



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 May 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:33 P.M., 18 May 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Animal Experiments: Surveys**

Grahame Morris:

[\[1041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish an update to the Public Attitudes to Animal Research survey last published in 2019.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government understands the importance of this research; the Department is working to ensure that this survey can be undertaken and the results published as soon as possible.

■ **Belt and Road Initiative: China**

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[1109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what role his Department has in the Belt and Road Initiative Strategic Oversight Board; who the primary lead is for that Board; what the objectives are of that board; who attends meetings of that board and in what capacity; which other (a) Government departments and (b) external individuals attend meetings of that board; how often such meetings take place; who the lead Minister is of those meetings; and whether the board Minutes are published online.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Strategic Oversight Board is a cross-Government coordination mechanism led by senior Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) officials. Other departments represented on the Board at senior civil service level include HM Treasury, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Department for International Trade (DIT), the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and the Cabinet Office. Through the Board, the FCDO ensures that other departments considering engagement with projects associated with the BRI are aware of the wider spectrum of UK interests, the strategic context, and priorities such as adherence to international standards. This applies to both engagement with specific BRI projects and to Government activities intended to influence the BRI at a more systemic level. BEIS representatives have attended regarding China's climate influence through the BRI. The Board meets quarterly or as required. Minutes are not published, reflecting normal practice for internal meetings between civil servants. There are no external or Ministerial attendees.

■ Biofuels: Subsidies

Ed Davey:

[\[978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to redirect biomass subsidies to solar and wind.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

This Government has a long tradition of supporting clean electricity, and we have announced ambitious plans to support up to 12GW capacity of renewable electricity in the next allocation round of the Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme, which would be double what was secured in the previous round.

The Government announced in March 2020 that onshore wind and solar projects will be able to bid for contracts in the next CfD allocation round, which is planned to open in December this year. The scheme has already awarded contracts to around 800MW of onshore wind and solar capacity combined.

We recently announced that coal-to-biomass conversions will be excluded from future CfD allocation rounds. This means there will be no new coal-to-biomass conversions under the scheme. We have no plans to remove support for biomass conversions prior to 2027 for generating stations that are already supported under the Renewables Obligation and CfD schemes.

In the Government's response to the Climate Change Committee's annual progress report to Parliament, we announced that we will publish a new Biomass Strategy in 2022. This strategy will review what amount of sustainable biomass could be available to the UK and how this resource could be best utilised across the economy to help eliminate the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Caroline Lucas:

[\[188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to support the recent decision of the United States Administration to support a temporary suspension of intellectual property rights for covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Solloway:

We are engaging constructively with the US and other WTO members on the TRIPS waiver issue. Any negotiations in the WTO on a waiver will require unanimous support, which could take a significant amount of time. Whilst we engage in the IP discussions, we must continue to push ahead with action such as voluntary licensing agreements for vaccines and support for COVAX.

■ Housing: Energy

Dawn Butler:

[\[1024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to support low income families that are unable to afford green

energy improvements to make their homes energy efficient and contribute to the Government's net zero target.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government has recently published a strategy, *Sustainable Warmth – supporting vulnerable households in England*, which sets out our plans to support fuel poor households in more detail.

As of 2019, there are 1.2 million fewer low-income households living in the least energy efficient homes (Band E, F or G) compared to 2010. There are a number of Government schemes which make funding available to support low-income families make their homes energy efficient.

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a GB-wide scheme currently worth around £640m per year, which provides energy efficiency and heating measures to low income and vulnerable households. We have committed to expanding ECO from 2022 to 2026 to a value of £1bn per year.

The Government is investing £1.3 billion in energy efficiency, up from the £1 billion announced in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan. The Green Homes Grant (Voucher) low-income scheme had issued 26,281 vouchers by the end of March, worth over £156 million. We have also provided support for Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery and for Social Housing – £500 million worth of works is already being delivered and additional funding will be disbursed this summer.

The Home Upgrade Grant has been allocated an initial £150 million to specifically support low-income households with energy efficiency and low carbon heating upgrades to the worst-performing off-gas-grid homes in England. The Home Upgrade Grant is due to commence delivery in early 2022.

We recently consulted on strengthening the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards for private landlords. These new standards would require landlords to invest up to £10,000 towards improving their property to energy efficiency Band C, or register an exemption. For social housing, the Government has also invited experts to review whether the Decent Homes Standard should be refreshed.

In addition to help with energy efficiency measures, over 2 million households get direct assistance with their energy bills through the Warm Home Discount. We have committed to expanding that scheme from 2022 to 2026 so that it will reach around 3 million households across Great Britain.

■ **Life Sciences: Research**

Rachael Maskell:

[355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating funding to the charity-led Life Sciences Charity Partnership Fund.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government recognise that this is a particularly difficult time for medical research charities, given the impact of COVID-19 on their fundraising activities.

We appreciate the globally recognised expertise of these charities, and the substantial contributions they make to our world-leading life sciences sector.

The Government already provides significant funding to charities' research, for example through Research England's Quality Related (QR) charity support funding. This year charity QR will amount to £204m, to support charity funded research in universities in England and equivalent support is provided in Scotland through devolved funding arrangements.

The Government has demonstrated its ambitions for research by committing £14.9bn to R&D in 2021/22. This funding will support the life sciences sector within which medical research charities operate alongside other research areas.

BEIS and DHSC regularly discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on charity-funded research with the Association of Medical Research Charities in order to review how we might provide support for medical research charities this financial year.

■ Photographs: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[1184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the travel photography industry.

Paul Scully:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to keep as many business sectors open as we can to protect the economy, whilst delicately balancing the need to protect the NHS and save lives. The Department engages regularly with business representatives, stakeholders and local partners to understand the impact of Covid-19 across all sectors of the economy.

In addition, the Government has provided an unprecedented package of support to businesses and individuals affected by the pandemic, including those in the travel photography industry. This support includes grants, loans, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, the trade credit insurance guarantee and tax deferrals.

■ Post Office**James Wild:**[\[1209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will list the (a) dates and (b) attendees of all meetings held between Ministers and Post Office Limited from 2010 to 2015.

Paul Scully:

Departments publish quarterly details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations on GOV.UK. In July 2016 the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) replaced the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Details of ministerial meetings for the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills from 2010 to 2015 are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bis-quarterly-publications-april-to-june-2012>.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Elections: Proof of Identity**

Cat Smith: [1106]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the roll out of Voter ID for a local election.

Cat Smith: [1107]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Government's plans to introduce Voter ID, whether a voter's photographic ID will need to match the address where they are registered to vote in order to be valid.

Cat Smith: [1108]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if his Department will publish the full cost of the photographic identification research carried out by IFF Research published on 31 March 2021.

Julia Lopez:

As legislation is brought forward to enable the national roll out of voter identification, appropriate impact assessments, which include information on costs, will be provided for Parliament in the normal way.

Showing identification to prove who they are is something people of all walks of life already do everyday. It is a reasonable and proportionate approach to extend this practice to voting and give the public confidence that their vote is theirs, and theirs alone.

■ Government Departments: Procurement

Debbie Abrahams: [1066]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what information his Department holds on how many (a) Government departments and (b) agencies and non-departmental bodies have regularly refused to use Project Bank Accounts in the last three years; and what the reasons were for not using such accounts.

Julia Lopez:

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

■ **Government Departments: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1121\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to develop a Government conference centre on York Central development site.

Julia Lopez:

The Government Property Agency recently studied the feasibility of locating a Government Conference Centre in York to provide an appropriate venue in the North of England to host international summits and conferences for the G7, G20 and Nato. An update will be provided in due course.

DEFENCE

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

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK military personnel are based in India.

James Heappey:

There are currently four UK military personnel permanently based in India. In addition, there are five other military personnel temporarily in India. Four of these are undergoing training on Indian courses, whilst one is a temporary member of staff supporting those personnel permanently based there.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for the Royal Navy to visit the Taiwan strait.

James Heappey:

The Royal Navy will next navigate the Taiwan Strait when navigationally expeditious to do so and in accordance with international law and operational requirements.

To preserve operational security, the Royal Navy does not discuss the specifics of the operational routings of ships in advance.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what long term military presence the UK will have in Afghanistan after the drawdown of troops from that country announced on 14 April 2021.

James Heappey:

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. No decisions have been made on any future presence.

Our support and training of Afghan institutions, including the National Directorate of Security, Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army has strengthened the ability of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) to counter security threats. That and other capacity-building work are aimed at increasing the self-reliance of Afghan forces in the fight against terrorism and other threats. Despite significant challenges, Afghan forces have led security in Afghanistan since 2014.

■ Armed Forces: Overseas Aid

Steve Double:

[327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what contribution the armed forces have made towards the delivery of humanitarian relief and other forms of overseas aid in the last three years.

James Heappey:

Defence assets are regularly used to facilitate transport of UK emergency relief to countries impacted by natural disasters. The delivery of emergency aid to the Caribbean following Hurricanes Iota (2020) and Dorian (2019) and to Mozambique (2019) following Cyclone Idai are just few of many examples of the military's contribution to global disaster relief efforts.

In support to the FCDO's International aid programme, Official Development Assistance (ODA), Defence has also facilitated the transportation of humanitarian aid to ODA eligible countries, such as vital UK aid to refugees on the Turkey-Syria border in 2020.

British military overseas activity in response to COVID-19 falls under Operation Broadshare. Over the last year Defence has been vital in transporting vaccines and medical equipment to affected British overseas territories and UK overseas military bases. Defence continues to support the COVID response in other nations where appropriate.

■ Astute Class Submarines

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress has been made on the (a) building, (b) handover and (c) seaworthiness of the Astute class submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the (a) build completion and (b) operational capability for each of the astute class submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

Astute submarines HMS ASTUTE, HMS AMBUSH, and HMS ARTFUL are in service with the Royal Navy. HMS AUDACIOUS was handed over to the Royal Navy in April 2020 and is currently undertaking sea trials.

ANSON, AGAMEMNON, and AGINCOURT are in various stages of build at the BAE Systems shipyard in Barrow-in-Furness, with ANSON having been successfully launched in April 2021.

■ **China: Warships**

Jim Shannon:

[\[727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of China's three new naval vessels; and what steps he is taking to support the UK's interests in the Pacific Ocean.

James Heappey:

We continue to watch closely the rapid growth in Chinese naval capabilities and their impact on the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

China is set to have as many as five aircraft carriers by 2030, as well as four light helicopter carriers and is supported by growing fleet of high-class cruiser destroyers, which are the world's most capable surface ships. This allows China to conduct operations from increased range and project influence further into the Pacific and beyond, potentially restricting freedom of movement for UK and allied vessels. This has been enhanced by China's construction of fortified military bases on contested islands and enormous investment in anti-ship missiles.

The Indo-Pacific is at the centre of global economic growth, and a region of increasing geostrategic importance; it is the fastest-growing economic region in the world, a crucial transit point for global trade and home to a number of UK allies and trading partners.

The UK has a range of enduring security interests in the region and many important bilateral defence relationships. The Carrier Strike Group 21 deployment is a sign of the UK's commitment to upholding international peace and security to ensure the prosperity of the UK and of our partners in the region. The deployment demonstrates the UK's state of the art capabilities, able to operate worldwide; no nation should feel antagonised.

Our approach to the Indo Pacific region will of course take account of regional dynamics including China's role and our partners and allies' investment in the region. But our wide-ranging relationships with partners and allies across this region also

stand in their own right as a broad, positive, long term set of priorities for UK investment and engagement.

■ Chinook Helicopters: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [1008]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK jobs will be created through the purchase of 14 new extended-range Chinook helicopters; and what assessment his Department has made of the social value attributed to that purchase.

Mr Kevan Jones: [1009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the purchase of 14 extended-range Chinook helicopters.

Jeremy Quin:

The acquisition of 14 Chinook H-47 Extended-Range helicopters assures Chinook operations to at least 2050, securing UK jobs both during aircraft manufacture and for long-term support. The UK workshare for every Chinook manufactured is estimated between 3-6% of unit value. In addition to Boeing Defence UK, other UK located suppliers include BAE, Collins UK, L3 Harris and Fujitsu.

The cost to the public purse for the purchase of the aircraft is £1,478.387 million.

■ Defence Equipment: Contracts

John Healey: [991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish guidance on social value in defence equipment contracts.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) procurement decision-making processes continue to be based on HM Treasury's Green Book framework. This ensures that all relevant costs and benefits to UK society are considered when undertaking procurement and project appraisal, thereby reflecting the totality of impacts on UK society overall, referred to as social value.

In September 2020, the Cabinet Office published Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/20 requiring additional social value benefits to be explicitly evaluated in all central government procurement (where the requirements are relevant and proportionate) rather than just 'considered' as previously required. The Social Value Model set out in the PPN requires a minimum of 10% of the total tender evaluation weighting to be allocated to specific social value criteria.

The application of the Social Value Model has been required from 1 January 2021 for all procurements under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 this has included a number of tenders conducted by the Ministry of Defence. From the 1st June 2021, the MOD will extend this to include all procurements under the Defence and Security Public Contract Regulations 2011.

The MOD will continue to follow the guidance provided in PPN 06/20, setting out how to take account of social value in the award of contracts by using the Social Value Model. Further information can be accessed on the gov.uk website at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0620-taking-account-of-social-value-in-the-award-of-central-government-contracts

■ Electronic Warfare: Private Sector

John Healey:

[988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department has taken to strengthen links with private businesses to improve their cyber defences and capabilities from attacks by hostile state and non-state actors.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) works with key industry partners in the Defence Cyber Protection Partnership (DCPP) to improve the cyber security and resilience of the defence supply chain. The DCPP Cyber Security Model sets out a proportionate approach to cyber risk in line with the MOD information used by suppliers, and specifies related controls. These controls build on the National Cyber Security Centre's Cyber Essentials scheme, adding higher levels of cyber security depending upon the risk. The process is mandated for all MOD contracts and is followed down the supply chain. In addition, MOD works with other government departments and with industry bodies to highlight the importance of cyber defence and resilience to businesses of all sizes.

■ Electronic Warfare: Training

John Healey:

[987]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 41 of the Integrated Review 2021, what steps have been taken to invest in an integrated education and training system for the UK's cyber ecosystem to maximise the UK's cyber capabilities.

James Heappey:

As part of the Government's commitment to strengthen the UK's cyber ecosystem, Defence is investing heavily in training and educating our workforce, and making this activity available cross-government where applicable. This includes the development of a Defence Cyber Academy which will significantly increase our current teaching capacity, build stronger links with other bodies including the newly-established UK Cyber Security Council and embed common standards aligned with industry and academia. The development of our people will be underpinned by the Defence Cyber Competency Framework and supported by a suite of Cyber Virtual Environments on which to train and exercise both internally and externally with our cross-government partners.

■ Espionage: Internet**Andrew Rosindell:****[100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of reports that British officials are being targeted for recruitment by hostile states using online recruitment platforms.

James Heappey:

We aim, through our Personnel Security Strategy, to continuously build a security conscious organisation where staff understand the spectrum of evolving threats, including the potential to be targeted for recruitment by hostile states using online recruitment platforms. We take our responsibilities in this area seriously, and leverage a variety of methods to keep the Department and its people safe, and to fulfil our mission to safeguard national security. These include delivering security training, maintaining a strong internal security culture, recognising signs of people risk through comprehensive oversight, and delivering a range of support and guidance to staff to keep them aware of the latest threats. Moreover, the Department makes use of specific cross-HMG programmes such as 'Think Before You link' <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/security-campaigns/think-you-link> and has introduced a Cyber Confident programme to improve awareness of the Cyber threat, to help personnel spot potential targeting from hostile states and act appropriately if this occurs.

■ Marines: Employment**John Healey:****[984]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Integrated Review, what the workforce requirement is for the Royal Marines in (a) 2021, (b) 2024 and (c) 2030.

James Heappey:

No decisions have been made on the future size of the Royal Marines. As the Royal Marines transition into the Future Commando Force and turn to new upgraded and autonomous capabilities, there is the potential for the workforce structure to change in the future.

■ National Cyber Force: Staff**John Healey:****[986]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel will be employed by the new National Cyber Force.

James Heappey:

We do not comment on exact figures for national security reasons. We are investing in our recruitment, including our recruitment pipelines. We are creating dedicated cyber career pathways to build a world-class workforce.

■ Radioactive Waste: Dalgety Bay

Deidre Brock:

[\[1097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 15 April 2019 to Question 241447 on Radioactive Waste: Dalgety Bay, whether the first stage of the remediations has been completed; and whether the second stage remains on target to be completed in 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The first stage of the remediation work has not been completed; however work is underway on the site, following the granting of a licence by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, which was granted on 17 May 2021.

The target remains to complete all work by September 2022.

■ Type 26 Frigates: Procurement

Luke Pollard:

[\[844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of gearbox delays on the timescale for the Type 26 construction programme.

Luke Pollard:

[\[845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what effect delays to the Type 26 gearbox for HMS Glasgow and HMS Cardiff will have on the build programme for those ships

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 April 2021, to Question number 184544.

Attachments:

1. 184544 - Type 26 Frigates [184544 - Type 26 Frigates.docx]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Robert Largan:

[\[548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals to expand the Dormant Assets Scheme.

Matt Warman:

On 11 May, the State Opening of Parliament took place and the Queen's Speech set out the Government's agenda for the next session. It was announced that the Dormant Assets Bill is set to be introduced in the Second Session of Parliament, and on 12 May the Bill had its first reading in the House of Lords.

Once legislation has achieved Royal Assent, the speed at which it can be implemented and new funds will become available is dependent on regulator and industry readiness, as well as their voluntary participation in the Scheme. We

anticipate that the estimated £880 million to be unlocked through the expansion of the Scheme will take several years to be released.

Robert Largan: [\[550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how his Department took the decision to define dormancy as it has under the Dormant Assets Scheme in light of the use by the finance industry of the broader definition of unclaimed assets.

Matt Warman:

The Dormant Assets Bill, introduced to the House of Lords on 12th May, will enable the Dormant Assets Scheme to accept a wider range of dormant assets – expanding from bank and building society accounts to include certain assets in the insurance and pensions, investment and wealth management, and securities sectors.

Scheme expansion has been led by industry, who have been instrumental in determining how this expansion would work in practice. The definitions of dormancy used for the expanded Scheme have been tailored to each asset class, based on existing practice and relevant regulations within each sector.

The Bill also introduces a new power for the Secretary of State or HM Treasury to expand the Scheme through secondary legislation in the future. This will enable the Scheme to build experience with managing new and complex asset classes before broadening the pool further. The government anticipates close engagement with industry if, and when, new assets are introduced to the Scheme under this power.

■ 5G: Infrastructure

Chi Onwurah: [\[1057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 132906 on 5G, what progress he has made on identifying opportunities to establish UK capability and skills in the telecoms supply chain.

Matt Warman:

We have been building upon the findings of the 5G Diversification Taskforce, which included specific recommendations on long-term research and investment opportunities in the UK. Our work is ongoing to better understand our existing capabilities and the needs of the telecoms sector across the entire ecosystem, including skills development. We remain committed to supporting UK suppliers, investing in R&D initiatives across the supply chain, and championing the exciting research underway across UK universities and regional advanced technology hubs.

■ Bank Services: Third Sector

Rachael Maskell: [\[356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to transfer assets residing in dormant accounts to the Community Trust Fund.

