



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 May 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 20 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Kirsten Oswald:

[900292]

Whether his Department has received representations on the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law.

Michael Ellis:

The Member for East Renfrewshire will be aware of my decision, alongside the Advocate General's for Scotland, to refer the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill to the Supreme Court on legislative competence grounds. We have also referred the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill.

It would not be appropriate for me to comment in detail on what are live proceedings.

Ultimately, our concerns with regards to these Bills do not relate to their policy content, nor to the approach the Scottish Parliament has taken in incorporating these international agreements into Scots law. Rather they relate to specific provisions in the Bill and whether they fall outside the Scottish Parliament's legislative powers.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Amazon: Delivery Services

Ben Lake:

[2396]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made any recent representations to Amazon UK on (a) the adequacy of working conditions for its delivery drivers, (b) requests from their delivery drivers for a meeting with Amazon's leadership team and (c) the potential merits of reviewing the delivery targets for Amazon UK delivery drivers.

Paul Scully:

The Government actively encourages businesses to ensure their supply chains are robust, especially by ensuring partners treat workers fairly and in accordance with the law. The specific issues raised by the Hon. Member for Ceredigion about Amazon and their contractors are internal matters of a private company on which I cannot comment.

I am thankful to our valuable retail workers who continued to work over the last year in warehouses, supply chains and as delivery drivers throughout this challenging period, ensuring consumers have safe access to goods. I look forward to continuing to work with Amazon, in particular through the Retail Sector Council.

■ Animal Experiments

Alex Sobel:

[\[2431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to learn from international efforts to accelerate the replacement of animal experiments with human-relevant methods, including (a) the commitment made by the United States Environmental Protection Agency to stop funding and requesting tests on mammals by 2035 and (b) the collaborative work being undertaken in the Netherlands to develop strategies for research without using animals.

Amanda Solloway:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is committed to ensuring that the UK remains at the forefront of global efforts to improve the use and welfare of laboratory animals. The use of animals in research is carefully regulated and remains important in ensuring new medicines and treatments are safe. The government funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved primarily through UKRI funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs) which works nationally and internationally to drive the uptake of 3Rs technologies and ensure that advances in the 3Rs are reflected in policy, practice and regulations on animal research. Across the UK, the NC3Rs has invested £71 million in research through grants to universities.

We recognise the important signal that the commitment of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to phase out animal testing on mammals by 2035 sends. The UK through the NC3Rs has been effective at changing international regulations on chemical and pharmaceutical safety assessment. For example, the US Office of Pesticide Programs which is part of the US Environmental Protection Agency has recently changed its fish testing requirements for bioconcentration factor studies based on the NC3Rs work in this area.

The NC3RS CRACK IT Challenges, which funds R&D to solve major challenges relating to the use of animals, includes funded research teams in the EU with the NC3Rs committing £4.35 million to teams led by organisations in the Netherlands. The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development has launched Create2Solve, a funding call in its 'More Knowledge with Fewer Animals' programme, that is entirely based on the NC3Rs CRACK IT Challenges programme.

Alex Sobel:

[\[2432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a new Department or Ministerial position dedicated to accelerating the replacement of animals in research with artificial intelligence, the use of human cells or tissues, organ-on-a-chip technology and other human relevant methods.

Amanda Solloway:

The use of animals in research is carefully regulated and remains important in ensuring new medicines and treatments are safe. The Government funds the

development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funds a portfolio of research projects involving humans, human materials, animal models, and non-animal technologies. At this time, whole organism approaches continue to be important as they can replicate aspects of disease complexity when experimentation in human volunteers is not possible for safety or ethical reasons. We do recognise the increasing value of *in vitro* and *in silico* models, including organs-on-chips and 3-dimensional mini-brains, which can greatly aid the development of new healthcare innovations and also reduce, refine or replace the use of animals in research.

Between 2015-2019, UKRI's Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) spent over £7 million on research grants aimed at developing and applying innovative methodologies to studying human and animal physiology, including *in silico* approaches, organ-on-a-chip, organoid and other advanced cell culture systems. These methodologies have the potential to reduce the use of animals in research and provide more effective tools for studying human and animal biology. In addition, BBSRC supports the UK Animal Research Network which aims to bring the animal research community together to improve collaboration, and help sustain and develop UK animal welfare research.

■ **Hospitality Industry: Recruitment**

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[2300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to incentivise people to return to or apply for hospitality jobs as businesses begin to reopen as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

The Department has and continues to regularly meet with representatives from across the sector to discuss how it can recover and build back from the pandemic.

■ **Nuclear Power: Finance**

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[2492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made on the funding models for nuclear energy announced in the Energy White Paper; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of those models on Ynys Môn.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As we stated in our response to the consultation on a Regulated Asset Base (RAB) for nuclear published on 14th December 2020, the Government is continuing to explore a RAB model. We will also continue to consider the potential role of Government finance during construction, provided there is clear value for money for consumers and taxpayers and subject to relevant approvals.

We believe that a RAB remains a credible model for large-scale nuclear projects, including future projects proposed for Wales, as it has the potential to help reduce the cost of raising private finance and thereby reduce consumer bills in the long run.

■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Mr Kevan Jones: [2211]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the scope of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry will include investigation of those who took the decision to conduct private prosecutions against sub-postmasters.

