details of the amount of assistance designated as Coronavirus related provided in each relevant quarter. This requirement is fulfilled by the table below. Expenditure by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs is being included for the first time within this fourth quarter report.

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD & RURAL AFFAIRS IN 2020, BY QUARTER

First quarter 2020 (1 January – 31 March)	NIL
Second quarter 2020 (1 April – 30 June)	£ 9,179,062
Third quarter 2020 (1 July – 30 September)	£ 2,532,544
Fourth quarter 2020	£ 1,321,814

ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED
BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD
& RURAL AFFAIRS IN 2020, BY QUARTER

(1 October – 31 December)

Total reported for the first time in this fourth quarter report £ 13,033,420

Contingent liability under the Coronavirus Act 2020

CONTINGENT LIABILITY OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED
BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FROM 1 OCTOBER
TO 31 DECEMBER 2020 £ 11,746,523,334

All contingent liability of assistance provided by the Secretary of State from 25 March 2020 £ 61,188,652,244

CABINET OFFICE

■ The UK's Emergency Alerts Service: Our way of warning you when lives are in danger

Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt):

[\[HCWS33\]](#)

The Government will introduce a new Emergency Alerts service across the UK later this summer as part of the Government's continued work to improve our resilience in the event of emergencies. Emergency Alerts would inform people of serious emergencies, either nationally or in their local area, which could affect them by broadcasting information directly to their mobile phones.

Emergency Alerts would only be used to warn and inform the public in emergency situations when lives are at risk. It is anticipated that this could include public health emergencies, severe floods, fires, industrial incidents and terror attacks.

Messages will always include details of the impacted area, situation, actions for people to take and a link to further information not transmittable in the alert message such as maps and images. This capability is already used around the world in countries such as the United States, New Zealand and Canada, and has been shown to help save lives.

Ahead of introduction, the Government is working in partnership with the devolved administrations to ensure that all relevant emergency responders across the United Kingdom have access to the capability.

The Government is also working with the charity and voluntary sector to ensure that the needs of the elderly, vulnerable, young people and those with disabilities are fully considered as the new service is delivered.

The new service will be secure. Alerts can only be sent by authorised Governmental and Emergency Services users. Emergency Alerts cause the phone to vibrate and emit a unique noise making them both difficult to ignore, and mimic or spoof. Emergency Alerts are broadcast from cell towers in the vicinity of an emergency, meaning that no personal data is collected and the service will never be used for commercial purposes. As part of its development, there will be a series of public trials of the system where we will send out live test alerts to the phones of people in Suffolk (25 May 2021) and Reading (15 June 2021).

Should the public trials prove successful, the Government will send out a National Welcome Message to the whole of the UK later this year.

During the pandemic, the Government communicated direct to the public via text message when we asked people to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives. This new alert builds on that capability, but by broadcasting from cell towers, the new Emergency Alerts messages would be quicker and delivered instantaneously to all recipients.

Public testing will allow us to check the effectiveness of the system and ensure that members of the public are familiar with the new system and know what to do should they receive an alert in future. There will be localised public information campaigns ahead of each test to inform people about the look and feel of the alert and what they should do when they receive it. There will also be a nationwide public information campaign ahead of the full national launch of this new capability.

To ensure that as many people as possible receive Emergency Alerts in future, we would encourage people to make sure that their phones have the latest manufacturer's software updates downloaded.

HOME OFFICE

■ Appointment of the Forensic Science Regulator

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): [\[HCWS31\]](#)

I am today announcing arrangements for the appointment of the Forensic Science Regulator. Following an open competition conducted in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, I have decided to appoint Gary Pugh OBE. He is a forensic scientist who has previously held a number of senior leadership posts in forensic science in the UK, including the Director of Forensic Services in the Metropolitan Police Service and leader of national governance boards and operations. His 3-year term of appointment has commenced on 16th May.

This appointment comes at an opportune moment, with the Forensic Science Regulator Act receiving Royal Assent last month. This means that for the first time the Regulator will have statutory powers to help drive up quality standards in forensic science.