Matt Warman:

Following the government's commitment to expand the Dormant Assets Scheme, the Dormant Assets Bill was introduced to the House of Lords on Wednesday 12 May. This will enable the Dormant Assets Scheme to accept a wider range of dormant assets – expanding from bank and building society accounts to include certain assets in the insurance and pensions, investment and wealth management, and securities sectors.

The Government recognises the public interest in how this funding is spent in England, and has concluded that some increased flexibility in determining this would be beneficial. The Bill therefore amends the approach to restrictions in England in the 2008 Act to mirror the model used for the devolved administrations.

Subject to this measure passing, the Government will be launching a public consultation on the way that funds are spent in England to give people a say in how future funds are spent. The consultation will inform English expenditure only, and the current restrictions on initiatives focused on youth, financial inclusion, or social investment will continue until or unless a new order is made.

■ Food: Advertising**Richard Fuller:**[\[1038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on (a) businesses and (b) employment of the proposed advertising restrictions on products high in fat, sugar and salt.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Prime Minister has made it clear that tackling obesity is a priority for this Government. In July 2020 the Government outlined its Tackling Obesity strategy which details a host of measures aimed at empowering people to live the healthier lives they want to live.

The Government proposed various options for restricting HFSS advertising in the 2019 and 2020 consultations targeted at protecting children from being exposed to advertising of unhealthy food products.

Balanced against the priority of protecting children and tackling obesity, we have carefully considered the impact that any restrictions will have on industry and in particular the potential for market distortion or disproportionate effects on key business sectors.

The final policy will be set out in our consultation response due to be published shortly. This will be accompanied by a final impact assessment. We will support businesses, individuals and organisations to prepare for changes to the rules around HFSS advertising.

■ Football Index

Dawn Butler: [1019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government plans to launch an investigation into (a) the collapse of Football Index and (b) the Gambling Commission's regulation of Football Index.

Mr John Whittingdale:

DCMS will appoint an independent expert to conduct a review of the regulation of the Football Index gambling product and to make recommendations to government and the regulators. The review will take an objective look at the decisions and actions of the Gambling Commission and any other relevant regulatory bodies to provide a clear account of how the activities of its operator, BetIndex Ltd, were regulated, identify if there are potential areas for improvement, and inform our Review of the Gambling Act 2005. More information can be found in a Written Ministerial Statement on Regulation of Football Index, available at:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-04-20/hcws929>

■ LGB Alliance

John Nicolson: [777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has plans to assess whether the Charity Commission appropriately complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty in giving the LGB Alliance charitable status.

John Nicolson: [778]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the Charity Commission monitors the LGB Alliance's revised social media policy to ensure that it meets ethical standards under law.

Matt Warman:

As an independent regulator, the Charity Commission for England and Wales ("the Commission") is not subject to Ministerial or Government direction or control; it is accountable to the courts for its legal decisions.

The Commission has set out its decision to register the LGB Alliance in a detailed paper which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lgb-alliance/lgb-alliance-full-decision>

The Commission concluded that the LGB Alliance is established for exclusively charitable purposes, in accordance with the legal framework and based on the evidence received.

During the registration process, the Commission took account of guidance from the Government Equality Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which informed its consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty, and equality law issues.

The Commission's published decision addressed allegations that LGB Alliance unlawfully discriminates against transgender people under the Equality Act 2010.

The Commission's published decision is clear that no charity should undermine the rights of others in promoting the rights of one or more group. If any charity undertakes activity that gives rise to concerns about the denigration of human rights then the Commission will consider taking regulatory action. To the extent that matters considered by the Commission during the course of its registration case or in future constitute matters of regulatory concern, these will be addressed appropriately by the Commission in line with its risk and regulatory framework.

■ Telecoms Diversification Task Force

Chi Onwurah:

[1058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce has made on delivering its remit to date; and which UK regions have benefitted from investment through that Taskforce.

Matt Warman:

The Telecoms Diversification Taskforce was established to look at where the Government should target measures to ensure effective, accelerated and sustainable diversification. The Taskforce's findings and recommendations were published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and we are currently in the process of developing targeted measures to deliver our strategy, guided by these recommendations.

We will respond to the Taskforce findings, and outline our next steps on diversification in the summer. This will include outlining how we will use the initial investment, of up to £250 million, to deliver our key priorities and maximise benefits across the UK.

We remain committed to supporting UK suppliers, investing in R&D initiatives across the supply chain, and championing the exciting research underway in UK universities and regional advanced technology hubs. In Wales, for example, the Government is providing funding for the NEC NeutrORAN trial. The trial will establish a testbed for a multi-operator, neutral host solution in outdoor rural and urban environments, whilst using Open virtualised Radio Access Network (RAN) principles.

■ Wrecks

Tim Loughton:

[975]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government's policy on the management of heritage assets located beyond UK Territorial Waters but within the UK Marine Area includes the collation of detailed archaeological information derived from site surveys in addition to the monitoring of vessel movements in those waters; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinanage:

The Government monitors vessel movements in relation to selected heritage assets in the UK Marine Area if there is good reason for doing so. In addition, Historic

England - Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment - maintains a National Record of the Historic Environment. Through the implementation of its Heritage Information Access Strategy, Historic England is in the process of building on this by creating a National Marine Heritage Record that will collate details of heritage assets located in the region between Mean High Water and the 200 nautical mile sea limit.

EDUCATION

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Lee Anderson:

[444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support services are available for (a) children with autism and (b) the parents of those children.

Vicky Ford:

The Children and Families Act 2014 provides a framework for ensuring that autistic children are identified early and that they receive the support they need. The upcoming Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Review will look at how the system has evolved since 2014, and how it can be made to work best for all children and young people and their families.

The department is also working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to develop a refreshed cross-government autism strategy. This recognises the progress that has been made, as well as the challenges and priorities for reducing inequalities, and enabling autistic people of all ages to have the same opportunities as everyone else to lead healthy, happy and fulfilling lives. DHSC aims to publish the refreshed autism strategy, subject to COVID-19 pressures, this spring.

We also know how important expertise and training is for the workforce to give children with SEND, including autistic children, the best experiences in education. The department has funded the Autism Education Trust since 2011 to deliver autism awareness training in order to best support autistic students to education staff in early years, schools and further education settings.

The Children Act 1989 places a general duty on local authorities to provide services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need, including the provision of social care services for disabled children, as some autistic children would be considered disabled. The Equality Act 2010 carried forward existing protections against discrimination and extended a duty on schools to supply auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils as reasonable adjustments, where these children are not being supplied through education, health and care plans or other sources.

The Children and Families Act 2014 (Section 97) requires local authorities to assess and support the needs of parents and carers as well as those of children with SEND. Assessments are based on individual needs but should include parents' wellbeing and 'control over day-to-day life'. Further information is available here:

http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/media/948959/socialcare_implementationofcfa2014_online.pdf.

■ **Breakfast Clubs: Contracts for Services**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[1083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many organisations have expressed an interest in the Breakfast Clubs Programme Tender 2021-23.

Vicky Ford:

The Breakfast Clubs procurement remains ongoing. Therefore, we are unable to disclose this information at this time. These details will be made available upon conclusion of the procurement process, through Contract Award Notices via the usual channels.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Apprentices**

Chi Onwurah:

[716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support apprentices who have been furloughed who will potentially be unemployed and not in training when the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ends.

Gillian Keegan:

We have been committed to supporting apprentices and employers to safely continue with, and complete, their programmes throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. In recognition of the impact of COVID-19 we introduced a number of ongoing flexibilities to ensure that apprenticeships can continue where possible. This included making it possible for furloughed apprentices to continue their apprenticeships and undertake end-point assessments.

All apprentices have been able to return to onsite learning since 8 March. However, we recognise the need to continue to support apprentices that are at risk of or have been made redundant. We are committed to supporting redundant apprentices to find new opportunities and to continue and complete their apprenticeships wherever possible. In August 2020, we introduced the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices which provides clear, accessible advice and guidance to individuals on the impact of redundancy, their options and next steps.

As part of this service, we also launched a vacancy sharing scheme to help redundant apprentices find new apprenticeship opportunities with employers. We encourage employers to use this service to find redundant apprentices who may already have the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to hit the ground running and add considerable value to their business. An employer recruiting a redundant apprentice can receive a £3000 incentive payment, introduced as part of the government's Plan for Jobs.

We have also amended legislation to enable more apprentices to complete their apprenticeship in the event of redundancy. We will fund an apprentice's training to

completion if they have less than six months of their apprenticeship remaining, or if they have completed 75% or more of their apprenticeship at the point of redundancy.

We continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the apprenticeships programme to ensure that apprentices and employers are well supported. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the government's priority has always been to protect jobs and incomes, and the furlough scheme has protected 11.5 million jobs between March 2020 and 14 April 2021.

■ Curriculum: Litter

Emma Hardy: [417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to introduce information on the effects of littering into the curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

The National Curriculum already includes content regarding environmental and sustainability issues in both the science and geography curricula. For example, in primary science pupils are taught about how environments can change as a result of human actions. This could include teaching about the impact of litter on the environment, which schools can expand on should they wish to.

In citizenship, pupils are taught about the wider world and the interdependence of communities within it. Pupils are taught that resources can be allocated in different ways and that these economic choices affect individuals, communities and the sustainability of the environment.

Citizenship includes opportunities for pupils to undertake school and community-based volunteering, encouraging young people to come together to tackle the local issues they care about within school and in the wider community. Schools are expected to use their professional expertise and understanding of their pupils to develop the right approach for their particular school. Many schools do choose to teach pupils about the impact of litter, including helping pupils undertake volunteering, such as litter picking. The citizenship programmes of study are available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study>.

■ Education: Hearing Impaired

Andrew Rosindell: [1012]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that deaf children in education have access to fully qualified language and communication support professionals.

Vicky Ford:

I am determined that all children and young people, including those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, receive the support they need to succeed in their education.

Local authorities and schools are expected to commission appropriately qualified staff to meet local needs. The government have increased high needs funding for children and young people with the most complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), from £5 billion in 2013 to over £8 billion this year.

Children with sensory impairments in special schools, resourced provision or specialist units should have access to specialist provision to meet their needs. Those teaching classes of children with sensory impairment must hold an appropriate qualification, approved by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State. Teachers working in an advisory role to support such pupils should also hold the appropriate qualification.

Similarly, all mainstream schools should be able to access specialist teaching where this is considered necessary to particular children's progress, as well as specialist advice for their own teachers. To complement this, we have provided funding of over £8 million to the Whole School SEND Consortium since 2018, through our contract with nasen. It aims to equip the school workforce, particularly in mainstream settings, to deliver high quality teaching to children and young people with SEND. This includes children with hearing impairments as their primary need. The National Sensory Impairment Partnership are part of the Consortium.

■ **Government Departments: Bank Services**

Debbie Abrahams:

[1069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information he holds on the use of Project Bank Accounts by (a) his Department, (b) Government agencies his Department has responsibility for and (c) non-departmental bodies his Department has responsibility for.

Nick Gibb:

As set out in the Construction Playbook, the Department for Education (DfE) has committed to use Project Bank Accounts (PBAs) on its school construction projects unless there are compelling reasons not to. PBAs are just one way that government departments support fair payment as part of the Government's Prompt Payment Code.

DfE has considered the use of PBAs for school construction projects delivered through the DfE Construction Frameworks. However due to the specific nature, size and volume of DfE's school construction projects, the DfE has assessed that it is not practical, efficient and cost effective to use them on our construction projects. Therefore, there are compelling reasons not to deploy PBAs on DfE projects. Accordingly, the DfE does not hold any information on the use of PBAs for its school construction projects as the DfE does not currently use PBAs.

■ Nurseries: Closures

Rachael Maskell:

[1120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has he made of the effect of the closure of nurseries as a result of financial difficulties following the covid-19 outbreak on the sufficiency of available childcare.

Vicky Ford:

During the COVID-19 outbreak, providers have, like other businesses, been supported by the various business support packages put in place, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and the new Recovery Loan Scheme. Information on these schemes is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wages-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recovery-loan-scheme>. Childminders have been able to access support via the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and eligible nurseries have also been able to access a nurseries discount as part of business rates relief. Information on these is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme> and <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief/nurseries-discount>.

The most recently published results (wave 3) of the 'Survey of childcare and early years providers and coronavirus', published in March this year, set out that the majority of school-based providers (98%), group-based providers (96%), and childminders (89%) reported being open at the time of the survey being taken. This data is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers-and-coronavirus-covid-19-wave-3>.

We have not seen a significant number of parents unable to secure a childcare place this term, during the most recent lockdown in the spring term, or since early years settings re-opened fully on 1 June 2020. Where parents have been unable to temporarily secure a childcare place, for example due to their usual setting being temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this has been quickly resolved locally, and local authorities are not reporting sufficiency of supply issues. The next Ofsted statistical release on the number of childcare places is due to be published on 30 June 2021.

As a department, we engage with local authorities on accessibility of childcare on a regular basis. We continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate, and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

■ Overseas Students: Government Assistance

Nicola Richards:

[567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department has provided to international students studying in the UK during the covid-19 outbreak to help mitigate for

the diminished opportunities available to those students to undertake casual work alongside their studies.

Michelle Donelan:

The government recognises that the COVID-19 outbreak has had unparalleled impact on all elements of the global and UK economy, and this academic year has been difficult for all students.

To protect students at this unprecedented time, particularly those who may have been planning to undertake a part time job, 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 (HE) providers to draw on for this academic year, 2020/21.

Providers have flexibility in how they distribute this funding to their students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need. Support can include help for students, including international students and postgraduates, facing additional costs arising from having to maintain accommodation in more than one location or assistance to help students access teaching remotely.

The current measures aim to target support for students in greatest need, and we have been consistently clear that if an international student needs to request access to hardship funds through their provider due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, they can be confident in expressing these concerns to their provider without any impact on their immigration status.

The HE sector has also led some valuable work in this area. For example, Universities UK international published guidance for universities to support international students in financial hardship, and in March they wrote to all UK-based embassies to ensure international students are aware of the support available to them if required. This guidance is available here:

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/guidance-support-international-student-hardship-pandemic.aspx/>.

To further support students in finding work post-graduation, the department has worked with the HE sector to understand what more we can do to support graduates who are looking to enter the labour market at this challenging time. In response, we have developed the Graduate Employment and Skills Guide, which was published on Monday 10 May 2021 on the Office for Students website. The guide signposts graduates to public, private and voluntary sector opportunities, to help students build employability skills, gain work experience or enter the labour market, as well as providing links to further study options and resources on graduate mental health and wellbeing.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Tulip Siddiq:

[1144]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average early years funding rate given to local authorities in England was for (a) two year olds and (b) three and four year olds in (i) 2017-18, (ii) 2018-19, (iii) 2019-20, (iv) 2020-21 and (v) 2021-22.

Vicky Ford:

The table below shows the average early years hourly funding rate for 2 and 3 to 4 year olds.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
2 year old average hourly funding rate	£5.40	£5.40	£5.40	£5.48	£5.56
3 to 4 year old average hourly funding rate	£4.76	£4.75	£4.75	£4.83	4.88*

*The vast majority of local authorities have seen an increase in their 3 to 4 year old average hourly funding rate of 6p an hour in 2021-22. Due to rounding, this is represented by an increase from £4.83 to £4.88 in the overall national average.

Calculations for the 3 to 4 year old hourly funding rate exclude supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools, the disability access fund and the early years pupil premium. The 3 to 4 year old hourly funding rate is an average across both universal hours and additional hours entitlements. The average for the 3 to 4 year old hourly funding rate in 2017-18 has been adjusted to reflect the fact that the additional hours entitlement was introduced in September 2017.

For 2020-21 and 2021-22 the average hourly funding rates are provisional and will depend on future attendance.

Average rates can be calculated from dedicated schools grant tables which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2017-to-2018> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2018-to-2019> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2019-to-2020> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2020-to-2021> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2021-to-2022>.

■ Social Services: Disability

Tulip Siddiq:

[1145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that social care and support for disabled children and their families is included in the (a) the SEND review and (b) Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Vicky Ford:

Both Reviews are taking a holistic response to the issues that these 2 systems face.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Review has listened carefully to children, young people, families and partners across education, health and care, and will be publishing proposals for consultation focused on identifying and addressing issues earlier and preparing for fulfilled adulthood through every stage. These measures will not only improve children and young people's outcomes, and put them and their families at the heart of the SEND system, but they should deliver a SEND system fit for the future – high quality support, delivered affordably, and sustainable for the long term.

The Care Review is independent of the government with freedom to make recommendations based on the Reviewer's findings. The scope is broad and will look at the whole system of support, safeguarding, protection and care, and the child's journey into and out of that system. This will include children throughout their interaction with children's social care, from referral, Child in Need and Child Protection Plans, through to becoming Looked After. The review terms of reference set out the questions and themes the review will consider. The terms of reference can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/952624/terms_of_reference_independent_childrens_social_care_review.pdf.

Almost half of children in need within the children's social care system are children with SEND, so there is a significant overlap between these Reviews, but there will be opportunities for the 2 reviews to feed into each other's work.

■ Special Educational Needs: Barnsley Central

Dan Jarvis:

[1074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to increase the number of special educational needs and disabilities places in schools in the Barnsley Central constituency.

Vicky Ford:

The statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, including for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), sits with local authorities. We are supporting local authorities to fulfil this duty by investing £300 million in the 2021-22

financial year to support local authorities to deliver new places and improve existing provision for children with SEND or who require alternative provision.

On 9 April 2021 we announced that Barnsley has been allocated almost £1.5 million of this funding via its High Needs Provision Capital Allocation. It will be for Barnsley to determine how best to use this funding to address their local priorities and local authorities are free to work with any schools in their area.

This funding is on top of the £365 million we invested nationally through the Special Provision Capital Fund between the 2018-19 and 2020-21 financial years, and our continued investment in the free schools programme. We are also providing an increase in revenue funding for those children and young people with more complex needs, of nearly a quarter (24%) over 2 years, bringing the total high needs budget to more than £8 billion in the 2021-22 financial year.

Further funding for new high needs places will be subject to the outcomes of the next government spending review, where we will have a chance to consider how we can best support the sector in the round.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Munira Wilson:

[467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to publish guidance for universities on the return of in-person graduation ceremonies as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Michelle Donelan:

The government last updated its guidance for providers of higher education on 10 May: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>. As autonomous bodies, higher education providers will make their own judgements on educational activities and the use of facilities. They should take account of government guidance, including any advice on the easing of restrictions in Step 3 of the Roadmap.

Providers may hold events, as long as they are compatible with COVID-19 regulations. In doing so, they should conduct appropriate risk assessments and take any additional measures as required, following public health advice. We expect graduation ceremonies to go ahead, either physically in person but delayed in line with the roadmap, or to be held virtually.

■ Universities: Freedom of Speech

Sarah Owen:

[1204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Prevent strategy on free speech on university campuses.

Sarah Owen:

[1205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions officials in his Department have had with (a) East and (b) South East Asian students regarding freedom of speech on university campuses.

Sarah Owen:

[1206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of Muslim student groups regarding freedom of speech on university campuses.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is clear that the Prevent Duty should not be used to suppress free speech. It requires providers, when exercising their functions, to have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. There is no prescription from the government, or the Office for Students (OfS), in regard to what action providers should take once they have had due regard. The legislation imposing the Prevent duty in relation to higher education specifically requires that providers must have particular regard to their duty to ensure freedom of speech and to the importance of academic freedom.