Paul Scully:

I announced to the House on 19 May 2021 that the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry would be put on a statutory footing on 1 June 2021. At the same time, I made a written ministerial statement with the revised Terms of Reference for the Inquiry. That statement can be found at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-05-19/hcws40>

The Inquiry's revised Terms of Reference have been clarified to make clear that the Inquiry can investigate the Post Office's decision-making in pursuing the prosecution of Postmasters in relation to Horizon.

■ Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry: Witnesses

Mr Kevan Jones: [2212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a comprehensive list of witnesses that have been asked to give evidence to the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry.

Paul Scully:

The Inquiry is independent of government, but I would expect the Inquiry will provide detail of the witnesses who are being called ahead of the hearings once these are scheduled.

Mr Kevan Jones: [2217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what powers the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry has in the event that people refuse to come forward to give evidence.

Paul Scully:

I announced to the House on 19 May 2021 that, with the agreement of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I will put the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry on to a statutory footing on 1 June 2021. This change will give Sir Wyn Williams powers to compel organisations to provide documents and witnesses to give evidence, under oath if necessary, to ensure the Inquiry can get to the bottom of what happened and get the postmasters the answers they are looking for.

CABINET OFFICE**■ 11 Downing Street: Repairs and Maintenance**

John Nicolson: [1322]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on what dates renovation work on the Number 11 Downing Street flat took place.

Cat Smith: [2336]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what renovations and refurbishments have been made to the Downing Street flat since Boris Johnson became Prime Minister in July 2019.

Cat Smith: [2337]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much (a) funding from the public purse and (b) private funding has been spent on renovations and refurbishment of the Downing Street flat since Boris Johnson became Prime Minister in July 2019.

Cat Smith: [2338]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much (a) public and (b) private money has been spent on renovation and refurbishment of the Downing Street flats since the Prime Minister took up office in July 2019.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer by my noble friend, Lord True (Minister of State at the Cabinet Office), of [PQ HL14191](#), on 23 April 2021.

■ Animal Products: UK Trade with EU

Stephen Farry: [1222]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government is taking to convene a meeting of the SPS Specialised Committee under the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement.

Penny Mordaunt:

Now that the Trade and Cooperation Agreement has been ratified, its committees will begin their work. The dates and arrangements for the first meeting of each committee, including the SPS Specialised Committee, are yet to be finalised.

■ Census: Gender Recognition

Rachael Maskell: [1128]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason Census 2021 did not include gender identity on the forms required to be completed by students at their term-time address.

Julia Lopez:

Students should complete the household or individual census questionnaires depending on whether or not they have a different address at term time. Both questionnaires contain the voluntary question on gender identity.

■ Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission**Dan Jarvis:**[\[2298\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the answer from the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice to Q90 on 8 December 2020 during the oral evidence session of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, The Government's Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission HC892, for what reason his Department decided against establishing a Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission.

Dan Jarvis:[\[2299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the oral evidence session on 8 December 2020 of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, The Government's Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission HC892, what steps his Department is taking to ensure reviews remain independent; and how review topics will be selected.

Julia Lopez:

The Government remains absolutely committed to looking at the broader aspects of the constitution and the relationship between the Government, Parliament and the courts as pledged in our Manifesto. As set out to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, we are taking forward this work through a number of separate workstreams to ensure all policy development is given the utmost consideration.

Of those workstreams which have already been announced, two of these have been subject to independent review including an expert panel. These are the Independent Review of Administrative Law chaired by Lord Faulkes which presented its findings to Government earlier this year, and the current Independent Review of the Human Rights Act chaired by Sir Peter Gross.

We will consider the composition and focus of future workstreams carefully including whether these should be the subject of an independent review.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Julian Sturdy:**[\[2269\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has plans to ensure official recognition for the efforts of the creators of UK-made covid-19 vaccines.

Julian Sturdy:[\[2270\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has plans to ensure official recognition of the efforts of the creators of UK-made covid vaccines through the Honours List.

Julia Lopez:

We appreciate there is a huge appetite across the country to say thank you to all those who are supporting the nation through these unprecedented times.

Both the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020 and the New Year Honours 2021 included COVID-19 recognition - and have been symbolic of the nation's gratitude to those involved in the response to the pandemic on the frontline and in their communities. We anticipate more awards will be made over forthcoming honours rounds to recognise the work of those who have gone above and beyond across all key sectors.

On 12 May the Prime Minister announced that the Government will establish a UK Commission on COVID Commemoration to consider the appropriate way to remember those who have lost their lives and to recognise those involved in the unprecedented response. The Government will set out the Commission membership and terms of reference in due course.

■ Drugs: Northern Ireland**Louise Haigh:**[\[2375\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many occasions Lord Frost has met with representatives of the UK pharmaceuticals industry to discuss the ongoing and future supply of medicines to Northern Ireland.

Penny Mordaunt:

The government publishes details of ministers' meetings with external organisations. Transparency returns for Cabinet Office Ministers are published regularly, and can be found [here](#).

Lord Frost and his team are in regular contact with representatives of the UK pharmaceutical industry. We continue to work closely with all those involved in the health care system, suppliers, industry, and the Northern Ireland Executive to put in place robust measures to help ensure the continued supply of medicines and medical products to Northern Ireland.

■ Elections: Fraud**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1131\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many cases of voter fraud have been identified in (a) York, (b) Yorkshire, (c) England and (d) UK in each of the last 10 years.