I should like to record the government's appreciation of the former Regulator, Dr Gillian Tully CBE, for her contribution towards the regulation of quality in Forensic Science in England and Wales.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Rough Sleeping Initiative update

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): **[HCWS34]**

On Saturday, the Government announced the allocation of an additional £203 million to 210 areas (representing 281 local authorities) across England to tackle rough sleeping and provide support for people living on the streets. No one should have to sleep rough and that is why the Government has committed to ending rough sleeping. The Rough Sleeping Initiative is a key part of that mission.

The allocations can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-initiative-2021-to-2022-funding-allocations>

Rough Sleeping

During the last 12 months we took unprecedented steps to protect rough sleepers from the pandemic and in the longer-term. By the end of January, we had supported over 37,000 people since the pandemic began, with over 11,000 people currently being supported in emergency accommodation and over 26,000 already moved on into settled and supported accommodation. Figures published in February show that the number of people sleeping on our streets on a single night in Autumn fell by 37% compared to the previous year.

This is a significant achievement, but our work continues, and we are proud to confirm allocations for the fourth year of this flagship programme.

Rough Sleeping Initiative 2021/22

The Government is announcing a total of £203 million of funding through the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2021/22. I am pleased to tell colleagues that this is an 81% increase from the £112 million provided last year.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative, initially launched in March 2018, seeks to reduce the levels of rough sleeping by working with local authorities to provide specialist services, tailored to local circumstances, to help vulnerable people off the streets. To date the programme has been a success, with a 2018 impact evaluation finding that there was a 32% reduction in rough sleeping in areas which received the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding in 2018/19, compared to the number it would have been had the Rough Sleeping Initiative not been in place.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative 2021/22 will build on past successes, providing ongoing support to those who need it and a route into settled accommodation. This year, it will

also provide additional resource to continue supporting work to protect people sleeping rough from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's Rough Sleeping Initiative has expanded to cover 281 local authorities in England, an increase from the 270 authorities funded in 2020/21. It will provide funding for 14,500 bed spaces and 2,700 full time equivalent staff to deliver interventions to support those on the street, as well as helping local authorities and other providers transition to longer term preventative support.

Saturday's funding announcement is just one part of the £750 million that this Government will be spending this financial year on homelessness and rough sleeping, and demonstrates our continued commitment to end rough sleeping.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ **Safe To Be Me: A Global Equality Conference on LGBT Rights**

Minister for Women and Equalities (Elizabeth Truss):

[\[HCWS32\]](#)

The UK is a global leader for equality at home and abroad, driven by a fierce belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to succeed at whatever they wish to do and to love whoever they want to love. We proudly support, defend and champion the rights of LGBT people all around the world.

Now, more than ever, is an important time for us to come together and build back a better world, one where all LGBT people feel safe.

That is why the UK Government will deliver its first ever global LGBT rights conference. Safe To Be Me: A Global Equality Conference will take place from 27 to 29 June 2022, marking the 50th anniversary of the first London Pride.

The conference will bring together countries, international civil society and businesses to improve the rights and freedoms of LGBT people around the world. We will address three key challenges: supporting decriminalisation and legislative reform to advance equality and legal protections for LGBT people globally, tackling violence and discrimination, and improving access to public services.

The event brings together two ongoing international commitments the UK holds: co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition alongside Argentina from 2019-2022, and hosting the Council of Europe's European LGBTI Focal Points Network Annual Forum alongside Cyprus.

We will be organising a series of virtual events that bring together our key international partners, starting with an event on 18 May 2021 to mark this year's International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT). The 2021 IDAHOT+ Forum will be an important moment to discuss a range of important issues including LGBT-inclusive healthcare and business advocacy. It will also be the beginning of a year-long partnership with Cyprus, our friend in Europe and the Commonwealth.

Additionally, as co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition, the UK and Argentina will launch the first Strategy of the Equal Rights Coalition, and its Five-Year Implementation Plan, at a virtual meeting in July this year. This comprehensive strategy will increase international action to advance freedom and defend the rights of LGBT people. We want to ensure that everyone can live their lives free from the discrimination and violence that persists today.

To drive this work the Prime Minister has appointed Lord Herbert of South Downs as his Special Envoy on LGBT rights. In this role, Lord Herbert will champion LGBT rights in the UK and abroad.

The Government is committed to ensuring that LGBT people can be safe and free to live their lives as they wish, here at home and supporting them around the world. These events will be the next important step to ensuring we build a world where it is truly Safe To Be Me.