In the most recent published assessment by the OfS on implementation of the Prevent programme in the English higher education sector in 2019, they found no cause for concern that free speech was being undermined by Prevent in external speakers' policies and their implementation. The assessment is available here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/prevent-review-meetings-programme-findings/>.

The government also remains committed to an Independent Review of Prevent, which is why William Shawcross was appointed on 26 January 2021 as the new Independent Reviewer. The call for evidence for the Independent Review was reopened on the 24 March 2021 and will close on the 26 May 2021. The review will look at how effective the statutory Prevent duty is and will make recommendations for the future.

The department has carried out structured discussions at all stages of the policy development leading up to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, including student engagement through the National Union of Students and roundtables with students' unions. The department welcomes further discussions and will continue to proactively engage stakeholders with a wide range of interests and backgrounds during and after passage of the Bill, including Muslim, East Asian and South East Asian students. The department plans to meet with Muslim organisations, as well as other stakeholders, in the next few weeks and looks forward to discussing the Bill measures in detail.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS■ **Neonicotinoids****Daniel Zeichner:****[754]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Health and Safety Executive advised that the Government's application for an emergency authorisation for neonicotinoid pesticide use on sugar beet for 2021 be refused.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra's approach to regulation of pesticides is underpinned by the precautionary principle. That is why, for example, we supported a ban on the use of certain neonicotinoids to treat crops including sugar beet in 2018 and removed the general authorisation for their use. Given what the current science tells us about these pesticides, they can only be authorised for use in special circumstances, where strict regulatory requirements are met, including when there is a threat of serious risk to a crop that cannot be addressed by other means. The Government took advice on this specific application from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Expert Committee on Pesticides and our own Chief Scientific Adviser. Emergency authorisation was granted for the use of a neonicotinoid seed treatment this year to address a potential serious risk to the sugar beet crop, with strict controls on use built in to minimise the potential risks to the environment.

The HSE advised that they considered many aspects of the environmental risk assessment met the requirements for standard authorisation. The Government concluded that the remaining potential risks could be mitigated to an acceptably low level and that, with the strict conditions of use in place, these were outweighed by the substantial benefits to crop production from the use of Cruiser SB if 2021 were to be a year of high pest pressure. One of the conditions attached was to ensure that the product would only be used if the pest pressure was predicted to pass a certain threshold. Ultimately, this threshold for usage was not met and so the neonicotinoid was not used on sugar beet crops.

The reasons for the decision to issue this emergency authorisation for the product Cruiser SB were set out more fully in the [Statement on the decision to issue - with strict conditions - emergency authorisation to use a product containing a neonicotinoid to treat sugar beet seed in 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****John Howell:****[177]**

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 2371 on the urgent need for electoral reform in Belarus passed at the Council of Europe on 21 April

2021; and whether the Government plans to take steps following the passing of that resolution.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government welcomes the important work that Lord Blencathra has undertaken as a Rapporteur for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, on the need for widespread and achievable electoral reform in Belarus. For too long the Belarusian regime has deprived its people of their democratic and political rights. Since last year's fraudulent Presidential elections, the UK Government has been at the forefront of international efforts to hold the Belarusian authorities to account, including through invoking the OSCE Moscow Mechanism. The UK and our partners have repeatedly called on the Belarusian authorities to implement all of the recommendations in Professor Benedek's subsequent report into electoral fraud and human rights violations. This includes the holding of new Presidential elections that meet international standards and are subject to unhindered monitoring by credible independent observers, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The UK Government continues to urge the Belarusian authorities to support the calls for urgent electoral and democratic reform and the growth of civil society, to ensure the rightful democratic aspirations of its people are met.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on that country's decision to boycott events marking the 20th anniversary of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Canadian counterpart on that country's decision to boycott events marking the 20th anniversary of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Australian counterpart on that country's decision to boycott events marking the 20th 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.

Scott Benton:

[\[502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 27 January 2020 to Question 6055, on Developing Countries: Genito-urinary Medicine, on what basis his Department allocates funding to grassroots organisations in other countries for sexual and reproductive health services and rights.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is proud to defend universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights. Investing in SRHR can reduce some of the factors that lead girls to drop out of school, such as early pregnancy, HIV and AIDS, period poverty and shame.

Grassroots organisations are critical to achieving lasting transformation. The barriers to achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights are multi-dimensional and complex, and particular to a country or community context. Grassroots organisations are well placed to understand this context, to be a voice for people affected by these barriers and to define where actions should be focused. An example of UK support is to the Robert Carr Fund which supports networks of grassroots organisations that seek to serve key populations affected by HIV, and ensure that their issues and concerns are raised and addressed.

Scott Benton:

[\[503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 27 January 2020 to Question 6055 on Developing Countries: Genito-urinary Medicine, if he will publish details of foreign governments funding UK grassroots organisations to change UK laws on abortion.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office does not track foreign governments funding of UK grassroots organisations to change UK abortion laws so is unable to provide this information.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Somali counterpart on the recent violence in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK has expressed deep concerns about the outbreak of violence in Somalia at the end of April and the risks of future escalation. With its international partners the UK condemned the violence, and has consistently urged Somali leaders to show restraint and return rapidly to dialogue on the electoral process on the basis of the 17 September agreement. Failure to move quickly towards consensus-based elections in Somalia risks greater insecurity and serious humanitarian consequences. On 1 May the UK welcomed the Somalia Parliament's endorsement of a return to talks. Through the British Embassy in Mogadishu, the UK, with its international partners, continues intensive diplomatic engagement with leaders of the Federal Government, Federal Member States and Opposition parties, to curb risks of violence and restore the political process.

Imran Ahmad Khan:[\[533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the level of democracy in countries in Africa categorised as Not Free by the Freedom House index for 2020.

James Duddridge:

Promoting democracy and defending democratic freedoms is a fundamental part of the UK's foreign policy in Africa. We believe that strong democratic institutions and accountable governments, which uphold universal rights and the rule of law, are key building blocks for secure and prosperous states. The way we act to support democracy in each country is different and dependent on the context and needs of the country concerned. Our approach is principled but practical, based on an understanding of where and how we can affect positive change. The UK is a strong advocate for the promotion and defence of democracy in Africa. We support a wide range of democracy-building initiatives, including funding Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that increase citizen participation, promoting inclusion of marginalised groups, providing training for legal professionals, promoting freedom of expression, and strengthening political parties and parliaments. As a 'force for good,' the UK will continue to work with its allies, including championing and strengthening democracy through international bodies like the UN.

Hilary Benn:[\[64\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will review the Government's position on recognising the massacre of Armenian people in 1915 as genocide in response to the recent decision of the US Administration to make that recognition.

Wendy Morton:

The events of 1915-1916 were a tragic episode in the history of the Armenian people and they must never be forgotten. The UK Government of the day condemned the massacres and this Government fully endorses that view. The longstanding policy of the UK Government is that any judgement on whether genocide has occurred is a matter for competent courts, rather than for governments.

■ China: Uyghurs

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[1084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee, entitled Uyghur forced labour in Xinjiang and UK value chains, HC 1272, published on 17 March 2021, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on supporting the recommendation in that report for the Government to publish lists of companies that (a) can and (b) cannot offer supply chain transparency.

Nigel Adams:

Evidence of forced Uyghur labour, within Xinjiang and in other parts of China, is credible and growing. We have consistently made clear our view that all businesses involved in investing in Xinjiang, or with parts of their supply chains in Xinjiang, should conduct appropriate due diligence to satisfy themselves that their activities do not support, or risk being seen to support, any human rights violations or abuses. Our message to UK business is clear. It is time to act without delay to ensure our supply chains are free from forced labour and that they are not complicit in these gross violations of human rights. The Government will formally respond to the report and its recommendations by the deadline. Policy responsibility for forced labour and supply chains is split across several Government departments. Officials from BEIS, the FCDO and across Government are co-ordinating closely, including on issues raised by the Committee.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Dawn Butler:

[\[1018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to prevent the spread of covid-19 internationally; and for what reason owners of second homes abroad are permitted to travel to their overseas properties during the pandemic while restrictions are in place on international travel for other purposes.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is at the forefront of the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic, committing up to £1.3 billion of Overseas Development Assistance to counter the health, economic, and humanitarian impacts of the pandemic, and to support the global effort to distribute vaccines equitably. We have committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, contributing to the supply of at least 1.8 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 for up to 92 developing countries, with our overall support to COVAX reaching over 120 countries and economies. We have also committed £23 million to support the research and development of easily manufactured testing devices to allow for self-testing at home as well as community testing. We will use our G7 Presidency this year to take forward the Prime Minister's

five-point plan for a new approach to global health security, announced at the United Nations General Assembly last year.

The Government has confirmed that international travel can resume from 17 May with the new traffic light system, and passengers will no longer need to prove they have a valid reason to leave England, thus permitting people to travel to different locations. The Government's priority remains to protect public health from COVID-19 through these new travel measures and regulations. Given that the virus is still spreading in many parts of the world, people should not be travelling to amber and red countries.

■ **Developing Countries: Nurses**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to progress the allocation of the £5 million commitment to developing nursing made to commemorate Florence Nightingale's bicentenary.

Wendy Morton:

The government is committed to supporting nursing and midwifery development in low and low-middle income countries through our work on strengthening health systems. This includes significant investment in global health initiatives, for example our £1.4 billion contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (2020-2024). With the closure of the UK Partnerships for Health Systems, programme we will not meet the commitment to allocate £5 million to support the development of nurses and midwives.

■ **Ethiopia: Elections**

Helen Hayes:

[\[1137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the EU's decision to withdraw observers from Ethiopia's planned federal elections on democracy in that country.

James Duddridge:

We note the EU's decision on 3 May not to deploy an Electoral Observation Mission as they have not been able to reach agreement with the Ethiopian authorities on the EU's requirements on the importation of telecommunications equipment and on the public reporting of their findings. Observers and journalists have a vital role to play and need to be able to report freely and safely on elections - we have raised this with the Ethiopian authorities. The UK and other local Diplomatic missions will observe voting and are also visiting polling stations to observe the voter registration process and security arrangements.

Helen Hayes:

[\[1138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the democratic legitimacy of Ethiopia's planned federal elections; and what recent discussions he has had with his Ethiopian counterpart on democratic rights and participation in that country.

Helen Hayes:

[\[1139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of potential for unrest arising from Ethiopia's planned federal elections.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with Prime Minister Abiy during his visit to Ethiopia on 22 January. During this conversation he discussed the importance of credible elections for any country seeking inclusive and peaceful democracy. Most recently, I raised the elections delay with President Sahle-Work during the 17 May Sudan Conference in Paris. On 14 April, our Ambassador (alongside Ambassadors and representatives from other Embassies in Addis Ababa) met the Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General. During this meeting we pressed concerns about the narrowing of political and civic space. Ensuring security, freedom of expression, freedom of the media and allowing political parties to organise and campaign are critical to credible elections. These are basic political rights which, if withheld or constricted, increase the risk of social unrest around the planned elections. Some parties have decided not to compete in the election. We encourage the inclusion in dialogue of parties who have not taken part in this election.

We are supporting the organisation of elections with up to £15m of support to UN programming to support the National Elections Board of Ethiopia. We note the recent postponement, estimated at 2-3 weeks, of the elections and are urging clarity for voters on arrangements. We continue to be in close contact with the National Elections Board of Ethiopia and the UN as they continue with preparations to hold the vote.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Jamie Stone:

[\[1165\]](#)

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 findings of the Human Rights Watch report entitled A threshold crossed on Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of the Human Rights Watch report released on 27 April and will review the findings.

■ Kashmir: Politics and Government

Matt Vickers:

[\[545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) political and (b) human rights situation in Kashmir.

Nigel Adams:

It is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people. We recognise that there are human rights

concerns in both India-administered and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. We encourage all states to ensure domestic laws are in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights violation or abuse is deeply concerning and must be investigated thoroughly, promptly and transparently. We are in regular contact with the governments of India and Pakistan, with whom we discuss Kashmir.

■ Overseas Aid

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget is limited to one year; for what reason the UK Partnerships for Health Systems Strengthening programme could not be delayed by a year rather than cancelled; and what assessment he has made of the benefits of a scheme which involves doctors and nurses giving their time voluntarily to support health services in developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is facing the worst economic contraction in over 300 years, and a budget deficit of close to £400 billion. Given the impact of this global pandemic on the economy, the government has been forced to take tough but necessary decisions, of which one has been to close the UK Partnership for Health Systems (UK PHS) programme. The Government is committed to returning to 0.7% of GNI on ODA spend once the fiscal situation allows. This is confirmed in the Integrated Review.

The tough decision to close the UK PHS programme was made due to uncertainty around future levels of funding. Doctors and nurses who give their time voluntarily through this and previous programmes, have made a substantial contribution to achieving global health goals in developing countries. This has included support to the development of the global health workforce, and strengthening health service delivery and performance with partner countries.

■ Pakistan: Counter-terrorism

Dan Jarvis:

[\[1071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to Question 186166 on Pakistan: Counter-terrorism, how much funding has been allocated to the Counter-terrorism Associated Prosecutorial Reforms Initiative (CAPRI) programme in each of the last five financial years.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[1072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to Question 186166 on Pakistan: Counter-terrorism, what (a) safeguards and (b) legal framework his Department is using to help ensure that the Counter-terrorism Associated Prosecutorial Reforms Initiative programme is human rights compliant.

Nigel Adams:

The Counter-terrorism Associated Prosecutorial Reforms Initiative (CAPRI) programme ran in Pakistan from 2013 to 2020, working to improve the capability of the police and criminal justice sector in Punjab. There is no allocated funding for the 2021-22 financial year. The programme was subject to strict legal and human rights frameworks including Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) and oversight from Subject Matter Experts in-country, including a Criminal Justice Advisor and Counter Terrorism Policing Liaison Officer. We remain committed to working together with the Government of Pakistan to combat the terrorist threat and the extremism that sustains it, in a human rights compliant manner.

Dan Jarvis:[\[1073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to Question 186166 on Pakistan: Counter-terrorism, whether his Department has allocated funding to the Counter-terrorism Associated Prosecutorial Reforms Initiative programme for the 2021-22 financial year.

Nigel Adams:

The Counter-terrorism Associated Prosecutorial Reforms Initiative (CAPRI) programme ran in Pakistan from 2013 to 2020, working to improve the capability of the police and criminal justice sector in Punjab. We remain committed to working together with the Government of Pakistan to combat the terrorist threat and the extremism that sustains it, in a human rights compliant manner.

■ Taiwan: China**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[95\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with its counterpart in Taiwan on recent incursions into their airspace by Chinese Military jets.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government considers the Taiwan issue one to be settled by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue. However, we remain concerned by any action which raises tensions in the Taiwan Strait and risks destabilising the status quo.

■ Tigray: Elections**Helen Hayes:**[\[1135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the current violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia on the country's planned federal elections.

Helen Hayes:[\[1136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the ongoing conflict in Tigray and other regions

of Ethiopia, including the detainment of opposition leaders and activists, on that country's planned federal elections.

James Duddridge:

The UK has consistently called for an end to fighting, and advocated for a political process as essential to bring a full end to fighting and a sustainable settlement for Tigray. On our most recent visits to Ethiopia the Foreign Secretary and both pressed these issues, and also raised concerns about wider unrest and political freedoms in Ethiopia.

In our evidence to the International Development Committee on 17 March, the British Ambassador to Ethiopia set out the difficulties and risks in running a credible and safe election at this time. With the military fully engaged in Tigray (and other conflicts in Ethiopia), some responsibility for the safeguarding of elections sites, staff and materials has been passed to other agencies. We have expressed concerns about the lack of security personnel guarding election sites during the voter registration process, and the lack of security provision for the transportation of materials to election sites. Inadequate security and operational provisions risk: i) voters and poll-workers not feeling safe to vote or work, leading to reduced turnout and/or polling stations not opening; ii) elections not taking place in some areas as polling stations cannot open or materials have not been distributed; and iii) opening up the process to intimidation and/or electoral manipulation.

On 14 April the British Ambassador (alongside Ambassadors and representatives from other Embassies) met the Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General. The meeting discussed concerns about running an election in these circumstances. Ambassadors also raised concerns about the narrowing of political and civic space and arrests of candidates. The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia has now indicated a 2-3 week delay in the vote, from 5 June. Voters need urgent clarity on the arrangements. A core group of Ambassadors, including the British Ambassador, has been set up to continue coordinated engagement with the Government of Ethiopia and the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and will push them on this point.

■ **Tropical Diseases: Finance**

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[1044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of reducing funding for neglected tropical disease programmes on the worldwide prevalence of (a) malaria, (b) elephantiasis and (c) blinding trachoma.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[1045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of reducing funding for neglected tropical disease programmes on progress towards the elimination of (a) malaria, (b) elephantiasis and (c) blinding trachoma.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[1046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that neglected tropical diseases programmes affected by a reduction in Official Development Assistance funding are able to continue operating.

Wendy Morton:

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take tough but necessary decisions, including temporarily reducing the overall amount we spend on aid, and exiting from some programmes, including the Accelerating the Sustainable Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) programme. We will still spend more than £10 billion this year to fight poverty, tackle climate change, and improve global health, which remains a top priority for UK ODA. We will focus on the UK's position at the forefront of the international response to COVID-19 through our commitments to COVAX, Gavi, and WHO, and through bilateral spend where the need is greatest in Africa. Where we have taken the decision to exit programmes, this will be done in a measured way, working closely with our delivery partners.

The UK has made a significant contribution to global efforts towards protecting hundreds of millions of people from NTDs. Malaria is not classified as an NTD by the World Health Organisation. We remain committed to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

■ Uganda: Politics and Government

Alex Norris:

[1191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has been made of the political and humanitarian situation in Uganda, including the ongoing harassment of opposition figures; and if he will make a statement.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government has been worried about the treatment of opposition candidates and their supporters in the run-up to and since the Ugandan elections. The current situation does not provide for an open political landscape within which democracy can flourish and Uganda can prosper. We have repeatedly raised concerns about the treatment of opposition candidates and their supporters during and after the election period in Uganda.

Our High Commissioner in Kampala has discussed concerns about reports of opposition supporters going missing or being arbitrarily detained with the Uganda government. I also raised this in my call with the Ugandan Foreign Minister, Sam Kutsea, on 21 April. Our High Commission in Kampala will continue to monitor this closely, and will engage the Ugandan authorities on the fair treatment of opposition leaders and supporters. Political freedoms are vital for democracy to prevail. The UK Government supports programmes for civil society groups and organisations in Uganda that promote democracy, robust institutions, and transparent elections.

The UK provides humanitarian support to refugees and their host communities in Uganda, with an emphasis on the provision of food assistance and nutrition, strengthening community resilience, and building the foundation for self-reliance. With more than 1.4 million refugees, Uganda is the largest refugee hosting country in Africa. More than 80% are women and children. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of Uganda's borders to refugees, there were often more than 5,000 refugees per month entering Uganda. More than 40,000 children per year are born in the refugee settlements.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: China

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[1110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what role his Department has in the Beijing COP26 Core Group; what the aim is of that Core Group; who attends the meetings of that group and in what capacity; which other external individuals attend those meetings; how often such meetings take place; who the lead Minister is of those group meetings; and whether the group Minutes are published online.