Julia Lopez:

The Electoral Commission works with police forces to collect data on the number of allegations and cases of electoral fraud and publishes the data on its website.

■ Electronic Warfare: Public Sector**John Healey:**[\[989\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 41 of his Department's Integrated Review 2021, how many critical vulnerabilities in the cyber systems of the public sector has the National Cyber Security Centre addressed as at 13 May 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

It is for each public sector organisation to remediate vulnerabilities in their systems and this information is not held centrally. This is achieved through activities such as designing systems to be secure, regularly patching, continuous monitoring, security testing and vulnerability disclosure programmes. The NCSC and Cabinet Office provide expert advice and guidance to help public sector organisations address critical vulnerabilities.

■ Government Departments: Cost Effectiveness**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[1230\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the rationale for the plan to create Shared Services Centres for all of government; and what assessment the Government has made in terms of the potential (a) affinity and (b) encouragement of competition.

Julia Lopez:

The Government's Shared Services Strategy was published on 9 March 2021. It (a) identifies the groups of departments which will create five Shared Service Centres, (b) confirms that departments, and the commercial function, will work together to deliver value for money, by using central frameworks and national pricing models, driving commercial tension.

■ India: Visits Abroad**Emily Thornberry:**[\[2237\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the details of any advance visit to India undertaken by Downing Street officials or advisers to prepare for the Prime Minister's scheduled visit on 26 April 2021, including (a) dates and length of the visit and (b) the number of officials involved.

Julia Lopez:

I am responding on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office. As has been the practice under successive administrations, a small team of officials went ahead to make arrangements for the visit and to discuss plans for the UK-India partnership. These took place in March, when COVID cases were much lower in India. COVID-secure

procedures were followed at all times, including tests before, during and after. Although the official visit was subsequently postponed, £1 billion of new UK-India trade and investment was announced on 4 May that is expected to create more than 6,500 jobs.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Civil Servants

Dan Jarvis: [R] [2296]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants will be assigned to the levelling up task force.

Dan Jarvis: [R] [2297]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the planned timetable is for publishing the levelling up White Paper announced in the Queen's Speech 2021.

Julia Lopez:

Levelling up is at the heart of the Government's agenda to build back better after the pandemic and to deliver for citizens in every part of the UK. The Government will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper later this year, setting out bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunity in all parts of the UK. The Levelling Up Unit will be resourced in line with the PM's ambitions for this agenda.

■ Third Sector

Rachael Maskell: [357]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to establish the Civil Society Forum since the end of the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement provides for a Civil Society Forum - composed of a balanced representation of UK and EU business and civil society groups - to discuss the implementation of the trade, transport and fisheries part of the Agreement.

We expect to agree with the EU at the Partnership Council the operational guidelines for the conduct of this Forum, and work with the EU to facilitate its first meeting this year.

We will of course continue to engage with business and civil society in the usual way, including on issues relating to TCA implementation.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ St Paul's Cathedral

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2912\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to ensure the future of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Andrew Selous:

The Church Commissioners and other National Church Institutions have been in regular contact with the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral throughout the pandemic as they have with all the Anglican cathedrals in England. The Church Commissioners made additional financial support available to all cathedrals and dioceses throughout the pandemic over and above the financial support they regularly make available. The Third Church Estates Commissioner, Dr Eve Poole, has also been in touch with both the Dean and the Chair of Council of St Pauls in the wake of recent headlines and conversations about the additional specific needs of St Paul's are ongoing. Currently, the Church Commissioners are aware that St Paul's Cathedral has received the following financial support during the pandemic from the Church Commissioners and the Government. This does not account for any support received through the Government's furlough scheme:

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Dean and 2 Residentiary Canons - Standard Grant	£158,000
Cathedral Sustainability Grant - staff and administration	£172,000
Heritage Trade and Skills Grant	£96,500
Music Grant - Lay Clerks	£131,000

GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Culture Recovery Fund round 1 & 2	£3 million
Culture Recovery Fund Capital Works Grant	£320,000

The pandemic has impacted the finances of all cathedrals and churches right across the country to varying degrees, and this is not an experience unique to the Church of England. However, the Church of England is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of 45% of all grade one listed buildings in the country and the lack of in-

person worshipers, educational visits and events have impacted not just the charitable giving and income of all cathedrals and churches but also the social and community and education work the Church supports and funds. Prior to the pandemic, the '[House for Good](#)' report by the National Churches Trust showed clearly the positive social and economic impact a church and cathedral have on their local community, with over 70% of parishes operating over 35,000 social action projects across the country.

The Church of England is grateful to the Government for the continued support of DCMS via the Culture Recovery Fund. The Church looks forward to the opportunity to engage with the Government to look at the future sustainability of its buildings following the publication of the Government's [Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals 2017](#).

DEFENCE

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[2202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, through which legal mechanism the Ajax IFV contract has been signed.

Jeremy Quin:

The AJAX contract was placed under competition, following Ministry of Defence policy and EU procurement regulations prevalent at the time. The contract is subject to English Law.

■ Challenger Tanks: Depleted Uranium

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[1007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the current Challenger 3 business case includes integration of a US depleted uranium anti-armour round with the Rheinmetall high-pressure L55 barrel.

Jeremy Quin:

The new Challenger 3 (CR3) Main Battle Tank will mount the Rheinmetall R55A1 high pressure gun which, when used with advanced armour-defeating ammunition, will enable CR3 to defeat the latest armoured threats it may face. Several ammunition options are being considered; however, no decisions have yet been made.

■ Cybercrime

John Healey: [\[2192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's strategy is for tackling zero day exploits.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) takes cyber security and resilience very seriously and is increasing our already substantial investment in this area as a result of the Integrated Review settlement. The MOD conducts a range of activities to ensure its systems are protected against attack. This includes working closely with industry and partners across Government, especially the National Cyber Security Centre. Although the unknown scope and quality of zero-day exploits means that their prevention can never be guaranteed, the MOD takes a proactive approach to identifying and managing threats and vulnerabilities. For security reasons we do not comment on details, as to do so could be useful to potential adversaries.

John Healey:[\[2194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 41 of the Integrated Review 2021, what the critical vulnerabilities are in the UK's data and digital infrastructure; and what steps his Department is taking to address those vulnerabilities.

James Heappey:

Defence Digital has responsibility for remediating vulnerabilities in Ministry of Defence platforms, systems and core digital infrastructure. This is achieved through an extensive programme of activities which includes designing systems to be secure, regularly patching, continuous monitoring, security testing and vulnerability disclosure programmes. In these efforts, we work closely with industry and partners across Government, particularly the National Cyber Security Centre. For security reasons we do not comment on details, as to do so could be useful to our adversaries.

■ HMS Queen Elizabeth: Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**Stephen Morgan:**[\[2429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of the F-35Bs deploying with HMS Queen Elizabeth are UK-owned.

James Heappey:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for North Durham on 29 April 2021 to Question 187167

Attachments:

1. 187167 - HMS Queen Elizabeth; JSF Aircraft [187167 - HMS Queen Elizabeth JSF Aircraft.docx]

■ RAF Valley**Virginia Crosbie:**[\[2489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to move any of the operations from RAF Valley on Anglesey to RAF Leeming.

James Heappey:

There are no plans to move any flying operations from RAF Valley to RAF Leeming. RAF Valley will remain the home of UK Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) Hawk T2, Texan T1 and Jupiter fleets.

We have announced that the Qatar Emiri Air Force will base their new Hawk Mk167 aircraft at RAF Leeming and these will be jointly manned by RAF personnel. We have also announced Hawk T1 with 100 Squadron will drawdown at RAF Leeming later in the decade.

■ Terrorism: Weapons of Mass Destruction**John Healey:**[\[985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Integrated Review 2021, what resources his Department has allocated to strengthen security to meet the potential threat of a terrorist attack using CBRN weapons by 2030.

James Heappey:

Through the Modernising Defence Programme and now the Integrated Review, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has committed to invest over £880 million over the next ten years to develop and maintain its counter-Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) capability. Capability development and delivery is focussed on physical protection, medical countermeasures, hazard management, sensing and knowledge management. This commitment has been enabled by over £130 million from the MOD's own science and technology programme over the past four years. The future MOD science and technology capabilities and portfolio are currently being assessed and will continue to support Defence's ability to counter current and emerging threats. The MOD also plans to spend £12 million over the next four years to reduce the risks of such attacks, through the International Biological Security Programme.

CBRN weapon use remains an enduring and growing threat to the UK, our deployed forces and international stability. To counter this threat, we will have capabilities in place that allow us to maintain our political and military freedom of action despite the presence, threat or use of CBRN materials. The MOD must also be prepared to provide counter-CBRN forces to support a UK homeland resilience response to multiple threats and maintain our contingent capability to operate overseas. The United Kingdom's world leading CBRN science and technology capability will continue to play a vital part in maintaining our counter-CBRN operational advantage and in countering current and emerging CBRN threats.

The MOD's capabilities must be viewed within the context of cross Government activity and the Department readily contributes to the United Kingdom's wider counter-CBRN capabilities and activities. These include those of the Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre, inter-agency operations in the homeland and overseas and collaboration with our key allies around the world.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts Council: Music**

Philip Davies: [\[2248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much the Arts Council spent on (a) opera and (b) brass bands in each of the last two financial years.

Caroline Dinenage:

The figures for Arts Council England funding for opera and brass bands in financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 are given below.

The figures for each year are broken down into primary and secondary funding and then a total. Primary classification indicates that, in this case, opera or brass bands, was a major focus of the activity funded with the assumption most of this amount went to funding this activity. Secondary classification indicates this was a minor focus of the activity and so it cannot be assumed this full amount of funding went towards this activity.

A small number of projects are classified under both opera and brass bands, so these figures cannot be added together, as these projects would be double counted.

■ Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press Inquiry

Zarah Sultana: [\[889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to the Question 184471, what (a) policing reforms and (b) press regulations have been enacted following the Leveson Inquiry.

Mr John Whittingdale:

There have been extensive reforms to policing practices as well as significant changes to press self-regulation.

Since Lord Justice Leveson published his report on part 1 of the inquiry in 2012, the Government has considered all eight recommendations and introduced a number of reforms to policing. This includes the publication of the policing Code of Ethics by the College of Policing in 2014; guidance on relationships with the media; guidance on whistle-blowing; new powers for the Independent Office for Police Conduct to investigate without referral from the police and voluntary notification by chief constables of post-service employment for 12 months.