Nigel Adams:

The 'Beijing COP26 Core Group' is an internal meeting of officials from different teams across the British Embassy in Beijing. This includes experts leading on climate, environment, energy, transport, nature, green finance, international trade, communications, and multilateral policy, in support of the UK's COP26 objectives. The group usually meets fortnightly, supplemented by other ad hoc meetings. Minutes are not taken or published, reflecting normal practice for many internal meetings between civil servants. There are no external or Ministerial attendees.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Daniel Kawczynski:

[166]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that when secondary school children receive information on abortion it is (a) accurate, (b) balanced and (c) includes information on alternatives to abortion to allow students to make an informed judgement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Following the recent introduction of compulsory relationships, sex and health education in schools pupils will be taught that there are choices in relation to pregnancy with medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including keeping the baby, adoption, abortion and where to get further advice. The statutory guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

Henry Smith: [211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when NHS England and Improvement plans to publish the Getting It Right First Time report on cardiology services.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently considering the Getting it Right First Time Programme report, which includes cardiology services and will publish their findings later in the year.

Ian Paisley: [237]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the introduction of the home abortion policy and Freedom of Information requests to NHS Trusts that have disclosed that women have been presenting with complications at a potentially higher rate than recorded in his Department's abortion statistics, if his Department will request data from NHS Trusts and Emergency Services on (a) the incidence of Retained Products of Conception and Evacuation of Retained Products of Conception following medical abortions over the last five years and (b) whether in each case, both abortion pills were taken at home or in a clinic.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Data on whether both pills are taken at home or in a clinic is collected through the statutory abortion forms that clinicians send to the Chief Medical Officer. Data for 2020 will be published later this year as part of the annual abortion statistics.

Stephen Morgan: [421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group's recommendations on progress and learning from the first phase of the covid-19 pandemic published in September 2020.

Helen Whately:

We published the Adult Social Care COVID-19 Winter Plan on 18 September 2020, which was informed by the recommendations of the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce. The Taskforce was informed by a number of advisory groups, including the Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group. We have no plans to publish additional responses to the recommendations of the advisory groups.

Stephen Morgan: [422]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to bring forward proposals to reform social care.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to sustainable improvement of the adult social care system and will bring forward proposals by the end of the year. We are working

closely with local and national partners to ensure our approach to reform is informed by diverse perspectives, including of those with lived experience of the care sector.

Stuart Anderson: [\[442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to level up mental health and wellbeing services in the City of Wolverhampton.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) advises that across Wolverhampton, all registered patients have access to mental health and wellbeing services. A Joint Public Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Wolverhampton has been developed by the local authority and the local CCGs covering all tiers of service provision and support for all ages.

There is programme of work to put in place a common and standard service in the Black Country to eliminate any variations in existing mental health delivery.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of moving more NHS mental health services to (a) telephones and (b) online.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, we have set out specific objectives for the digitisation of mental health services by 2023/24. This includes digital options for accessing care, including online referrals, digital consultations and digitally enabled models of therapy to support access to psychological therapies in the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme.

The digitisation of services enables people to have more control over their own appointments, have greater choice over their treatment as well as manage their own mental health in between appointments. The shift to delivering greater care online and by phone has created new opportunities to provide care more flexibly and reduce barriers to access for some people. Although some services will see the benefit of continuing to use remote consultations in the future, we recognise that many people will still prefer or require face-to-face appointments.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish monthly data on contact mediums for adult mental health services in the Mental Health Services Data Set.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no current plans to do so.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) offer to and (b) uptake of remote mental health support services based on people's (i) ethnicity, (ii) gender and (iii) age.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such assessment has been made. However, research is being undertaken by the National Institute for Health Research's Mental Health Policy Research Unit to develop broad models of telemental health services and how they could be used appropriately.

Sir John Hayes:**[57]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the response from Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust to freedom of information request RFI-003971 stating that there had been seven admissions with complications following a medical abortion from 31 March to 1 September 2020 and his Department's data, which showed there has been only one reported complication for medical abortions at home in from January to June 2020, what assessment he has made of the reliability of the process of reporting complications from medical abortions at home given differences in the data referred to.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The Department is examining, with partner organisations, how well data collection systems are working in relation to recording complications arising from abortions and what improvements are needed.

■ Accident and Emergency Departments**Philip Dunne:****[645]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when data collected at 12 hours from the point of arrival at emergency departments will be available from hospital trusts.

Edward Argar:

Data on 12 hour waiting times in accident and emergency departments is collected and published by NHS Digital. The latest data available is for the period 2019-20 and is available at the following link:

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

■ Autism: Children**Barbara Keeley:****[173]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure local health, care and education services are able to share records to identify autistic children at risk of being admitted to inpatient mental health services.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: In England, the Care, Education and Treatment Review policy sets out an expectation that local commissioners hold a database to identify people with a learning disability, autism or both with a particular requirement to identify those who are at risk of an admission to mental health inpatient care. This may be known as a dynamic support register or dynamic risk register.

Commissioners are tasked with holding the local database and keeping this information with support from those in the education, care and health partners and community teams to identify those who are at risk of admission.

■ Autism: Eating Disorders

Barbara Keeley: [\[171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many autistic people are receiving treatment for an eating disorder in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Autism: Mental Illness

Barbara Keeley: [\[174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of support for autistic people with mental health problems.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: As part of implementation of the NHS Long Term Plan we are increasing investment in intensive, crisis and forensic community mental health support to enable more autistic children and young adults to receive personalised care in the community and prevent avoidable admissions to inpatient services. In March 2021, we published the COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan, which includes £31 million to improve autism and learning disability services.

■ Autism: Suicide

Barbara Keeley: [\[172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to reduce the risk of suicide for autistic people, as set out in the fourth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: In March, we published 'Preventing suicide in England: fifth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives'. It includes an update on work across the Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement to reduce suicide rates amongst groups with specific needs and characteristics that may expose them to more risk factors for suicide, including autism.

This work includes NHS England and NHS Improvement's refreshed approach to the Learning Disability Mortality Review (LeDeR) programme, 'Learning from lives and deaths - people with a learning disability and autistic people'. The LeDeR aims to improve care, reduce health inequalities and prevent premature mortality of people

with a learning disability and autistic people by reviewing information about the health and social care support that people received.

We also published the Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Plan, setting out our response to the mental health impacts of the pandemic. Many of the actions in the Plan will support people at risk of self-harm or suicide, including autistic people. The Plan is backed by an additional £500 million, including £5 million to support suicide prevention organisations in 2021/22.

■ Brain: Injuries

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) serving personnel and (b) veterans have been diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury in the last 10 years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2020, there were a minimum of 2,202 United Kingdom armed forces regular and reserve personnel who had a record associated with a traumatic brain injury.

Data on the number of veterans diagnosed with such an injury in the last 10 years is not collected centrally.

■ Cancer: Drugs

Anne Marie Morris: [\[248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) criteria the UK had to meet and (b) financial commitment the UK had to make to join Project Orbis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: There were no defined criteria or financial commitments.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[1142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will allocate additional funding to tackle the cancer backlog in the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

For 2021/22, we have provided a further £1 billion for the recovery of elective procedures, including cancer and £325 million for diagnostic equipment. In addition, £6.6 billion funding has been provided to support the wider health system.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Jim Shannon: [\[238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the UK have been detected with antibodies that protect against the infection of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

Paul Bristow:

[496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made by (a) the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and (b) his Department of the potential merits of using (a) UV-C systems and (b) H2O2 vapour as methods of air purification in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

In July 2020, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies published a paper on the application of UV disinfection, visible light, local air filtration and fumigation technologies, particularly hydrogen peroxide vapour using H2O2 to microbial control regarding COVID-19 transmission. The paper is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904656/S0440_EMG -
Application of UV disinfection visible light local air filtration and fumigation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904656/S0440_EMG_-_Application_of_UV_disinfection_visible_light_local_air_filtration_and_fumigation.pdf)

Public Health England (PHE) has undertaken assessments of inactivation methods against COVID 19, including the use of UV-C and H2O2 vapour, with further evaluations ongoing. PHE published guidance on infection prevention and control for COVID-19. Standard use of UV-C and H2O2 technologies are not recommended as these could be used to supplement existing cleaning and ventilation rather than replace them. Their guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>

Paul Bristow:

[499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has allocated to research on the utility and safety of UV-C as a means of tackling the aerosol transmission of viruses that cause covid-19; to which research bodies that funding has been disbursed; and how that funding has been so spent by each of those research bodies.

Jo Churchill:

Two grants totalling £296,049 have been awarded for two trials on far-UVC.

£136,000 has been provided to University of St. Andrews to trial the efficacy of far-UVC radiation technology on droplets, aerosols and surfaces in simulated public locations. £160,049 has been provided to University of Dundee to investigate the effects on human skin from viricidal far-UVC radiation.

The spend to date on both trials is planned but has not yet been accounted for by NHS Test and Trace.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Dr Kieran Mullan:** [\[561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he is making on increasing the proportion of lateral flow covid-19 tests being used that are UK-made.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he is making on procuring saliva tests to detect covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

We are working with a number of United Kingdom suppliers to increase production capability for lateral flow devices (LFDs). We expect to increase the proportion of UK-produced self-test LFDs by the summer, while saliva tests remain at a trial stage.

Dawn Butler: [\[633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, will the Minister confirm, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 188073, for what reasons his Department's guidance, Testing for coronavirus: privacy information confirms that personal details are passed to a company not in charge of delivery of polymerase chain reaction tests for home testing.

Jo Churchill:

The reference to names and addresses being shared with Amazon is now out of date. Royal Mail Group have held the contract for the delivery of COVID-19 home test kits since 14 December 2020.

We follow best practice to help protect personal information and comply with the law on the use of data, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and also require our suppliers to do so.

Rosie Cooper: [\[643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to sanction private companies that breach their contract by failing to provide covid-19 testing kits in a timely manner for day 2 and day 8 testing.

Rosie Cooper: [\[644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department takes to verify the reliability and good practice of companies who are listed on gov.uk as suppliers of covid-19 testing kits for quarantine day 2 and day 8 testing.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: We monitor all providers' performance, including their delivery and testing services. We are taking rapid action with companies where appropriate. Those providers providing inadequate services receive a five-day warning to demonstrate they have rectified their service, or they are removed from GOV.UK.

All private providers listed on GOV.UK have demonstrated compliance with the relevant minimum standards for their commercial provision of testing. This includes undergoing the three-staged UKAS accreditation process if they are providing sample collection and/or test analysis services.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Dawn Butler:

[\[1016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the rollout of covid-19 vaccines to people who are not registered with a GP surgery.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department has introduced the General Practice COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21 Enhanced Service Specification, which enables practices to vaccinate unregistered patients within their eligible priority cohort, therefore increasing accessibility.

National Health Service regional teams, working with various partners, will contact those individuals not registered with a general practitioner to ensure that they are offered appropriate support to receive the vaccine and avoid inequalities in access.

Alex Norris:

[\[1188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using (a) bingo halls and (b) other currently unoccupied venues for the administration of the covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No specific assessment has been made.

In support of the deployment programme, National Health Service regional teams worked with local commissioners to identify sites potentially suitable for use as vaccination centres, including those that were unoccupied. Those sites deemed to suitable were then assessed by NHS England and NHS Improvement in order to make the final selection.

Justin Madders:

[\[303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the cancellation of second covid-19 vaccinations by the national booking system has led to second vaccinations being delayed beyond the recommended 12 weeks; and on how many occasions that has occurred.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Established systems and procedures are in place to ensure that second doses can be easily booked. The National Immunisation Management System (NIMS) is the centralised service for the management of the COVID-19 programme established by NHS England. If an individual is invited for a COVID-19 vaccination via a general practitioner (GP) and once the patient has a vaccination, this information is entered into the patients' GP record and it is also

recorded on the NIMS. A second vaccination appointment can then be offered to the patient by the National Health Service in the following 12-week period, in line with national guidance. The system keeps a record of everyone who has been invited and sends reminders via text or letter to anyone who has not been vaccinated, or who has not booked an appointment through the National Booking System.

Vaccine supplies have already been set aside to ensure that everyone who has already received their first dose will receive their second dose and this will be within 12 weeks of their first. There are currently no delays in the administration of the second dose of the vaccine. Where a patient has been invited to book their own appointment, they will also be required to book their second appointment 11 to 12 weeks on from the first. Vaccinations will be recorded on the NIMS and corresponding updates sent to GP systems.

NHS England's guidance states that all vaccination centres should ensure that all second dose appointments are booked in by the twelfth week after the first dose.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to rollout the covid-19 vaccine to all young people aged 12 and over.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advises that only those children at very high risk of exposure and serious outcomes, such as older children with severe neuro-disabilities that require residential care, should be offered COVID-19 vaccination. Public Health England's Green Book also sets out that children under 16 years of age, even if they are clinically extremely vulnerable, are at low risk of serious morbidity and mortality and given the absence of safety and efficacy data on the vaccine, are not recommended for routine vaccination.

At present, there are no vaccines authorised in the United Kingdom for use in children under 16 years old. On 11 May 2021, Pfizer announced that they have submitted their clinical trials results for children aged 12 to 15 years old for consideration to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

■ Coronavirus: Vitamin D

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the provision of free vitamin D supplements to people at high risk from covid-19 infection on the health of those people during winter 2020-21.

Jo Churchill:

The free vitamin D supplement scheme was introduced to benefit those asked to stay indoors more than usual over the spring and summer 2020 due to national restrictions. The supplements were provided to help support their general health, in particular bone and muscle health.

In collaboration with Public Health England and the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence conducted a rapid evidence review evaluating evidence from recent studies on vitamin D in relation to COVID-19. The expert panel supported current Government advice for everyone to take the supplement throughout the autumn and winter for bone and muscle health. However, the panel concluded that there is currently not enough evidence to support taking vitamin D solely to prevent or treat COVID-19.

■ **Coronavirus: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional public health support he plans to make available in the context of the Indian variant of covid-19 being present in York.

Jo Churchill:

Measures to control the spread of the B.1.617.2 variant are the same as those for other strains of COVID-19. Where it is necessary to provide surge capacity a process in place to do so.

Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace are supporting City of York Council to help identify the B.1.617.2 variant and are providing appropriate advice for any suspected COVID-19 cases which are confirmed.

■ **Dementia: Health Services**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to help improve care for people affected by dementia.

Helen Whately:

During the pandemic we have worked with stakeholders and health and care system partners to identify and implement actions to support people with dementia and their carers, including modifying the diagnosis and care pathways to ensure people continue to be diagnosed and can access care and support. We will be setting out our future plans on dementia for England in due course.

■ **Dental Services**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have received NHS dental treatment in each year from 2010 to 2020; and how many dental practices have provided NHS dental treatment in each year from 2010 to 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The number of patients seen by a National Health Service dentist in England from 2010 to 2020 and the number of dental practices in

England from 2014 - to 2020 is shown in the attached table. Data on the number of dental practices in England is only available from 2014.

Attachments:

1. Table [TABLE FOR MINISTERIAL CLEARANCE PQ194 Table.docx]

■ **Fisheries: Coronavirus**

Luke Pollard: [\[842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on extending the pre-arrival negative covid-19 tests requirement to crews of foreign fishing boats landing their catches in English ports.

Jo Churchill:

There have been no recent discussions.

■ **General Practitioners**

Sir Charles Walker: [\[635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice his Department has provided to General Practitioners on the provision of in person appointments; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: 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 NHS Improvement's letter to general practice of 13 May 2021.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine**

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[1226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to support the post-covid-19 recovery of sexual health and HIV services; and what plans he has to increase the capacity of those services.

Jo Churchill:

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services remained open during the pandemic, with some temporarily reduced face-to-face appointments. Only emergency cases were seen in person. Similarly, HIV services continued to operate with clinics across the country providing virtual and face-to-face clinics to ensure patient care was maintained.

Departmental officials are working closely with local government, NHS England and other delivery partners to support the recovery of SRH and HIV services. Issues related to capacity within SRH and HIV services, as well as new opportunities that have arisen during the pandemic, such as increasing online services, will be

considered as part of the development of the SRH strategy which will be published in 2021.

■ Health Services: Hearing Impaired

Nadia Whittome:

[\[945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to protect and preserve (a) BSL Health Access and (b) other services that aide deaf people in accessing NHS services, particularly during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: All National Health Service providers are required to comply with the public sector equality duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Accessible Information Standard to ensure that deaf people who wish to communicate using British Sign Language (BSL) to access NHS services can do so.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have extended access to BSL interpretation of their 111 service via Interpreter Now. NHS England and NHS Improvement have also commissioned a rapid review into access to BSL interpretation in NHS services which is near completion. The review will set out clear steps to support NHS providers to meet their responsibilities to deliver access to BSL interpretation.

■ Hospitals: Admissions

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[288\]](#)

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 Discharge to Assess model since the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and (b) number of those patients who have been readmitted to hospital within 30 days.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Since the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020, the number of patients who have been discharged using the Discharge to Assess model is 4 million patients. However, data on the number of patients who have been readmitted to hospital within 30 days is not held centrally.

■ Integrated Care Systems: Finance

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 13 April 2021 to Question 174874, what recent estimate he has made of what the (a) maximum percentage is of the NHS budget for England and (b) minimum percentage is of the NHS budget for England that would be shared between all ICSs in England.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: We are proposing to establish statutory Integrated Care Systems, made up of an Integrated Care Board and Integrated Care Partnership, together referred to as the ICS. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) will

take on the commissioning functions of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) as well as some of NHS England's commissioning functions. NHS England will allocate a single system financial envelope to each ICB using the existing CCG allocation formula.

In 2019-20, through the National Health Service mandate, £123.8 billion was given to NHS England and of that, £89.9 billion was provided to CCGs. This is approximately 73% of NHS England's funding allocated to CCGs. Under the new arrangements we anticipate this remaining broadly the same percentage, with adjustments made for any additional delegated or transferred functions.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021

Anne Marie Morris:

[249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has plans to bring forward secondary legislation under the powers provided by the Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The Government is currently working on a number of statutory instruments under the powers in the Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021. Regulations made using the majority of powers under the Act are subject to public consultation. More details on the upcoming consultations will be made available in due course.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review

Dame Diana Johnson:

[638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to implement the nine recommendations of the the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report.

Caroline Nokes:

[687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the response to the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review has been withheld for nine months.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The recommendations are still under careful consideration.

The Government is committed to learning from this report and we currently plan to respond further to the report of the Review during 2021.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[1028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 26 February 2021 on shielding, reference ZA55735.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 17 May 2021.

■ **Menopause**

Robert Halfon:

[681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support women who have been diagnosed with early menopause.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for menopause were updated in December 2019 and include clear criteria for the diagnosis, investigation and treatment of early menopause. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect all providers to give due regard to NICE guidance.

Treatment for early menopause usually involves Hormone Replacement Therapy or a combined hormonal contraceptive pill both for relief of symptoms and to prevent against the long-term consequences of oestrogen deficiency. Women diagnosed with Premature Ovarian Insufficiency are generally managed in a specialised menopause clinic and should have regular reviews to assess the efficacy of treatment and to be offered fertility advice if appropriate. NHS.UK provides signposting to a range of counselling and support groups, such as the Daisy Network and to fertility support groups, where necessary.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

Stuart Anderson:

[443]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department is piloting a four week waiting time for access to specialist mental health treatment for children and young people in 12 areas of England as an integral part of the implementation programme for the Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision Green Paper. The pilots will inform a recommendation to the Government on the potential development of access and waiting-time standards for all children and young people who need specialist mental health services.