There now exists a strengthened, independent, self-regulatory system for the press. The majority of traditional publishers—including 95% of national newspapers by circulation—are members of IPSO. A number of smaller publishers have joined Impress.

These regulators enforce codes of conduct which provide guidelines on a range of areas, including discrimination, accuracy, privacy, and harassment. If they find that a newspaper has broken the code of conduct, they can order corrections or critical adjudications.

IPSO, unlike its predecessor the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), has the contractual power to legally enforce all the obligations into which the press has entered. This includes determining the wording, where a ruling is placed in a newspaper, in what font size and on what page. As well as dealing with complaints, IPSO can launch a standards investigation in cases where there may have been serious and systemic breaches of the Editors' Code. IPSO also now has a compulsory low cost arbitration scheme, introduced in August 2018, that all member national newspapers have signed up to. This can be used to make claims for defamation, privacy and harassment, and some data protection breaches.

In 2016 IPSO commissioned its own independent review which found it had made some important achievements in demonstrating it was an independent and effective regulator, and that it was largely compliant with the recommendations of the Leveson Report.

■ Digital Markets Unit: Staff

Chi Onwurah:

[\[2281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many full time equivalent staff are employed in the Digital Markets Unit as of 1 May 2021; and what estimate he has made of the number of those staff that will be employed in that unit at the end of 2021.

Matt Warman:

In April, we established a new Digital Markets Unit (DMU) within the Competition and Markets Authority to prepare for the new pro-competition regime for digital markets. We will legislate to put the DMU on a statutory footing as soon as parliamentary time allows, following consultation on the regime later this year.

The Competition and Markets Authority is an independent regulator. It received funding for approximately 55-60 staff members for the Digital Markets Unit for this financial year. Approximately half of the Digital Markets Unit staff are in post, with the Competition and Markets Authority expecting the Unit to be fully staffed by the summer.

■ Dormant Assets Scheme: National Lottery Community Fund

Rachael Maskell:

[\[2363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of whether a higher proportion of funds from dormant bank and building society accounts transferred to the Reclaim Fund Ltd could potentially be transferred to the National Lottery Community Fund.

Matt Warman:

Reclaim Fund Ltd (RFL) is legally obliged to retain a portion of the funds it receives as a result of the Dormant Assets Scheme in order to repay owners who come forward to reclaim their money. Overseen by HM Treasury, it is RFL's responsibility to determine the appropriate proportion of funding that it can prudently release.

RFL currently releases 60% of the money it receives to social and environmental initiatives through The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF), and reserves 40% for meeting reclaims. RFL's approach is based on actuarial modelling and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) guidance. Over time, this has enabled RFL to change the proportion of funds transferred to TNLCF: in 2016, RFL decreased their reclaim provision from 60% to 40%.

■ Events Industry: Insurance

Julian Knight: [\[1424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the events indemnity sprint team recently created in his Department, what the remit of that team is; what form the recommendations of that team will take; and when that team plans to report its conclusions.

Julian Knight: [\[1427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Events Indemnity Sprint Team will consider a Government-backed scheme for live events; and what plans that team has to engage directly with the insurance industry.

Caroline Dinéage:

This Government recognises the importance of the UK's live events sector and has provided significant financial support including an additional £300M to the Culture Recovery Fund.

As the Secretary of State made clear at the DCMS Select Committee on Thursday 13th May, the government is aware of the wider concerns around securing indemnity for live events and we continue to assess options to provide further support to the sector within the public health context, engaging with relevant stakeholders as necessary.

We need to be confident that any intervention would lead to an increase in activity, and that insurance represents the last barrier to events reopening. The government's first priority is to remove remaining barriers (such as social distancing) by reaching Stage 4 of the Roadmap.

■ Gambling: Advertising

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[1006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to make it illegal for gambling companies to describe their product as an investment platform.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Gambling operators who advertise in the UK must comply with advertising codes of practice issued by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP), which are enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Failure to comply with the advertising codes is also a

breach of the Gambling Commission's social responsibility code and it can take appropriate action. These codes already require that gambling marketing is socially responsible and does not create the impression that gambling products are an investment opportunity when they are not.

Martyn Day:**[809]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 179071 on Gambling: Advertising, for what reason adverts that promote bingo or lotteries are allowed to be broadcast on television before 9.00pm.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As set out in answer to Question 179071, all gambling advertising, wherever it appears, is subject to strict controls on content and placement. Adverts must never be targeted at children or vulnerable people, and the Committees of Advertising Practice recently concluded a consultation on proposals to amend the advertising codes to further limit the potential for adverts to appeal to these groups.

The broadcast advertising codes make clear that adverts for commercial gambling and lotteries must not be shown during or adjacent to television programmes directed at or likely to appeal particularly to children. Gambling adverts on television are also subject to a pre-broadcast clearance regime to ensure they comply with advertising codes. Adverts for most gambling products are not broadcast before 9pm under the voluntary Industry Group for Responsible Gambling code; however this restriction does not apply to products such as bingo and lotteries that were permitted to advertise prior to the Gambling Act 2005.

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we have called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing gambling operators to advertise. The review will not look at advertising relating to the National Lottery, which is regulated under a separate framework, the National Lottery Act 1993. Evidence from the latest (2018) [Health Survey](#) for England shows that problem gambling rates for National Lottery draw-based games were 0.9% and Scratchcards were 1.4%.

Martyn Day:**[810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 187228 on Gambling: Internet, what the Gambling Commission's timescale is for publishing an interim update on progress and next steps in relation to its consultation and call for evidence on Remote Customer Interaction.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Gambling Commission's consultation and call for evidence on Remote Customer Interaction closed on 9 February and received over 13,000 responses. The Commission is reviewing that evidence and will publish an interim update on progress and to set out next steps in due course.

■ Huawei: Telecommunications**Chi Onwurah:** [\[2291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress has been made on the removal of Huawei from the UK's (a) fixed and (b) mobile networks; what assessment he has made of the effect of the removal of Huawei on the timescale of the 5G rollout; what estimate he has made of the cost of that removal to the UK's telecommunication networks providers to date; and what recent estimate he has made of total cost of that removal of Huawei for UK businesses.

Matt Warman:

Over the course of 2020, the Government made a set of announcements regarding public telecommunications providers' use of goods and services provided by Huawei.

This included advice that providers should stop procuring 5G equipment from Huawei after December 2020; stop installing Huawei equipment in 5G networks from September 2021;

remove Huawei equipment from the core of all networks by January 2023; reduce Huawei equipment to 35% of their 5G and full fibre networks by January 2023; and remove Huawei equipment from the 5G network by 2027.

Telecoms providers continue to reassure Ministers on their progress and response to the advice in their regular meetings.

As the Secretary of State set out in his statement to the House on 14 July 2020, we estimate that implementation of the advice will mean a cumulative delay to 5G rollout of two to three years and costs of up to two billion pounds.

Once the Telecommunications (Security) Bill has been enacted, and subject to consultation in accordance with the Bill's provisions, the Government will be empowered to give this advice legal effect.

■ Mass Media: Education**Chi Onwurah:** [\[2288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what additional resources he plans to provide to Ofcom to (a) commission and (b) encourage educational initiatives to increase media literacy as outlined in clause 11 of the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinéage:

Clause 103 of the draft Online Safety Bill, which the government published on 12 May, would extend Ofcom's existing statutory duty to promote media literacy which is set out in section 11 of the Communications Act 2003. The amended duty includes specifying that Ofcom must carry out, commission or encourage educational initiatives designed to improve the media literacy of members of the public. It also applies the duty in relation to online safety.

Government is working closely with Ofcom to ensure that, through the proportionate and differentiated fees to industry, the annual operating costs of the online harms

regime are recovered. As set out in the draft Online Safety Bill, the cost of any activities undertaken by Ofcom in the course of carrying out their regulatory responsibilities can be recharged to industry; this will include costs relating to the media literacy function as it applies to online safety.

■ Parkrun: Coronavirus

Stephen Morgan: [\[1379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking with local authorities throughout the country to facilitate the reopening of parkrun events in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

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

■ Reclaim Fund

Rachael Maskell: [\[2362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many and what proportion of people were reconnected with their assets (a) before and (b) after they were transferred to the Reclaim Fund Ltd in each year since the inception of that scheme.

Matt Warman:

The Dormant Assets Scheme is voluntary and industry-led. Neither the government nor Reclaim Fund Ltd (RFL) hold data on how many people have been reconnected with their assets prior to them being classed as dormant and transferred to RFL. This data is held by the individual banks and building societies that choose to participate in the Dormant Assets Scheme.

RFL data indicates that circa 7.5% of funds transferred from dormant accounts – a total of £106m since the Scheme's inception in 2011 – has been reclaimed by customers after their dormant assets were transferred to Reclaim Fund Ltd.

■ Reclaim Fund: Third Sector

Rachael Maskell: [\[2356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much of the £750 million in funding announced for the voluntary and community sector on 8 April 2020 came from Reclaim Fund Ltd.

Matt Warman:

None of the £750 million funding announced for the voluntary and community sector in April 2020, came from the Reclaim Fund Ltd transferred under the Dormant Assets Scheme. All of the funding was central government funding.

Separate to the £750m funding package, in May 2020 the DCMS Secretary of State announced the unlocking of £150m of dormant assets funding to help charities, social enterprises and individuals in need of support during the coronavirus outbreak.

■ Sports: Costs**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department is taking steps to make viewing professional sports live more affordable.

Nigel Huddleston:

We understand the importance of elite sport being visible and accessible to as many people across the country as possible to further inspire commitment to regular engagement and participation in sport.

Whilst ticket prices are a matter for individual host clubs to determine, the Government continues to expect all elite sports to make their ticketing policy inclusive of all ages and backgrounds.

The Government has though launched its fan-led review of football governance which will be looking at governance and financial sustainability within the game. As part of this, the Chair, my Honourable friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford, will be consulting extensively with fans to ensure the review covers the issues close to their heart.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure**Chi Onwurah:**[\[713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the interaction between the Government's Gigabit Programme subsidy plans and the geographic price regulation approach taken in Ofcom's Statement entitled Promoting investment and competition in fibre networks – Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review 2021-26.

Matt Warman:

On 18 March, Ofcom published its Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review, which sets broadband regulations for the 2021 to 2026 period. Ofcom's proposals will encourage competitive build in the majority of the UK, and have secured a commitment from Openreach to extend its coverage in the least competitive areas of the country. We have engaged closely with Ofcom on our commitment to spend £5 billion supporting gigabit-capable deployment in the hardest to reach areas, in order to ensure we can deploy it most effectively to maximise gigabit coverage and ensure value for money.