■ Mental Illness: Criminal Proceedings

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Outcome Evaluation of the National Model for Liaison and Diversion, published by RAND Europe in April 2021, what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations to (a) increase capacity for onward referrals from Liaison and Diversion services and (b) develop approaches to support people who have multiple vulnerabilities but are not currently eligible for referral because no single vulnerability meets a required therapeutic threshold.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Departmental funded evaluation of Liaison and Diversion services, published by RAND, found that these services are successfully engaging with a range of service users with diverse and often overlapping vulnerabilities. The evaluation has shown that the Liaison and Diversion model is successful in increasing referrals to mental health and drug and alcohol treatment services and diversion from custodial sentences. The Department will be working across Government to further analyse the report's findings and identify opportunities to build on this successful model.

We remain focussed on our NHS Long Term Plan commitments including those to expand access to community mental health services for adults with serious mental illness, including those individuals with the most complex needs. This will help maximise the effectiveness of Liaison and Diversion services by increasing capacity for onward referrals and improving support available for individuals with multiple vulnerabilities.

■ Nurses

John McDonnell:

[\[602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many FTE nurses at each grade were employed in NHS England in (a) December 2019 and (b) the most recent month for which figures are available.

Helen Whately:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in social care, primary care, local authorities or private sector providers commissioned by the National Health Service.

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) nurses by Agenda for Change grade in the NHS in England in December 2019 and January 2021, the latest data available.

GRADE	FTE NURSES AS AT DECEMBER 2019	FTE NURSES AS AT JANUARY 2021
Band 1	0	0

GRADE	FTE NURSES AS AT DECEMBER 2019	FTE NURSES AS AT JANUARY 2021
Band 2	0	0
Band 3	0	2
Band 4	208	288
Band 5	133,272	136,228
Band 6	88,328	92,963
Band 7	48,887	51,732
Band 8a	12,829	14,249
Band 8b	3,011	3,339
Band 8c	1,273	1,334
Band 8d	490	581
Band 9	171	213
Non AfC Grade	723	562
Total	289,192	301,491

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS workforce statistics.

Staffing changes will be impacted by the cyclical nature of annual recruitment and training cycles.

■ Older People: Abuse

Nadia Whittome:

[\[944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to protect elderly people with limited or questionable capacity who are victims of (a) control, (b) abuse and (c) forced estrangement by a financially-motivated relative; and whether he has received any representations from the Law Commission on this matter.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Local authorities must safeguard people with care and support needs who are at risk, in cooperation with the police and the National Health Service. Specific offences can be used to prosecute perpetrators. These duties have remained throughout the pandemic and we have supported the sector with guidance, training and increased funding for local authorities.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provides protection and support for all victims who are abused or controlled by a relative. We have also committed to review the protections

and support in place for adults abused at home by someone caring for them. The Law Commission is running a consultation on its programme of reform. Government officials are also engaged with this work.

■ Prescription Drugs

Anne Marie Morris:

[1075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of prioritising the appraisal by the National Institute for Health and Social Care of medicines for (a) clinically extremely vulnerable and (b) other priority groups.

Jo Churchill:

All medicines appraised by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) address important areas of health. NICE works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency to ensure that licensing procedures and health technology assessments are streamlined and aims wherever possible to publish its recommendations on all new medicines very close to licensing.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NICE adapted its priorities to support the health and care system at a time of unprecedented pressure. This involved pausing the publication of topics that were not COVID-19 related or regarded as therapeutically critical.

■ Radiology

Olivia Blake:

[939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Clinical radiology UK workforce census 2020 report, what assessment he has made of the (a) trends in the number of UK radiologists and (b) need to expand the clinical radiologist workforce for proposed community diagnostic hubs.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but not staff working in social care, primary care, local authorities or private sector providers commissioned by the National Health Service.

The latest data at January 2021 shows there are over 4,800 full-time equivalent clinical radiologists employed in NHS trusts and CCGs in England - an increase of over 200 or 4.6% since January 2020.

The recent one-year spending review settlement has enabled the expansion of clinical radiology training programmes by 110 in 2021/22.

■ Social Services

Anne Marie Morris:

[247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 10 March 2021 to Question 163234 on Social Services, whether he plans to publish the proposed legislation before the House rises for summer recess.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The legislative measures in the Health and Care Bill White Paper are a critical first step in wider reform in the adult social care sector. However, our commitment to the reform of social care extends beyond this legislation and we will bring forward further proposals in 2021.

Feryal Clark:

[509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 21 April 2021 to Question 179648 on Social Services: Conditions of Employment, when the Government plans to bring forward its plans for workforce reform in 2021; and what plans the Government has to ensure that local authorities have adequate funding for the provision of adult social care.

Helen Whately:

We will bring forward proposals for reform, including workforce plans, later this year.

Throughout the pandemic, we have provided almost £1.8 billion in specific funding for adult social care and we are providing local authorities with access to over £1 billion of additional funding for social care in 2021-22.

■ Suicide

Munira Wilson:

[468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve mental health support and reduce levels of suicide in (a) South West London and (b) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In March, we published 'Preventing suicide in England: fifth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives' and an update to the 2019 Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan. We also published the Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Plan, setting out our response to the mental health impacts of the pandemic. Many of the actions in the Plan will support people at risk of self-harm or suicide. The Plan is backed by an additional £500 million, with £5 million to support suicide prevention organisations in 2021/22.

This funding is in addition to the £57 million we are investing in suicide prevention and suicide bereavement support through the NHS Long Term Plan, which will see investment in all areas of the country, including South West London, by 2023/24.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants

Mr Kevan Jones: [81]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether specialist surgical mesh centres opening from April 2021 will provide surgery for people affected by rectopexy meshes.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are considering the commissioning of care and support for people with complications in the use of mesh inserted for colorectal indications or rectopexy. This work includes exploring whether the remit of the existing specialist mesh services can be expanded. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect to have made a decision by the autumn.

■ Tobacco

Adam Afriyie: [170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of the all-party Parliamentary group on vaping's inquiry into COP9 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; and if he will meet the APPG to discuss the inquiry's conclusions.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has reviewed the report and agrees that e-cigarettes can play an important role in supporting smokers to quit.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Gareth Thomas: [43]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what provisions are in place for people in covid-19 hotel quarantine to obtain prescription medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Those in a managed quarantine facility will be able to access National Health Service healthcare via 111 or their general practitioner to seek medical attention, including for prescription medicines. They are asked to inform the medical staff at the hotel on arrival if they anticipate any issues.

Gareth Thomas: [44]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of training provided to staff at hotels providing covid-19 quarantine stays to ensure that those quarantining and hotel staff remain safe; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

All staff have been fully trained in COVID-19 secure practices and all contractors have been instructed to ensure their facilities and services are provided in a secure

way. Staff are trained to deal with medical emergencies that may involve close contact with guests and take appropriate safety steps. Medical staff are also available at the hotel.

■ **Whistleblowing at West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust Independent Review**

Justin Madders:

[\[293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the independent rapid review into West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust undertaken by Christine Outram has concluded; and when he plans to publish the findings of that review.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The independent review into West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust has not concluded. The report is now being finalised by the review team and will then be submitted to NHS Improvement. NHS Improvement is committed to publishing the final report when it is complete.

HOME OFFICE

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

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will cease issuing Notices of Intent to asylum-seekers and revoke those already issued in response to authorities in (a) France and (b) other EU states declining to agree a bilateral agreement with the UK on the return of people seeking asylum.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of delaying asylum determinations for people issued with a Notice of Intent on the number of outstanding asylum cases.

Chris Philp:

We will continue to issue Notices of Intent in line with the Immigration Rules and our published policy. It is right that we consider inadmissibility action and explore all reasonable removal options where there is evidence that someone applying for asylum in the UK was in a safe third country and already has been: granted asylum; had a claim for asylum rejected as unfounded; or had reasonable opportunity to claim asylum there but failed to do so.

The published policy is clear that this consideration is not open-ended: in broad terms, a case must be admitted for substantive consideration in the UK asylum system if it is concluded that there are no reasonable prospects of an EU state, including France, or any other safe country, agreeing to the person's return, or if no such agreement has been secured within a maximum of 6 months. (This 6-month timescale does not apply to the period after a country agrees to an individual's return,

during which time practical arrangements for the removal will be confirmed and, if necessary, enforcement action taken.)

This system will not introduce significant delays either for individuals entering the asylum system, or the asylum system as a whole.

Gill Furniss: [386]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether officials in her Department recognise Ahmadiyya marriage certificates which are not registered with the Pakistan Union Council for the purposes of EU Settlement Scheme family permit applications.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Ahmadiyya marriage certificates which for legitimate reasons are not registered with the Pakistan Union Council, but which have been accepted for official purposes by the Pakistani authorities, will be recognised as evidence of marriage in an EU Settlement Scheme family permit application.

■ **Armed Forces: Myanmar**

Stephen Kinnock: [1085]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of whether the Tatmadaw should be declared a terrorist organisation.

Kevin Foster:

The Government does not comment on intelligence matters, including whether an organisation is or is not under consideration for proscription.

The Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under review.

■ **Biometric Residence Permits**

Gill Furniss: [1147]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the efficiency of her Department's delivery partners in delivering Biometric Residency Permits.

Kevin Foster:

Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) are delivered by FedEx, which took over the delivery contract from DX in February 2020, with the key performance indicator being to attempt to deliver 99% of BRPs within 48 hours of collection from the production facility.

FedEx took over the delivery contract from DX in February 2020, after a bedding in period formal reporting started in July 2020. Between 1 July 2020 and 31 March 2021 FedEx attempted to deliver 99.2% of BRPs within 48 hours. Of the deliveries attempted, 90.4% were successful.

We are working with FedEx to improve the number of BRPs successfully delivered by improving Management Information reporting, incident/investigation reporting and reconciliation, and customer service functions.

■ Detention Centres: Mobile Phones

Hilary Benn:

[995]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under what powers immigration removal centre staff are able to remove mobile telephones from persons detained for being in the UK without a work visa; and whether she plans to review that policy.

Chris Philp:

The rights of all detained individuals are protected by the Detention Centre Rules 2001 (DCR), published Operating Standards for immigration removal centres (IRCs) and individuals under escort and Detention Services Orders (DSO). This framework includes specific guidance on the Home Office's policy on the possession of mobile phones in immigration removal centres, as set out in DSO 05/2018 'Mobile phones, internet enabled devices, and cameras'

Detained individuals are able to retain their own mobile telephones throughout their detention, provided their handset has no recording facility and/or access to the internet. Where a detained person's handset does not comply with these restrictions, they are provided with a suitable handset by the IRC supplier so that they may maintain contact with friends, family and other means of support. Individuals are provided with £5 phone credit upon induction to an IRC and they can request additional phone credit to maintain contact with their legal advisors, friends and family up to a maximum of £10 per week.

■ Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre

Sarah Olney:

[1150]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of immigration detention on asylum-seeking women with regard to the proposal to open Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in County Durham as an immigration removal centre for women.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has acquired the former Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in County Durham and will open it as an immigration removal centre (IRC) for women by the autumn.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is being developed to consider the development and operation of the new 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.

The Home Office does not anticipate any changes to the manner in which asylum-seeking women are managed in line with existing published policies.

Kate Osborne: [1207]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what consultations have been carried out with the local community on her Department's proposal to re-open the former Medomsley Detention Centre site as Hassockfield immigration removal centre.

Kate Osborne: [1208]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what consultations have been undertaken with men abused at Medomsley Detention Centre on her Department's proposal to re-open the site as Hassockfield immigration removal centre.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has acquired the former Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in County Durham and will open it as an immigration removal centre for women by the autumn.

Discussions with Durham County Council have taken place and will continue throughout the development of plans for the site. Consultations with local councillors, other local stakeholders and interested non-governmental organisations including the Refugee Council, will take place over the coming months.

The former Medomsley Detention Centre was demolished and rebuilt in 1988.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Hilary Benn: [996]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether EU citizens are able to enter the UK for a job interview without already possessing a UK work permit.

Kevin Foster:

A person may come to the UK under the visitor route for a job interview. However, if successful they must leave the UK and obtain an entry clearance under a route which grants the right to work in the UK before starting the role.

During the current global pandemic any travel to the UK must also be in accordance with the prevailing health regulations at the time of travel.

Irish Citizens do not need to seek entry clearance in order to seek or start work in the UK.

■ Police: Demonstrations

Geraint Davies: [900157]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the (a) behaviour and (b) alleged use of force by police in response to the vigil for Sarah Everard in London and demonstrations in Bristol against the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in March 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government fully supports the public's right to peaceful protest. However, those rights do not extend to violent or threatening behaviour and the police have powers to deal with any such acts.

The management of demonstrations and the use of the powers available is an operational matter for the police, who take decisions based on the circumstances they are faced with on the ground.

Police put themselves in harm's way to defend us and the use of force is a vital part of their powers. However, the Government is also clear that all use of force must be lawful, proportionate and reasonable in the circumstances and subject to proper scrutiny.

Following the events on Clapham Common, the Home Secretary asked Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to conduct a full, independent lessons learned review. The report was published on 30 March and concluded that whilst the vast majority of attendees were peaceful and respectful; severe provocations in the evening by a minority of those present warranted the proportionate enforcement actions taken by the police.

■ Windrush Lessons Learned Review**Neil Coyle:**[\[263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 3 March 2021 to Question 158072 on Windrush Lessons Learned Review, if she will publish a progress report on that full evaluation of the compliant environment policy and measures.

Priti Patel:

We intend to publish an update on the progress of the evaluation at a suitable juncture. As set out in the Comprehensive Improvement Plan, initial analysis of data and evidence on the compliant environment will be completed by Autumn 2021.

Wendy Williams will return to review progress in September 2021. Ms Williams is currently in discussion with the Home Office to agree the terms of reference and the intended completion date.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Margaret Ferrier:**[\[276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to (a) simplify and (b) homogenise across local authorities the process of applying for business rates relief in respect of the Government's £1.5 billion business rates relief fund for businesses in England outside of the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors which have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

The Department will ensure that local authorities have the guidance they need to deliver the additional £1.5 billion business rates support package once primary legislation is passed, in line with the announcement on 25 March. As with other business rates reliefs, officials will work closely with local government on the development of the relief scheme and guidance for local authorities will be published in due course.

Margaret Ferrier:[\[277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with businesses which have applied for Additional Restrictions Grant funding; and if he will apply lessons learnt from the administration of that scheme to the new £1.5 billion Business Rates Relief Fund for businesses affected by covid-19 outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Luke Hall:

The Department will work closely with local government throughout the development of the £1.5 billion relief scheme and will ensure that experiences from the delivery of other support measures are taken on board. This includes experiences of administering the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) which – as of 28 March 2021 – has delivered £816 million in support to over 400,000 businesses. The Government will continue to support local authorities in making further ARG payments throughout 2021/22.

John Healey:[\[58\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason Thurnscoe, Barnsley, Mexborough, Bolton-upon-Deane, Rawmarsh and Wath-upon-Deane were not invited to bid for Towns Fund funding when their total score, following an assessment by his officials of their need and growth potential, was higher than the scores for Whitby, Shipley, Wakefield, Todmorden, Stocksbridge, Brighouse and Morley, which were invited to bid.

John Healey:[\[59\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason Thurnscoe, Barnsley, Mexborough, Bolton-upon-Deane, Rawmarsh and Wath-upon-Deane were not invited to bid for Towns Fund funding when officials in his Department scored them higher for income deprivation than Goole, Whitby, Wakefield, Todmorden and Brighouse, which were invited to bid.

John Healey:[\[60\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason four low priority areas in Yorkshire and the Humber were invited to bid for funding under the Towns Fund.

Luke Hall:

The selection criteria for Town Deals was set by officials and took into account a range of factors including deprivation, skills levels and exposure to economic shocks. From

this list of eligible towns, Ministers selected the 101 towns invited to develop town deal proposals in line with advice from officials. It was appropriate that Ministers made the selection rather than officials, due to the need for qualitative judgement and accountability for decision-making.

The Department has published a summary of its Accounting Officer Assessment which sets out the details of this selection process [here](#).

John Healey:

[61]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to page 29 of the report published by the National Audit Office on 21 July 2020, entitled Review of the Town Deals selection process, for what reason 16 towns in Yorkshire and the Humber were selected to bid for funding under the Towns Fund when officials in his Department recommended that 19 towns in that region should be invited to bid.

Luke Hall:

The process for selecting Town Deals was designed by civil servants in the Department and agreed by previous Ministers. Regional spread was an important priority and Ministers therefore considered the priority towns by region. All towns in the highest priority group for each region were selected. Ministers then used their judgment and local knowledge to select those in the medium and lower priority groups. In making that judgment, Ministers looked at both opportunities arising from investment in the wider area, and potential job losses in the future. Ministers were responsible for qualitative judgments and took the final decisions.

The Department has published a summary of its Accounting Officer Assessment which sets out the details to this selection process [here](#).

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[28]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to discontinue funding for the provision of covid marshals.

Luke Hall:

Government is working closely with local partners to minimise risks arising from easing of restrictions at each stage of the roadmap. This may include managing the impacts of increased footfall on beaches and in tourist hotspots, as well as helping shops and businesses to operate in a COVID-secure way. COVID-19 Secure Marshals or their equivalents are employed by local authorities as a result of the £400 million funding from Government through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, and have played an important role in meeting the challenges of the pandemic at the local level.

Government will continue to keep its response under review to ensure local areas are equipped to meet the demands of the pandemic.

English Language: Education**Rachael Maskell:** [\[1112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to reimburse local authorities that have agreed to extend the Expanded Retail Discount to English Language Colleges in their locality on the basis that those businesses have been unable to open their premises during the covid-19 lockdown national restrictions.

Luke Hall:

In response to the pandemic, the Government has provided business rates relief for eligible retail, hospitality, and leisure properties worth £16 billion across 2020/21 and 2021/22. As with other business rates reliefs, local authorities will be fully reimbursed for the costs of providing this relief to ratepayers who meet the eligibility criteria as set out in the guidance published by the Department.

Government Departments: Procurement**Debbie Abrahams:** [\[1068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information he holds on the use of Project Bank Accounts by (a) his Department, (b) Government agencies his Department has responsibility for and (c) non-departmental bodies his Department has responsibility for.

Eddie Hughes:

Project Bank Accounts (PBAs) are just one way that government departments support fair payment as part of the Government's Prompt Payment Code.

We do not hold data on PBAs if we have assessed it is not practical, efficient and cost effective to use them on our current construction projects.

Along with all government departments, and as set out in the Construction Playbook, we have committed to use PBAs on our construction projects unless there are compelling reasons not to.

Housing: Construction**Steve Reed:** [\[1079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of an exclusion for conservation areas from the proposed permitted development right to enable change of use from the new Class E to residential.

Steve Reed: [\[1080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the proposed new permitted development right to enable change of use from the new Class E to residential and the

focus of the White Paper Planning for the Future on design and placemaking in the planning system.

Steve Reed:

[\[1081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed new permitted development right to enable the change of use from the new Class E to residential on the effectiveness of the Future High Streets Fund and Heritage High Streets Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The permitted development right for the change of use from the Commercial, Business and Service use class (E) to residential will support our ailing town centres and highstreets to become thriving, vibrant hubs where people live, shop, use services, and spend their leisure time. The right provides for local consideration of the implications of a change of use of the ground floor on the sustainability and character of conservation areas.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Sarah Owen:

[\[1203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support local councils with adequate staffing resources to formulate bids to the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

The Fund will operate UK-wide, extending the benefits of funding for priority local infrastructure across all regions and nations.