The Government welcomes Ofcom's regulatory framework, which will promote investment and competition in new gigabit broadband networks. Ofcom's proposed regulations will allow those deploying networks to make a fair return on their investment whilst ensuring that customers across the country can continue to access world-class broadband at affordable prices.

■ Telecommunications: Lithium and Silicon

Chi Onwurah: [\[2294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the silicone and lithium shortages on UK telecommunications supply chains; and what steps he is taking to secure UK silicon and lithium supplies.

Matt Warman:

Government works in collaboration with the telecommunications industry to enhance its resilience through the Electronic Communications Resilience and Response Group (EC-RRG). We will continue to keep the availability of raw materials in the supply chain under continual review with industry partners, as we do for all issues that may affect resilience of UK telecommunications networks and services.

In the [Integrated Review](#) of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy published in March 2021, the Government's priority actions to 2025 include diversifying the UK's supply in critical goods, such as medical equipment and rare earth elements, through trade partnerships and international collaboration. Within the UK, the Government will continue to explore opportunities around domestic extraction and processing of critical minerals, such as lithium, as well as their recovery, recycling and reuse to establish a viable circular economy. Demand for these materials is global and the Government is working to ensure supplies remain sufficient for the UK economy.

■ Telecommunications: Standards

Chi Onwurah: [\[2292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to work with telecoms standards setting bodies overseas to encourage and develop best practice in the security of open networks.

Matt Warman:

Technical standards are a crucial part of our work to diversify the supply chain. Specifically, the Government's 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy identified ensuring UK representation and boosting UK participation in global standards setting bodies as key objectives which can help to promote secure and interoperable standards.

To achieve these objectives, the Government is working closely with industry, the NCSC, Ofcom and a wide range of international partners to increase UK influence and presence at major standards development organisations such as ETSI and 3GPP.

Through the UK's G7 Presidency the Government led positive conversations on standards with international partners, and will continue to work closely with like-minded partners in order to forge a consensus on these issues.

■ UK Safer Internet Centre

Damian Hinds: [\[1288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support the Government plans to provide to the UK Safer Internet Centre.

Caroline Dinenage:

The UK Safer Internet Centre plays an important role in improving online safety in the UK, particularly for children.

The Centre has been successful in its bid for further funding from the European Commission's Connecting Europe Facility programme for the calendar year of 2021, for which the government provided a letter of support. Officials are in regular engagement with the Centre on its future funding position.

■ Video on Demand: Age

Sarah Champion: [\[2302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the BBFC's recent survey entitled Age ratings on subscription streaming services - April 2021 and its finding that parents want age ratings to be consistent between cinema, DVD and video-on-demand platforms; and if he will take steps to ensure that platforms respond to that finding and use age ratings based on UK standards.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government welcomes the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) recent report, which contributes to our understanding of this matter and builds on wider evidence regarding best practice age ratings for film content.

The Government will consider the report and its findings, and continue to support the adoption of BBFC ratings for content on video on demand platforms. To that end, we were particularly pleased to see Netflix announce on 1 December 2020 that they have become the first platform to achieve complete coverage of their content under the BBFC's ratings.

We will keep the evidence for legislation in this area under review.

EDUCATION

■ Children and Young People: Disability

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[2381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to implement a covid-19 recovery plan for disabled children and young people.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to helping all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Extended school and college restrictions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education, health and wellbeing. The Department is committed to supporting them and their families.

Sir Kevan Collins has been appointed as the Education Recovery Commissioner and is considering how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support towards pupils in greatest need. In the development of this recovery plan, Sir Kevan is regularly meeting with a variety of stakeholders, including disabled young people and their families. Sir Kevan is reviewing how evidence-based interventions can be used to address the impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had not just on academic outcomes, but on the physical and mental health of children and young people.

As part of this plan, both special schools and alternative provision will be able to access funding to provide summer schools and the National Tutoring Programme. The Department recognises the additional costs associated with offering provision to pupils in specialist settings. Eligible pupils in special schools, special units in mainstream primary and secondary schools, and alternative provision settings will attract a higher rate of funding for summer schools. We have also consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings by providing additional uplifts both in the 2020 catch-up Premium and in the 2021 Recovery Premium.

Young people with SEND aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health and care plan will be eligible for support via the 16 to 19 Tuition Fund, where they meet the fund criteria. Colleges are asked to have regard to the needs of students with SEND when prioritising students that would benefit most from small group tuition. Furthermore, the proposals to support early language and literacy catch up will benefit all children, including those with SEND.

The Department will continue to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and its subsequent COVID-19 recovery plans on all pupils, including those with SEND, to ensure it targets support across the system most effectively.

■ Children: Disability**Grahame Morris:**[\[2264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Disabled Children's Partnership's No End In Sight report, if he will implement ring-fenced catch-up funding for disabled children's services to support (a) physical and mental recovery from the covid-19 pandemic and (b) disabled children to catch up with their non-disabled peers.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to helping all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. We recognise that extended school and college restrictions

have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education, health and wellbeing. Sir Kevan Collins has been appointed as the Education Recovery Commissioner and is considering how schools and the system can more effectively target resources and support at pupils in greatest need.