The prospectus published at Budget provides guidance for local areas on how to submit bids for the first round of funding for projects starting in 2021-22. This includes guidance on the process for submitting bids, the types of projects eligible for funding, and how bids will be assessed.

Capacity funding will also be allocated to the local authorities measured as highest need in England, and all local authorities in Scotland and Wales to build a new relationship with the UK Government. This will support the relevant local authorities develop bids and ensure that investment is targeted where it is needed most.

■ Non-domestic Rates

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government plans to provide (a) local authorities and (b) businesses with further details on the £1.5 billion additional business rates support package as announced on 25 March 2021.

Luke Hall:

Ratepayers will be able to access the additional £1.5 billion business rates relief package once the relevant primary legislation is passed and councils have set up their own schemes. Ahead of this, officials will work closely with local government on the development of the relief and the Department will publish guidance in due course.

■ **Parking: Private Sector****Shabana Mahmood:**[\[187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to implement a Single Code of Practice for private companies that levy parking charges.

Luke Hall:

My Department is working hard to improve standards in the private parking industry. Last year we launched public consultations on our proposals for the new Parking Code of Practice and Enforcement Framework, designed to ensure fairness across the board.

The Government published its response to its consultation on the Code Enforcement Framework on 20 March 2021, announcing our intention to deliver a series of parking measures which will benefit motorists and encourage people to return to our high streets and town centres.

We will continue to discuss the detail of the Code of Practice and the proposed approach in the consultation response on parking charges with all interested parties including key motoring and industry bodies.

■ **Property Development****Steve Reed:**[\[1078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the level of (a) section 106 payments and (b) community infrastructure levy that would have been paid to local authorities as a result of new developments in their areas, if those developments had gone through the full planning process rather than being built via permitted development rights, in each of the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

We have not made such an assessment.

In the planning White Paper, *'Planning for the Future'*, we proposed a new infrastructure levy which would be partially charged on permitted development rights. The new Infrastructure Levy would be extended to better capture changes of use which require planning permission, even where there is no additional floorspace, and for some permitted development rights including office to residential conversions and new demolition and rebuild permitted development rights. This approach would increase the levy base, and would allow these developments to better contribute to infrastructure delivery and making development acceptable to the community.

The consultation on '*Planning for the Future*' closed on 29 October. We are analysing the consultation feedback thoroughly and holding meetings with industry and local authority representatives to understand the implications of our proposals. We will respond formally as soon as possible.

■ Public Places: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people feel confident to return to public spaces as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Luke Hall:

My Department produces and regularly updates COVID-19 secure guidance to support local authorities, owners and operators to adapt and effectively manage outdoor public places to ensure they are safe. This guidance includes '[COVID-19: Safer Urban Centres and Green Spaces](#)', '[COVID-19: Managing Playgrounds and Outdoor Gyms](#)', and '[COVID-19: Managing Beaches, the Countryside and Coastal Areas](#)'. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs also produces guidance on [accessing green spaces safely](#).

In March this year, we announced the [Welcome Back Fund](#) which is providing councils across England a share of £56 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support the safe return to high streets and help build back better from the pandemic. This funding builds on the £50 million Reopening High Street Safely Fund (RHSSF) allocated to councils in 2020 and forms part of the wider support the Government is providing to communities and businesses.

On 25 March, the Secretary of State published a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) setting out that local planning authorities, having regard to their legal obligations, should not seek to undertake planning enforcement action which would result in the unnecessary restriction of retail hours from Step 2 to Step 4 of the Roadmap. This is intended to spread footfall, ease transport pressures and make shopping in a socially distanced way easier by giving shoppers greater flexibility to choose when they shop and avoid peak times.

Local authorities may also consider deploying COVID-19 Secure Marshals or equivalents to outdoor public places experiencing overcrowding or presenting other needs. Local authorities can access the £400 million Contain Outbreak Management Fund to support compliance and enforcement activity, such as COVID-19 Secure Marshals or equivalents.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Steve Reed:

[1082]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to conduct further consultations with (a) regional mayors and (b) local authority leaders on the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The Government has been engaging with key stakeholders on the design and priorities of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund since 2016, including holding a series of engagement events.

Over 500 stakeholders attended these events across a variety of sectors, including businesses, public bodies (such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Mayoral Combined Authorities, local governments), higher education institutions, voluntary and charity sector and rural partnership groups.

Our engagement events have taken place across the UK including in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Government officials will continue to work closely with interested parties as we develop the fund.

Claire Hanna:[\[520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will provide details of how the devolved administrations will be represented in the governance structures for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 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.

It will operate UK-wide, using the new financial assistance powers in the UK Internal Market Act 2020. The Government intends to work with the devolved administrations to ensure this new power is used to best effect. We have demonstrated this commitment by confirming that the devolved administrations will have a place within the governance structures for the Fund.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework later this year and confirm funding profiles at the next Spending Review.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland**Claire Hanna:**[\[519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent progress has been made on the Shared Prosperity Fund in Northern Ireland.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) 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.

It will operate UK-wide, using the new financial assistance powers in the UK Internal Market Act 2020.

The November 2020 Spending Review set out the main strategic elements of the UKSPF in the Heads of Terms. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework later this year and confirm the funding profile at the next Spending Review.

In addition, to help local areas prepare over 21/22 for the introduction of the UKSPF, we will provide £220 million additional UK funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Free Zones: Tees Valley

Emily Thornberry:

[\[145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she discussed the effect of prohibition clauses on duty drawback and exemption on the operation of freeports with the delegation of representatives from Teesside that she met on 12 October 2020.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The effective operation of freeports was discussed by my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State during her meeting including industry and the Mayor of the Tees Valley in October 2020. Further dialogue between businesses and HM Government will be vital to secure their success and we will make sure that traders can harness the potential that freeports present.

■ Iron and Steel: Imports

Paul Blomfield:

[\[1047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Answers of 29 April 2021 to Questions 188093 and 188094, when she expects the review to (a) conclude and (b) report.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We anticipate that the Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) – which will become the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) on 1st June – will complete the steel safeguard review in time for a decision by my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade before the measure expires on 30th June.

Before the TRA makes its final recommendation, it will publish a statement summarising the evidence and its initial conclusions. This will be open to comments.

Sarah Champion:

[\[1076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government plans to extend safeguards on steel imports beyond their expiry in June 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Trade Remedies Investigations Directorate (TRID) initiated a review of the steel safeguard measure on 1st October 2020.

We anticipate that TRID – which will become the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) on 1st June – will complete the review in time for a decision by my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade before the measure expires on 30th June.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Emily Thornberry:

[146]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the answer of 26 October 2020 to Question 106261 and the publication of transparency data on 7 May 2021, how many members of staff, and at what grades, accompanied her on her visit to Japan from 21 to 24 October 2020; what the total cost to the public purse was of that visit for all UK attendees; and what the costs were of the (a) flights, (b) accommodation, (c) internal travel and (d) subsistence expenses for that visit.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The Government does not routinely release information regarding accompanying staff on ministerial engagements.

The total cost for this visit were: £18,884.38

A breakdown of costs is as follows:

- a) Flights – £18,701.64
- b) Accommodation – nil.
- c) Internal travel – nil.
- d) subsistence and expenses – £182.74

■ Trade Agreements: Mexico

Sir Greg Knight:

[997]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to negotiate an enhanced trade agreement with Mexico, subsequent to the UK-Mexico Trade Continuity Agreement signed in 2020.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom signed a Trade Continuity Agreement with Mexico on 15th December 2020. The Government has agreed to begin new negotiations with Mexico on an ambitious, modern and comprehensive free trade agreement within one year, and to conclude them within three years.

The joint political statement published by both countries commits that this will be at least as liberalising as the EU-Mexico Modernised Agreement that will come into force next year.

Sir Greg Knight:

[998]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the new enhanced EU-Mexico Trade Agreement on levels of British imports from and exports to Mexico.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom is committed to starting negotiations with Mexico later this year towards an upgraded Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This deal will be tailored to the needs of British businesses and the British people. We are consulting through a 'Call for Input', which includes gathering feedback on the EU-Mexico Modernised Agreement. We will publish a response to the 'Call for Input' in due course.

Trade Agreements: Singapore and Vietnam**Emily Thornberry:**[\[147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many members of staff, and at what grades, accompanied her on her visit to Singapore and Vietnam in December 2020; what the total cost to the public purse was of that visit for all UK attendees; and what the costs were of the (a) flights, (b) accommodation, (c) internal travel and (d) subsistence expenses for that visit.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The Government does not routinely release information regarding accompanying staff on ministerial engagements.

The total cost for this visit were: £25,699.24

A breakdown of costs is as follows:

- a) Flights – £23,359.24
- b) Accommodation – £2,340
- c) Internal travel – nil.
- d) subsistence and expenses – nil.

JUSTICE**Administration of Justice: Government****Marion Fellows:**[\[900185\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on plans to review the relationship between Government and the courts.

Chris Philp:

Her Majesty last week announced that there will be a bill in this session. our aim in any measures we take forward following our recent consultation will not be to curtail the power of the courts, as the Government's critics have suggested, but rather to enhance it, and to restore the proper balance between courts, parliament and the executive.

■ Cammell Laird**Mick Whitley:** [R] [\[900162\]](#)

If he will make an assessment of the potential merits of holding a public inquiry into the 1984 imprisonment of 37 striking Cammell Laird workers.

Chris Philp:

The appropriate route to challenge a conviction and/or sentence is by way of appeal.

Anyone who has been convicted of a criminal offence in England, Wales or Northern Ireland can apply to the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which can review and investigate possible miscarriages of justice. Where there is a real possibility that the conviction or sentence will not be upheld, the Commission can refer the case to the appropriate court.

For the Commission to refer a case there normally needs to be significant new evidence or issue that might affect the safety of the conviction or sentence.

■ Courts: Opening Hours**Mark Pawsey:** [\[900165\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to increase the number of court sitting days.

Chris Philp:

We have finalised increased sitting days in the coming financial year, with an increase to a record level in total across all jurisdictions.

This will maximise the system - we will run our Crown Courts to the fullest possible extent, with no limit on sitting days, using up every room and judge, alongside more days in Civil and Family Courts, and the Employment Tribunal.

■ Crime: Victims**John Lamont:** [\[900163\]](#)

What progress he has made with the Home Secretary on bringing forward legislative proposals to support victims.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is committed to protecting the public and cutting crime. This means ensuring that victims are supported at every stage of the criminal justice system, so that justice can be secured, victims and the public protected, and offenders punished.

The Victims' Bill, announced in the Queen's Speech, will enshrine victims' rights in law, hold agencies to account for delivering those rights and set expectations for the standard and availability of victim support.

I am working closely with the Home Secretary in preparation for the consultation on this Bill which will take place later this year.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victims

David Johnston:

[\[900156\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support victims of domestic abuse.

Kit Malthouse:

Domestic abuse is a top priority across Government, and we are determined to transform the response to this abhorrent crime.

We passed our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill on 29 April and our forthcoming Victims' Bill will further transform victims' experience of the criminal justice system and we have provided unprecedented funding for domestic abuse since the pandemic began, including £51m boost for specialist support services to support victims through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Caroline Ansell:

[\[900166\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support victims of domestic abuse.

Kit Malthouse:

Domestic abuse is a top priority across Government, and we are determined to transform the response to this abhorrent crime.

We passed our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill on 29 April and our forthcoming Victims' Bill will further transform victims' experience of the criminal justice system and we have provided unprecedented funding for domestic abuse since the pandemic began, including £51m boost for specialist support services to support victims through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

■ Domestic Violence: Victims

David Simmonds:

[\[900155\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support victims of domestic violence through the civil and family courts process.

Kit Malthouse:

We have passed the landmark Domestic Abuse Act, which received Royal Assent on 29 April, representing our commitment to transforming our response to this crime.

This Act contains significant reforms to the ways in which victims are supported in the family and civil courts, including a prohibition on cross-examination in person by perpetrators and automatic eligibility for special measures in family and civil courts to help alleviate their trauma.

We are also continuing work to deliver our commitments made in response to the Expert Panel on Harm in the Family Courts report.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[900164\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support victims of domestic abuse.

Kit Malthouse:

Domestic abuse is a top priority across Government, and we are determined to transform the response to this abhorrent crime.

We passed our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill on 29 April and our forthcoming Victims' Bill will further transform victims' experience of the criminal justice system and we have provided unprecedented funding for domestic abuse since the pandemic began, including £51m boost for specialist support services to support victims through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

■ Group of States Against Corruption: Publications**Dame Margaret Hodge:****[33]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department plans to authorise the publication of GRECO's report on the UK's compliance with its recommendations made in the 5th Evaluation on preventing corruption and promoting integrity in top executive functions of government.

Alex Chalk:

We will be authorising publication of our GRECO Fifth Round compliance report in due course, in line with established process.

■ High Down Prison**Ms Lyn Brown:****[1036]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Report on a scrutiny visit to HMP High Down by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (23 March and 7 – 8 April 2021), what were the (a) sequence of events and (b) reasons for HM Prison and Probation Service's decisions in connection with the re-categorisation of that prison.

Alex Chalk:

The HMPPS Reconfiguration Project is a whole-system approach across the adult male prison estate. It aims to rebalance existing prison capacity and planning for the best use of new-build capacity (as it comes online) to ensure there is a sufficient supply of suitable prison places to meet demand. Over time, reconfiguration will reduce local (reception) prison places and increase much-needed category B training places. It will also help to smooth transition from prison to the community by increasing category C capacity and access to resettlement places.

We remain absolutely committed to ensuring reconfiguration takes place safely as soon as it is operationally possible. The stability of the prison estate remains our priority and no prison will re-role until it is safe and ready to do so.

Therefore, we continue to work with HMP High Down, as well as with other key stakeholders, to prepare for its re-role to a category C training/resettlement prison. The prison and all stakeholders are involved in the readiness processes to ensure that the courts currently serving HMP High Down only transfer to HMP Wandsworth when all parties are satisfied that they are ready, and it is safe to do so.

■ Human Rights

Angela Crawley:

[\[900172\]](#)

What steps he has taken to help ensure that the UK upholds its obligations under international treaties on human rights.

Chris Philp:

The UK has strong human rights protections within a comprehensive and well-established constitutional and legal system, and a longstanding tradition of ensuring rights and liberties are protected domestically and of fulfilling our international human rights obligations.

The UK has put in place a combination of policies and legislation to give effect to the international human rights treaties that it has ratified. The UK has a strong record before the various UN treaty monitoring bodies and fully participates in relevant reporting processes.

■ Human Rights Act 1998

Patricia Gibson:

[\[900179\]](#)

What plans he has to amend the Human Rights Act 1998.

Chris Philp:

The Government has established the Independent Human Rights Act Review to examine the framework of the Human Rights Act, how it is operating in practice and whether any change is required.

The Review is considering the approach taken by domestic courts to jurisprudence of the ECtHR. It will also examine whether the HRA currently strikes the correct balance between the roles of the courts, the Government and Parliament. The Panel will report back in Summer 2021.

■ Magistrates' Courts: Remote Hearings

Alex Cunningham:

[\[1055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of detained individuals appearing in magistrates' courts for remand hearings (a) by video and (b) in person have pleaded not guilty in the last three years.

Chris Philp:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Prisons: Females

Sarah Olney:

[\[900161\]](#)

What assessment he has made of trends in the level of self-harm in women's prisons in 2020.

Alex Chalk:

The self-harm rate increased by 13% in the 12 months to December 2020. In the most recent quarter, self-harm rates decreased by 19% on the previous three months. Despite recent improvements, the level of self-harm in women's prisons remains too high and we will continue to prioritise improving safety outcomes.

We have established a Women's Estate Self-Harm Taskforce and the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model, while expanding therapeutic services and improving gender-specific training for staff.

■ Remote Hearings: Disability**Alex Cunningham:**[\[1054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of defendants who are detained post-charge by the police are not required to appear on video for remand hearings as a result of their disabilities.

Chris Philp:

We do not hold the information requested. Video Remand Hearings (VRH) were rolled out at scale over Spring/Summer 2020 to help reduce footfall in courts and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The data regarding the proportion of defendants not required to appear on video for remand hearings due to disability was not collected during the COVID-19 period.

Prior to its use during the pandemic, VRH was in operation across a 5-force model in the South East as part of a Video Enabled Justice Programme sponsored by the Home Office. The requested information was not collected.

■ Remote Hearings: Mental Health**Alex Cunningham:**[\[1056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of detained individuals who appear in video remand hearings are screened by a health practitioner for mental health needs, neuro-diverse conditions and other disabilities.

Chris Philp:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Remote Hearings: Pre-trial Procedures**Alex Cunningham:**[\[1053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, in what proportion of video remand hearings is a decision about remand or bail made.

Chris Philp:

All remand hearings, whether conducted via video or in person, will seek to take a decision about whether the individual is remanded in custody or granted bail, apart from those instances where the hearing is concluded by way of a sentence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Veterans: Northern Ireland

Mr Kevan Jones:

[85]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals on Northern Ireland veterans in the next six months.

Mr Robin Walker:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The Government is fully committed to introducing legislation as quickly as possible that delivers better outcomes for victims, survivors and veterans; focuses on information recovery and reconciliation; and ends the cycle of investigations. This will deliver on our commitments to Northern Ireland veterans, giving them the protections they deserve.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[93]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether it is his Department's policy to ensure equal treatment of Northern Ireland veterans and those who served overseas.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government is fully committed to delivering on its commitments to veterans who served in Northern Ireland - as well as those who served overseas - as quickly as possible. We have been clear that we will do this as part of a wider package to address legacy issues in Northern Ireland that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims and ends the cycle of investigations.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Sustainable Development

Christine Jardine:

[1167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to undertake a consultation on the (a) steps needed to encourage the use of sustainable aviation fuels and (b) creation of a British sustainable aviation industry.

Robert Courts:

The Government believes that sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) have an important role to play in reducing aviation emissions and we are already providing strong support to the sector through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) and industry competitions.

To further build on this support, as part of the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan, the Government announced an additional £18m in funding as well as an intention to consult on a blending mandate to drive SAF uptake in the UK. This consultation is planned for the summer and will be complemented by supporting ambitions presented in the department's upcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Net Zero Aviation Consultation.

Beyond this, the Government is committed to continue working with stakeholders through the Jet Zero Council's SAF Delivery Group (15 meetings convened to date since November 2020) and other existing channels to explore what further policies are needed to support the sector's development.

■ **Department for Transport: Bank Services**

Debbie Abrahams:

[\[1067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information he holds on the use of Project Bank Accounts by (a) his Department, (b) Government agencies his Department has responsibility for and (c) non-departmental bodies his Department has responsibility for.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Project Bank Accounts are used to ensure fair payment terms on Government construction contracts. As these are specific to construction projects, they are not used by the Department for Transport nor its Agencies. However, the Department's large non-departmental bodies engaged in construction works do use them to improve cash flow, mitigate risk of payment delay and to reduce the risk of supply chain failure. Use of these provide transparency and assurance over payments to suppliers lower down the supply chain in particular.

■ **Driving Tests**

Bill Wiggin:

[\[1000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the backlog of people waiting for a practical driving test.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[1001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time is to undertake a practical driving test in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[1002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average waiting time is to take a practical driving test in (a) England, (b) Herefordshire and (c) North Herefordshire constituency in the latest period for which figures are available.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[1003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people are waiting for a practical driving test in (a) England, (b) Herefordshire and (c) North Herefordshire.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[1004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many more practical driving tests will be available as a result of the planned increased recruitment of examiners.

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 has also started a recruitment campaign to increase the 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.

As at 10 May 2021, the average waiting time for a practical driving test is (a) England 13.4 weeks, (b) Herefordshire (Hereford driving test centre) 15 weeks, (c) North Herefordshire (Ludlow driving test centre) 14 weeks.

The DVSA is currently recruiting up to 300 new driving examiners. If this number of driving examiners are recruited, the number of practical driving tests will increase by up to 40,000 each month.

Bill Wiggin:

[1005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to ensure that people whose driving theory tests are expiring, and who have been unable to book a practical driving test as a result of the covid-19 outbreak, are prioritised.

Rachel Maclean:

The maximum duration of two years between passing the theory test and a subsequent practical test is in place to ensure a candidate's road safety knowledge and ability to identify developing hazards is current. This validity period is set in legislation and the Government has no current plans to lay further legislation to extend it.

It is important road safety knowledge and hazard perception skills are up to date at the critical point a person drives unsupervised for the first time. Those with theory test certificates expiring now will have taken their test in early 2019. Since then, they have been unable to take lessons and practice for long periods of time, and not at all during recent lockdowns. It is difficult to maintain knowledge and understanding of driving theory at the level required during that time without being able to put it into practice. Research suggests that this would be particularly harmful for hazard perception skills, a key factor in road safety.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the preparation of new drivers, who are disproportionality represented in casualty statistics. Learners will therefore need to pass another theory test if their certificate expires.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Costs

Margaret Greenwood:

[1095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the total cost of the HS2 programme.

Andrew Stephenson:

The full HS2 network is estimated to cost between £72-£98Bn (2019 prices). The numbers include contingency to accommodate unforeseeable cost pressures which may emerge during construction, as is to be expected with all major infrastructure projects. More information on cost can be found in the 6-monthly parliamentary reports.

Passenger Ships**Jim Shannon:**[\[731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with relevant stakeholders on architect Stephen Payne's proposal for a Harland and Wolff-constructed vessel aimed at promoting Britain around the world.

Robert Courts:

The Secretary of State for Transport has had no discussions about Stephen Payne's proposal for a Harland and Wolff-constructed vessel aimed at promoting Britain around the World.

Road Traffic: Death and Injuries**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[1027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government plans to take to meet the target of the UN General Assembly resolution 74/299 on reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by at least 50 per cent by 2030.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government takes road safety very seriously and supports the aims of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution to launch a second decade of action and to prevent 50 percent of road traffic deaths and injuries. The Government was active in the negotiations to draft this important international document and continues to support activities that promote road safety both domestically and internationally and which support the aims of this Resolution.

While UK roads continue to be among the safest in the world, we can never afford to be complacent or relax efforts to improve what we do. Reducing the numbers of those needlessly killed and injured on our roads is a key priority for this Department. The Road Safety Statement, 'A Lifetime of Road Safety' published in July 2019, describes many actions that will contribute towards safer road use for everyone including drivers, motorcyclists, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

Trains: Coronavirus**Margaret Greenwood:**[\[1094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the (a) change in the demand for commuter train services that has arisen during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) how that change may affect (i) commuting and (ii) demand for HS2 in the long term.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department for Transport has not yet completed modelling the sensitivity of its major project business cases to post-COVID demand. HS2 is a predominantly long-distance service. There is significant uncertainty around how travel patterns will change post-Covid. This will be assessed more fully as part of the Outline Business Case for the Western Leg of Phase 2b, which we expect to be published by early 2022.

■ **Transport: Coronavirus****Hywel Williams:**[\[76\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the British Transport Police Authority on ensuring effective enforcement of covid-19 restrictions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As the responsible Minister, I have discussed the enforcement of covid-19 restrictions and other operational issues with both the British Transport Police Authority and the Chief Constable of the British Transport Police Force, who is responsible for the delivery of operational policing. In addition, officials have regular discussions with the British Transport Police regarding its work to support Covid-19 regulations and Government guidance.

TREASURY■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Rachael Maskell:**[\[21\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the Government plans to end the entitlement for flood risk management authorities to use red diesel in their operations by 2022.

Kemi Badenoch:

At Budget 2020, the Chancellor announced that he will remove the entitlement to use red diesel from most sectors from April 2022, as the Government is clear that the tax system should incentivise the development of greener alternatives and wants to ensure that, wherever possible, users of polluting fuels are paying the same for the pollution they cause. The Government recognises that these changes may affect some public bodies, including flood risk management authorities, but these changes are designed to incentivise greater energy efficiency and the switch to more environmentally friendly alternatives in the public and private sectors.

The Government takes flood risk very seriously. That is why at Budget 2020 the Chancellor announced that the Government will double the amount it invests in flood and coastal defences to £5.2 billion over six years from 2021.

Mick Whitley: [455]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the potential environmental benefits of expanding the definition of infrastructure under the Levelling Up Fund to include environmental regeneration projects with merit that may have been refused funding under the Green Recovery Challenge as a result of oversubscription.

Mick Whitley: [456]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential economic merits of expanding the definition of infrastructure under the Levelling Up Fund to include environmental regeneration projects with merit that may have been refused funding under the Green Recovery Challenge as a result of oversubscription.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Levelling Up Fund will invest in a range of high value local investment priorities that improves everyday life across the UK. A range of benefits for will considered during the assessment process for the Fund, with projects expected to be fully aligned to UK legal commitments, such as delivering Net Zero. Further information on this can be found on gov.uk.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

Carolyn Harris: [359]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on the levels of illicit alcohol trade of implementing a differential alcohol duty rate for (a) on-trade and (b) off-trade sales.

Carolyn Harris: [360]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of how much and what proportion of savings from a differential duty rate on kegged beer would be passed on to (a) on-trade premises and (b) stakeholders earlier in the supply chain.

Carolyn Harris: [362]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason pubs are considered to hold a special status over off-trade settings including (a) convenience stores and (b) specialist alcohol retailers.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury is considering the merits of differentiating products based on the place of retail as part of its alcohol duty review. We are currently analysing responses provided by stakeholders to our recent call for evidence and will provide further updates in due course.

Carolyn Harris: [361]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the aim of the alcohol duty review remains to simplify the existing system.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the need to reform the current duty system to support the alcoholic drinks and pubs sector in the longer term and that there is a case for simplifying the current complicated system, making the basis of alcohol taxation more economically rational, and reducing the administrative burden on producers.

Bank Services**Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[805\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether new funds are planned to be open to start up mutual banks from banking competition remedies.

Kevin Hollinrake:[\[806\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to establish mutual banks from dormant funds in banks.

John Glen:

The Government welcomes the efforts to establish regional mutual banks and recognises the importance of diversity in the banking system. Officials have been engaging with prospective mutual banks over their efforts to raise capital and look forward to further discussions.

Banking Competition Remedies Ltd (BCR) was established in 2018 as the independent body to implement and oversee the NatWest (previously RBS)-funded Alternative Remedies Package (the Package), including the £425m Capability and Innovation Fund (CIF). This consists of 23 pre-determined grants divided into five pools (A – E). Each pool has a distinct pro-competition purpose based on criteria agreed between HM Treasury (HMT) and the European Commission.

Eligible financial services providers competed for these grants to improve their financial products and services available to SMEs, and to improve their capability to compete with NatWest in the provision of banking services to SMEs. Most of the grants have now been allocated, except £5m worth of funds returned to BCR in January 2021. BCR intend to run a 'Pool F' consultation process for the returned funds in August 2021 and bodies eligible for pools A, B or C will be able to apply.

BCR is independent from government and has sole responsibility for evaluating applications and allocating grants to eligible bodies under the CIF. HMT plays no role in the ongoing delivery of the Package and does not have any influence over the decision-making process.

BCR has responsibility for communicating information regarding the Package to the market. Further information on the Package, including eligibility criteria and timelines for implementation is available on BCR's website.

The distribution of dormant accounts money is governed by the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Act 2008. Following the government's commitment to expanding the Dormant Assets Scheme, the Dormant Assets Bill was introduced to the House of Lords on Wednesday 12 May.

The government recognises the public interest in how this funding is spent in England and has concluded that some increased flexibility in determining this would be beneficial. The Bill therefore amends the approach to restrictions in England in the 2008 Act to mirror the model used for the devolved administrations. This is intended to allow the Government to respond to public feedback and evolving social and environmental needs in England over time by setting the causes through secondary legislation, which is subject to due consultation and parliamentary approval. Should the measure pass, the Government intends to launch a public consultation on the causes to which future funding can be distributed in England.

■ Currencies

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[629\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the Manx pound has not been approved for use as legal currency in the UK.

John Glen:

The Isle of Man is not part of the UK, but is a self-governing dependency of the Crown, and issues its own currency that is governed under Manx law.

It is also not the case that payment between contracting parties in the UK must necessarily be made using a specified method of payment. It is a matter for the prospective parties to a contract to stipulate whatever form of payment they wish.

■ Financial Services Compensation Scheme

Dawn Butler:

[\[1020\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on extending the Financial Services Compensation Scheme to payday lending companies.

John Glen:

The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) is the compensation scheme of last resort for customers of failed UK-licensed financial services firms and is funded by a levy on the financial services industry. The FSCS is an independent non-governmental body and carries out its compensation function within rules set by the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and they have the power to decide which activities are given FSCS protection. In 2016, the FCA decided not to extend FSCS protection to most consumer credit activities because it believed other regulatory requirements were sufficient.

The FCA's reasoning for not extending FSCS protection was set out in a letter on 15 February 2019 from its Chief Executive to the Chair of the Treasury Select Committee. This reasoning was that consumer credit firms did not generally hold client assets; losses to consumers had reduced since the FCA had taken over regulation of consumer credit; and, because the cost of providing FSCS cover for high-cost short-term credit would likely need to be subsidised by levies on other regulated firms. A copy of that letter can be found [here](#):

<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-committees/treasury/correspondence/2017-19/fca-chief-executive-to-chair-re-wonga-150219.pdf>.

Treasury ministers and officials meet regularly with the FCA, and the Government will continue to work closely with the FCA to ensure consumers of financial services are treated fairly.

■ Investment: Fraud

Nicola Richards:

[566]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to tackle financial crime and protect individuals and businesses from fraudulent investment schemes.

John Glen:

The UK has been recognised as world leading in its response to economic crime. Criminals, however, are continuously adapting their methods and we know there is more work to be done to tackle financial crime and fraud.

In 2019, the Government and private sector jointly published a landmark Economic Crime Plan. This Plan provides a collective articulation of 52 actions being taken by both the public and private sectors over the next three years to ensure the UK cannot be abused for economic crime.

The Government has also agreed an ambitious framework for a Fraud Action Plan, covering years 2022 to 2025. This will include the Government working with industry, the intelligence services, law enforcement, and all partners to tackle fraud. The Home Office are developing the Fraud Action Plan and the Government will publish this after this year's spending review.

Regulation also plays an important part in reducing the risk of fraud to consumers. As part of the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) responsibility to ensure the integrity of UK financial markets, the FCA requires all authorised firms to have systems and controls in place to mitigate the risk that they be used to commit financial crime. Whilst the police have primary responsibility for investigating fraud the FCA also has powers to take a variety of enforcement action against firms that carry out fraudulent activity. The Treasury continues to keep the legislative framework under review to ensure that it is effective in reducing the risk of fraud.

The Government takes fraud very seriously. We continue to work closely with industry to close down the vulnerabilities that fraudsters exploit and ensure members of the public have the information they need to spot a scam and stand up to fraudsters.

■ Loans: Interest Rates

Carla Lockhart:

[\[1224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent progress has been made on the pilot no-interest loan scheme; and whether that scheme will operate in Northern Ireland.

John Glen:

At Budget 2021, the Government announced up to £3.8 million of funding to support a pilot No-Interest Loans Scheme. The Government has been working closely with stakeholders, including with Devolved Administrations, to facilitate the pilot. An independent organisation will deliver the pilot. Further details, including the territorial extent of the pilot, will be announced in due course.

■ Money Lenders: Insolvency

Dawn Butler:

[\[1021\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with representatives of the Financial Conduct Authority on ensuring that adjudicator rulings are included in consideration for compensation when payday lending companies go into administration.

John Glen:

Where a high-cost credit firm enters administration, customers with outstanding compensation claims, including those which result from an adjudication by the Financial Ombudsman Service, become unsecured creditors in the administration, and so will be paid after secured creditors and preferential creditors.

Treasury ministers and officials meet regularly with the FCA, and the Government will continue to work closely with the FCA to ensure consumers of financial services are treated fairly.

■ Mutuals' Deferred Shares Act 2015

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to bring forward regulations for Mutual Deferred Shares under the Mutuals' Deferred Shares Act 2015.

John Glen:

The Government has consulted widely with industry representatives in considering whether to lay secondary legislation to enable mutual insurers to raise equity by issuing Mutual Deferred Shares. Mutual insurers and their representatives made clear that Mutual Deferred Shares would only be issued if they both qualified as Tier 1 regulatory capital and would not alter the tax treatment of the issuing mutual. The Government's decision in 2018 not to lay secondary legislation was taken based on an assessment that it was not possible to design Mutual Deferred Shares to meet both these conditions. The Government is committed to supporting the mutuals sector, but continues to have no plans to bring forward such legislation.

■ Pensions: Tax Allowances

David Linden: [833]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the proposed freeze to the lifetime allowance does not encourage senior healthcare workers to retire earlier than planned.

David Linden: [834]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the pension lifetime allowance freeze on staffing levels in the NHS.

David Linden: [835]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing similar provision to NHS workers to that offered to the judiciary to mitigate against the effect of the pension lifetime allowance freeze on NHS workers.

John Glen:

The NHS remains the Government's key spending priority. This is why the Government is increasing the NHS budget in England from £114.6 billion in 2018-19 to £148.5 billion in 2023-24.

The Government has also provided unprecedented support during the Covid-19 pandemic. As of 3 March 2021, taking into account the significant funding announced at Spending Review 2020 and Budget 2021, total support provided for the economy is £352bn across 2020-21 and 2021-22, or around 17 per cent of 2020 GDP. The Government must make responsible decisions to ensure the process of returning the public finances to a sustainable path is not harder than it needs to be.

Pensions tax relief is one of the most expensive reliefs in the personal tax system. In 2017-18 income tax and employer National Insurance Contributions reliefs cost £54 billion, with around 60 per cent going to higher and additional rate taxpayers. 92% of individuals approaching retirement over the next 5 years will have a pension below the lifetime allowance and so will not be affected by this change.

The unique circumstances of judiciary appointments mean that it is necessary to reform their pension arrangements. Judges are not able to work in private practice after taking up office, and many judges take a significant pay cut to join the judiciary. The combination of these factors is why the Government is committed to introduce a reformed judicial pension scheme. Such a scheme would not benefit the vast majority of NHS staff, as members would receive no tax relief on their contributions.

■ Photographs: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [1183]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support is available to people working in the travel photography industry who have been affected by the covid-19 restrictions.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government appreciates the significant disruption the pandemic has had on the travel and tourism sector and is very grateful for people's patience as it works to protect the NHS and save lives.

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. To do this, the Government has put in place an unprecedented economic package of support which will provide businesses and individuals with certainty over the coming months.

Measures announced at Spring Budget 2021 which businesses, including photography companies, may benefit from include extensions to the furlough scheme; extensions to the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS); extensions to the COVID-19 loan schemes; a business rates holiday; mortgage holidays; enhanced Time to Pay for taxes; and an extension to the reduced rate of VAT for businesses in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The Government is also conscious of the fact that demand for travel is influenced by international travel restrictions. Government's objective is to see a safe and sustainable return to international travel. That's why we have worked with industry and international partners to set up a Traffic Light System to facilitate the return of international travel while managing variants of concern.

We have recently published details of countries that fall into which category of the Traffic Light System and confirmed that international travel can resume from 17 May 2021. Our priority remains to protect public health, which is why the 'green' list is currently very small. As the epidemiological situation improves worldwide, it is expected that there will be more opportunities for leisure travel with a greater number of destinations added.

■ Renewable Fuels: Excise Duties**Philip Dunne:****[646]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing duty for (a) hydrotreated vegetable oil and (b) other renewable liquid fuels for home heating purposes.

Kemi Badenoch:

Hydrotreated vegetable oil is a direct substitute for diesel and it is therefore taxed at the rebated rate for diesel when it is used for home heating. There are no duty incentives for renewable fuels used as a direct substitute for diesel, and it would be difficult to legislate for a complex scale of duty rates to be applied to different hydrocarbon oil products. The Government will keep this under review to determine whether there is a case to make changes to the taxation of this fuel.

The UK is the first major economy in the world to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050 and the Government's Renewable Heat Incentive, currently worth over £1 billion per year, supports households to install renewable heating systems such as heat

pumps and biomass boilers. The forthcoming Heat and Building Strategy will set out the Government's position on the transition to low carbon off gas-grid heating, but fiscal decisions are a matter for Budgets.

■ **Soft Drinks: Taxation**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[1220\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has been generated by the Soft Drinks Industry Levy in the last three years; and how much of that revenue has been provided to Northern Ireland through Barnett consequentials.

Kemi Badenoch:

Since its introduction in April 2018, the provisional total for revenue raised from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy up to and including March 2021 is £878 million. This consists of the following amounts raised per financial year:

2018-19: £240 million 2019-20: £337 million 2020-21 (provisional): £301 million

Funding for the devolved administrations through the Barnett formula is based on UK Government spending rather than revenues. A breakdown of the Northern Ireland Executive's funding, including Barnett consequentials, can be found in the Block Grant Transparency publication.

WORK AND PENSIONS

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

Kate Osamor:

[\[383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 181077 and the Advertising Standards Authority's Ruling on her Department in association with Associated Newspapers of 6 November 2019, if she will set out the steps she is taking to ensure the proposed Universal Credit Take Up campaign complies with the Advertising Standards Authority Code.

Guy Opperman:

The Department works closely with the Advertising Standards Authority on all of its paid media campaigns to ensure they follow industry best practice.

All campaign messaging is shared with the Advertising Standards Authority Copy Advice Team as part of the rigorous approval process which precedes the launch of all DWP campaigns.

Angela Richardson:

[\[528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the announcement by his Department that people who have lived in a homeless hostel will be exempt from the shared accommodation rate, whether that exemption will include people living in supported accommodation.

Will Quince:

The exemption is for those who have spent at least three months in a specialist hostel (or hostels) for homeless people, where the main purpose of that hostel is to provide accommodation, care, supervision or support, with a view to assisting homeless people to be rehabilitated or resettled in the community. Further, to be eligible for this exemption they would need to have been offered and accepted support services to enable them to be rehabilitated or resettled in the community during their time in the hostel.

Supported housing covers a broad range of accommodation types including sheltered housing for older people and long-term housing for people with care needs. However, short-term supported housing could meet the definition above if it is hostel accommodation and its main purpose is to support and re-habilitate or resettle homeless people into the community.

Mr Barry Sheerman:**[62]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support is in place to assist (a) people and (b) people with mental health difficulties with financial management and guidance on budgeting in cases where a large back payment has been awarded.

Justin Tomlinson:

When a large back payment is made there are a number of mechanisms in place to support a customer, including those who may be vulnerable. These mechanisms depend on the legislative framework within the product line, and include payments being split between the customer and a third party with the customer's consent, payments being paid in full to a third party who will support the customer to manage the payment, or paying smaller amounts staggered over a period of time.

For example, within Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Universal Credit, where we identify that there may be an impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of a customer when they receive an arrears payment or a payment outside of their usual payment cycle, we work with the customer to understand their needs and help them to identify and access appropriate support.

This financial management support may include utilising the support of the Department's Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders and signposting customers to external organisations. These organisations include the Money Advice Service, Money Advice Trust, Citizens Advice or the customer's own support worker, to ensure they are supported with the management of these funds.

We also offer budgeting support to customers receiving their regular benefits entitlement. In UC a referral process is in place where a need for Personal Budgeting Support is identified; this includes referral to online information, or a personal appointment by phone or in person to discuss a customer's individual requirements. In some cases, an Alternative Payment Arrangement is agreed - where for example, payments are made more frequently or directly to a landlord to support claimants with longer term budgeting problems.

■ Housing Benefits: Lone Parents

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[1175]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of lone parent families claiming housing benefit are women.

Will Quince:

The statistics requested are published and available in Table 4 – Family Type by Gender of the Housing Benefit section at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract further information can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Occupational Health

Vicky Foxcroft:

[368]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 16 March 2021 to Question 166493 on Occupational Health, what further progress her Department has made towards publishing in full the survey entitled, Sickness absence and health in the workplace: understanding employer behaviour and practice employers relating to workplace health following the publication of the interim report of that title in June 2019.

Justin Tomlinson:

As highlighted in our response to [Question 166493](#), the forthcoming government response to the Health is Everyone's Business consultation draws on evidence in the 'Sickness absence and health in the workplace' report. It is therefore our intention for the research report to be published alongside the consultation response which we anticipate will be available shortly.

■ Older Workers

John Spellar:

[900021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect on levels of employment among older people of employers requiring non-job specific qualifications.

Mims Davies:

The vast majority, almost 90% of 50-64 year olds do possess qualifications, It is important that employers look at the experience that people have learnt over their careers, and the true value that they are able to bring to that company.

The Government is working to ensure that all employers understand the value of a workforce of all ages, engaging with them to reap the many benefits of recruiting and employing older workers and the values of a multigenerational workforce via Andy Briggs, the Business Champion for Older Workers, influencing employers both strategically and in terms of practical advice.

Where beneficial, older workers can get help from Jobcentre Plus to convert their current qualifications into more modern certifications if appropriate. Jobcentre Plus is also working alongside DWP's National Employers Service Team to develop links with employers and challenge perceptions of older claimants

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to upskill, including through the lifetime skills guarantee.

■ Pension Credit

Neil Coyle: [261]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to (a) raise awareness and (b) promote uptake of pension credit through targeted communications aimed at people in receipt of universal credit approaching state pension age.

Guy Opperman:

Universal Credit claimants who are identified as approaching State Pension Age are sent a message via their personal online journal which directs them towards Pension Credit.

Neil Coyle: [262]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions of 25 January 2021, Official Report, column 16, if the Government will publish (a) the full list of changes to Government communications that have been made as a result of the review of communication products on pension credit and (b) an evaluation of whether those changes have improved uptake of pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

The Pension Credit material on gov.uk has been updated, providing clear information on how Pension Credit can help pensioners and how easy it is to claim, particularly with the introduction of online service last year which enables family, friends and organisations to help pensioners make a claim. New State Pension information on gov.uk has also been refreshed and amendments to clerical products used to claim Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment to promote Pension Credit.

The latest Pension Credit stats can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2018-to-2019>

■ Post Office Card Account

Colum Eastwood: [1221]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to assist customers of Post Office card accounts who will no longer be able to use those accounts for the receipt of benefits as of November 2021.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is committed to supporting claimants to access their benefit and pension payments as we transform our payment exception services. Nobody will be left without a means to access to their benefits or pension.

The Department has put in place a dedicated team, the Financial Inclusion Customer Contact Centre. This team are able to support all Post Office Card Account customers to update their payment details to a standard account, answer questions about the payment change and to signpost customers to impartial financial advice available through the Money and Pensions Service where they need help to identify a suitable alternative account.

Customers who are unable to access a standard account will continue to receive their benefit and pension payments through an alternative payment exception service.

The Financial Inclusion Customer Contact Centre can be contacted on 0800 085 7133 Freephone.

■ Social Security Benefits**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[1170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of financial support provided to people who have moved from (a) severe disability premium and (b) other legacy benefits to universal credit.

Justin Tomlinson:

No assessment has been made of the adequacy of financial support provided to people who have moved from Severe Disability Premium and other legacy benefits to universal credit.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 155226, what further progress her Department has made in its discussions with representatives of (a) the Independent Assessment Service and (b) Capita on finding a suitable method of audio recording face-to-face assessments; and when those discussions will conclude.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is currently working with both PIP Assessment Providers to deliver an audio recording service for face to face assessments that removes the requirement for the Claimant to provide the equipment. This will bring the audio recording of face to face assessments in line with the audio recording of telephone assessments.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 23 March 2021 to Question 169910, what recent progress her Department has made towards (a) implementing the key areas identified in the review of the Special Rules for Terminal Illness, (b) a consensus to change the six-month rule, (c) improving consistency with other services used by people nearing the end of their lives and (d) raising awareness of the support that is available.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. The Department remains committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation and will announce the outcome in due course.

■ State Retirement Pensions: National Insurance Contributions

Paul Blomfield: [\[1048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of reforming the qualification criteria for the State Pension to include part year National Insurance contributions.

Guy Opperman:

There are no plans to change the National Insurance qualifying year definitions for State Pension purposes.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Payments

Jessica Morden: [\[161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time is (a) between receipt of an application for state pension and date of the first payment and (b) between reaching state pension age and the date of the first payment of state pension.

Guy Opperman:

The information requested is not readily available, as to provide it would require complex interrogation of our systems and would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Universal Credit

Peter Grant: [\[1111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on ensuring that monthly salaries are automatically reallocated within assessment periods for universal credit, where a claimant gets two monthly salary payments in a single assessment period following the decision made by the Court of Appeal in June 2020 in the case of Johnson, Woods, Barrett and Stewart v. the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Will Quince:

The legislation we introduced on 16th November 2020 provides a remedy to the Court of Appeal Judgment in the case of Johnson and others and allows us to reallocate monthly earnings to another assessment period. This means that claimants affected by this issue will have one salary payment taken into account in each assessment period rather than two.

To meet the Court of Appeal Judgment as soon as was practicable we introduced a solution based on a streamlined dispute process currently in place. This has enabled those who are affected to benefit under this regulation and claimants simply need to tell their work coach either in one of their regular discussions or via their journal if they think they are affected.

We expect to automate identification of affected claimants in mid-summer 2021. This will allow us to correct awards proactively before they are paid, without the need for the claimant to raise the issue.

Stephen Crabb:[\[1283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to increase data sharing with local authorities on universal credit.

Stephen Crabb:[\[1284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of sharing universal credit data with local authorities to help improve local responses to poverty.

Will Quince:

The Department already shares significant amounts of Universal Credit (UC) data through a secure mechanism with Local Authorities (LAs), including through a daily feed of change notifications to support administration of Council Tax Reduction schemes. In addition, LAs have access to claimant level UC data via a system called Searchlight. We continue to engage with LAs to enhance our understanding of how data access may support localised provision.

To further support LAs in identifying vulnerable families, we are also planning to provide them with information about those Universal Credit claims with limited capability for work as well as claims with earnings below the free school meals and free prescription thresholds before the end of May.

■ Universal Credit: Automation**Munira Wilson:**[\[478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to improve the guidance on the Universal Credit (Earned Income) Amendment Regulations 2020 (2020/1138) on her Department's website.

Guy Opperman:

The Department updated its online information to reflect changes to the reallocation of reported payments as detailed in Universal Credit (Earned Income) Amendment

Regulations 2020 (2020/1138) on 16 November 2020. The information can be seen at <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-youre-paid> and <https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/new-to-universal-credit/universal-credit-and-work/>

■ Veterans: Pensions

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that British veterans living in Commonwealth countries receive the full value of their pension.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether British veterans living in the EU will continue to receive annual uprating adjustments to their State Pensions.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that British veterans living anywhere in the world receive annual uprating adjustments to their State Pensions.

Guy Opperman:

The UK State Pension is payable worldwide to those who meet the qualifying conditions. Entitlement is based on an individual's National Insurance record without regard to nationality.

State Pension arrangements are unchanged following the UK's Exit from the EU. The Withdrawal Agreement provides up-rating for those who moved to the EU before 1 January 2021 and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides up-rating for those who move to the EU from 1 January 2021

Annual index-linked increases are paid to UK State Pension recipients where there is a legal requirement to do so. For example, where UK State Pension recipients are living in countries where there is a reciprocal agreement that provides for uprating of the UK State Pension. This is a long-standing policy which has been supported by successive Governments for over 70 years. The Government has no plans to change this policy.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Government response to the public consultation on the National Data Strategy and the Data Sharing Code of Practice**

Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):

[\[HCWS37\]](#)

I am pleased to inform the House that the Government is today publishing our response to the public consultation on the UK National Data Strategy and laying the Information Commissioner's Office, Data Sharing Code of Practice.

Government response to the public consultation on the National Data Strategy

The National Data Strategy, published in September 2020, set out a framework for action to maximise the power of responsible data use across the UK. It also launched a 13 week consultation which closed in December 2020. We received 282 unique responses from across the public sector, civil society, industry and academia, as well as from members of the general public. Consultation feedback has confirmed that our framework is fit for purpose. Many respondents also recognised the need to rebalance the narrative, moving away from thinking about data use primarily as a threat to be managed, and instead recognising data as an asset that, used responsibly, can deliver economic and public benefits across the UK.

The government response to the consultation builds on the insights we received, and details how we will deliver across our priority areas of action in such a way that builds public trust and ensures that the opportunities from better data use work for everyone, everywhere. This includes setting out our plans to create a National Data Strategy Forum which will ensure that a diverse range of perspectives continue to inform the strategy's implementation. The response also reflects on the crucial role of data in building back better after the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the coming months, we will publish focused updates on progress in delivering specific missions and/or actions within the National Data Strategy.

Data Sharing Code of Practice

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the UK's independent data protection regulator and has a statutory duty under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) to produce a code of practice that provides practical guidance on data sharing. Today, the government has laid the ICO's data sharing code in Parliament. Alongside the laying of the code, the ICO has launched a data sharing information hub on its website, where organisations and businesses can find clear guidance and practical tools on how to share data fairly, lawfully and transparently, while protecting people's personal information.

The Government is committed to working with the ICO to promote responsible data sharing which can have benefits for the economy and the delivery of public services. The National Data Strategy recognised that better use of data can help organisations of every

kind succeed – across the public, private and third sectors. Data can be a driver of scientific and technological innovation, and central to the delivery of a whole range of vital public services and societal goals, from tackling climate change to supporting the National Health Service.

A copy of each document will be placed in the library of the House today.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Plans to restore nature

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):
[\[HCWS38\]](#)

The events of the last twelve months have led people to appreciate the difference that nature makes to our lives more than ever before. Restoring nature will be crucial as we seek to build back greener from this pandemic, and in what is a huge year for the environment we will use our COP26 and G7 presidencies to take a leading role on driving a global green recovery on the world stage.

As a core part of our commitment to leave the environment in a better state than we found it, **and acting on the recommendations of the Dasgupta Review, we are announcing today that we will be amending the Environment Bill to require a historic, new legally binding target on species abundance for 2030- aiming to halt the decline of nature in England.** We hope that this world leading measure will be the Net Zero equivalent for nature, spurring action of the scale required to address the biodiversity crisis.

We will develop this target alongside the longer term legally-binding targets we are already developing in the Environment Bill, and set the final target in secondary legislation following the agreement of global targets at the UN Nature Conference CBD COP15 in autumn 2021. This amendment will be tabled at Lords Committee Stage.

We shouldn't underestimate the scale of the challenge ahead in halting the decline of nature. Over the last 50 years, much of the UK's wildlife-rich habitat has been lost or degraded, and many of our once common species are in long-term decline. We have also come to better understand the link between our own health, and economic prosperity, and that of the planet. The independent, global Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, led by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, has shown us that a healthy natural world, measured in its diversity of life, underpins so much of our economic prosperity and resilience.

To achieve our new target, alongside others in the Bill, we will also need measures that go beyond what is in the Bill.

We are also announcing today:

- An England Peat Action Plan to restore, sustainably manage and protect our peatlands. We will restore at least 35,000 ha of peatland by 2025, investing £50

million through the Nature for Climate fund and phasing out the most damaging practices to our peatland.

- An England Trees Action Plan to better protect our existing trees and expand woodland coverage, aiming for 12% woodland cover by the middle of the century. Over £500 million of the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund is dedicated to trees. Tree planting rates in England will treble by the end of this Parliament to benefit our local communities, nature and climate.
- Species reintroduction measures to recover threatened species and continue to provide opportunities for successful reintroductions. We want to see a more nature rich Britain, with further action to bend the curve of species loss in this country.

If we are to deliver this ambitious new target and reverse the downward trend we have seen in recent decades, we need to change our approach. We must move the emphasis away from processes that simply moderated the pace of nature's decline, and instead put in place the governance regime that can deliver nature's recovery. We need to create space for the creative public policy thinking that can deliver results, rather than relying on change being set by litigation and case law.

I am therefore also announcing today that I will be tabling an amendment to the Environment Bill to provide for a power to re-focus the Habitats Regulations to our domestic priorities. We want to ensure our legislation adequately supports our ambitions for nature, including our new world leading targets, rather than remaining tied to legacy EU legislation. We have already set out some important measures in the Environment Bill to switch the focus to nature recovery. We have the requirement for environmental targets on wider areas, for example water quality; a requirement for an Environment Improvement Plan; Local Nature Recovery Strategies to steer habitats delivered through biodiversity net gain; and Natural England are making progress with a more strategic approach to nature recovery through their support for delivering the Nature Recovery Network.

We will take a measured approach to reform. We will also consult with the new Office for Environmental Protection, and work with conservation groups on any proposals we develop before any regulatory changes are made. In addition, later this year, I intend to bring forward a Green Paper setting out how we plan to deliver a regulatory framework that is fit for purpose in driving forward our domestic ambitions now that we have left the EU, including our objective of protecting 30 percent of terrestrial land by 2030. We need a revised approach to deliver this new species abundance target and better support iconic and much-loved native species like the hedgehog.

As announced in the Queen's Speech on 11 May, we will also be bringing forward amendments in the Lords to reduce the harm from storm overflows to our rivers, waterways and coastlines. New duties will require government to publish a plan to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows by September 2022 and report to Parliament on the progress towards implementing the plan. Water companies and the Environment Agency will be required to publish data on storm overflow operations annually.

These new measures will complement the existing provisions in the Environment Bill, which will tackle air, water and waste pollution, which are critical to meeting our goals of net zero emissions, stemming and reversing biodiversity loss and improving public health.

Work on implementing measures in the Environment Bill has continued since it was last in the Commons. We have appointed the first chair of the Office for Environmental Protection, Dame Glenys Stacey. We have published a draft Principles Policy Statement, started work on developing legally binding environmental targets, launched consultations on the deposit return schemes for drinks containers, and extended producer responsibility for packaging and consistent recycling collections.

The Environment Bill will have its final day of Report and Third Reading in the Commons on 26 May, before moving to the Lords. We are aiming for Royal Assent in the Autumn. In the year of COP26, the Environment Bill is at the core of delivering the Government's manifesto commitment to deliver the most ambitious environmental programme of any country on earth and leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Call for Input - Canada and Mexico Trade Deals

Secretary of State for Department of International Trade (Elizabeth Truss):

[\[HCWS35\]](#)

The Call for Input on future Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Canada and Mexico will formally be launching as of today.

The UK has set its sights on the next generation of British-shaped trade deals to secure closer economic ties with major economies of today and tomorrow, with Canada currently being the 9th largest economy in the world, and Mexico forecast to become the 7th largest by 2050. These deals will secure more access for British goods and services, opening significant new opportunities for UK business by boosting trade with Canada and Mexico, already worth £22.8bn and £5.1bn respectively in 2019. They will cement the UK's position as a world-leader in digital and services trade, and constituent key building blocks to UK membership of CPTPP as well as delivering benefits to the whole of the UK.

The UK signed Trade Continuity Agreements (TCAs) with both Canada and Mexico before the end of the Transition Period and committed to start negotiating the new trade deals later this year. Building on the deals signed in 2020, which secured tariff-free exports on 98% and 88% of goods to Canada and Mexico respectively, this next generation of trade deals provides the opportunity to set new benchmarks in areas like digital trade, climate and women's economic empowerment, and cement the UK's position as world-leader in digital and services trade.

The Call for Input will provide businesses, public sector bodies, individuals and other interested stakeholders with the opportunity to give valuable feedback and highlight their priorities for our future trading relationship with these two countries.

The feedback received from stakeholders will be crucial when shaping our mandate, and will inform detailed negotiations preparation, and policy positions. The Department for International Trade is committed to ensuring future FTAs and their provisions are informed by stakeholder needs and shaped by the demands of the British economy.

The UK is to begin negotiations for upgraded trade deals with Canada and Mexico this year focused on creating even greater opportunities for UK businesses. Our new negotiations will allow us to go further to boost trade with these economies. Canada was the UK's 15th largest export market in 2019, and according to IMF data, Mexico ranks as the 15th largest economy worldwide, with a market of over 130 million consumers. Offering significant opportunities for UK businesses in industries including automotive manufacturing and food and drink.

Forging stronger trade links with Canada and Mexico will also support the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), as they are both members. CPTPP is at the cutting edge of global trade and will remove barriers, raise standards and support jobs, putting the UK at the centre of an increasingly influential and modern trade network of 11 economies in the Indo-Pacific region with a combined GDP of almost £9 trillion in 2019. Joining will help open up a new horizon of opportunities for British businesses, particularly in services and digital and data provisions. Canada and Mexico also represent the 2nd and 4th largest economies out of the CPTPP countries, which in total account for 13% of global GDP. This would increase to more than 16% if the UK were to join.

The UK and our partners in Canada and Mexico share a desire to launch negotiations later this year. The Call for Input will strive to support the goal of greater economic prosperity for businesses and it will ensure that their needs are heard. The Government is committed to transparency and will ensure that Parliament, the devolved administrations, UK citizens and businesses have access to information on our trade negotiations.

The call for input can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/trade-with-canada-and-mexico-call-for-input>

TRANSPORT

■ Local Transport Update

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[HCWS36]

The Government and the Mayor of London have agreed to extend the current Transport for London (TfL) funding deal. The deal was due to expire on 18 May 2021 but this extension will continue to support the capital and the transport network until 28 May 2021 on the same terms as now. The extension will provide certainty while we finalise the terms of the next funding deal which will get TfL onto a more financially sustainable footing.

The extension comprises an additional funding payment of £65m with a top up grant available based on actual passenger revenues.

The Government has repeatedly shown that it is committed to supporting the running of essential services across the capital with over £3bn emergency funding provided since the start of the pandemic. Support for London needs to be balanced with the national recovery and ensure fairness and value for money for the taxpayer. The Government will continue to work with TfL and the Mayor so TfL can be financially sustainable as soon as possible.