As part of the £1.7 billion funding announced so far for education recovery, the £302 million Recovery Premium will help schools to deliver evidence based approaches for supporting the most disadvantaged pupils. Whilst funding is not ring fenced, the Department has applied additional weighting to special schools, alternative provision and hospital schools to recognise the significantly higher per pupil costs they face. Eligible pupils attending special units within mainstream schools will also attract the higher funding rate.

The Department is also making £200 million available to all secondary schools, including specialist settings, to deliver face to face summer schools, providing opportunities for social interaction. The aim of the programme is for secondary schools to deliver a summer school which offers a blend of academic teaching and enrichment activity. Schools have the flexibility to target provision towards those pupils they feel would benefit the most as well as determining the size and shape of the summer schools, allowing them to tailor support for pupils with SEND. Eligible pupils in special schools, special units in mainstream primary and secondary schools and alternative provision will attract a higher rate of funding for summer schools.

In addition, the National Tutoring Programme provides additional, targeted tuition to disadvantaged children who have been hardest hit from disruption to their education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Young people with SEND aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health and care plan will be eligible for support via the 16 to 19 tuition fund, where they meet the fund criteria.

■ Children: Social Services

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[2476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's planned expenditure is for the Pause programme in the 2021-22 financial year; and what funding it allocated to that programme in each of the last three financial years.

Vicky Ford:

Pause have so far been awarded £29,000 in the 2021-22 financial year. This covered a data analyst to gather the evidence base for and demonstrate the impact of the new regional approach in the North of England.

The department has awarded Pause a total of £7.8 million in the last three financial years.

In the 2018-19 financial year, Pause were awarded £2.2 million. This was to roll out the model and implement a care leaver pilot that targeted young women (aged 16-25) who have been in care and have experienced one or more children being removed.

In the 2019-20 financial year, Pause were awarded £2 million to continue expansion of the model and open new practices.

In the 2020-21 financial year, Pause were allocated £3.6 million to test a regional approach to the North West and North East regions and implement a single Pause practice in six individual local authorities.

■ Higher Education: Standards

Stella Creasy:

[\[2275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to implement the findings of the Government consultation into Sharia-compliant financing for education and the November 2015 Government green paper entitled, Fulfilling our potential Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice.

Michelle Donelan:

The government took new powers in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 to make a system of alternative payments possible. The government has been considering the Alternative Student Finance (ASF) product carefully alongside its other priorities and has decided to align a decision on implementation with the outcome of the post-18 review of education and funding. The interim report of the review was published on 21 January 2021, and the review is due to conclude alongside the next multi-year Spending Review. We will provide an update on ASF at that time.

■ Sex and Relationship Education

Stella Creasy:

[\[2274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to monitor whether (a) sexual harassment and (b) other types of gender-based violence and abuse are being taught in schools as part of Relationship and Sex Education.

Nick Gibb:

Sexual harassment and gender based violence are covered within the statutory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum. Schools are expected to teach these important subjects as part of the statutory curriculum.

Schools are accountable for what they teach. The 2019 Ofsted education inspection framework includes a 'personal development' judgement, and inspections will look at how well a school is following the new statutory RSHE requirements.

The Department is awaiting the outcome of Ofsted's thematic review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. The review will look specifically at whether schools need further support in teaching about sex and relationships, which will provide some valuable insight and help us to consider how we can further support schools to deliver RSHE subjects effectively and confidently.

■ Students: Employment

Ed Davey:

[2179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of how students on practical university degree courses will be offered extra support before entering the job market to make up for lost teaching time during the covid-19 lockdown.

Michelle Donelan:

Education has always been a priority for this government, and we were committed to getting all students back into university as soon as the public health situation allowed. We prioritised the return of students on practical and practice-based courses because we realised the importance of them being able to return to their studies in person.

The higher education (HE) regulator in England, the Office for Students (OfS), has made it clear that all HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards. This means ensuring that courses provide a high-quality academic experience, students are supported and achieve good outcomes, and standards are protected, regardless of whether a provider is delivering its courses through in person teaching, remote online learning, or a combination of both.

We have worked across the sector to understand what more we can do to support graduates who are looking to enter the labour market at this challenging time. We have worked closely with the Quality Assurance Agency, professional bodies and the OfS. Our message to employers and students is that standards have been maintained and that the qualifications awarded will be of the same academic standard as in previous years.

To provide additional support, we have also developed the graduate employment and skills guide, published on 10 May 2021 on the OfS website here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/employment-and-skills/>. The guide signposts graduates to public, private and voluntary sector opportunities, to help them 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. To encourage graduates to take advantage of the support and resources available, we have worked with Universities UK to develop a sector statement of support and with HE providers to produce a collection of graduate employability case studies.

As part of the government's skills recovery package 'Plan for Jobs', we are also investing an additional £32 million in the National Careers Service up to March 2022. This investment will support delivery of individual careers advice for over 500,000 people whose jobs or learning have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak by the end of the 2021/22 financial year, representing an increase of 22%. The Service has introduced a range of new initiatives to continue to support all customers, working with a wide range of partners to offer careers guidance activities designed to support employers, furloughed workers, graduates, students, those who have recently lost

their jobs and anyone whose career path has been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

On 29 September 2020, we added additional courses to The Skills Toolkit covering digital, numeracy and employability skills. The new content includes a range of courses to develop 'work readiness' skills that employers report they value in their new recruits.

■ Students: Mental Health Services

Ed Davey: [\[2180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to universities on the provision of mental health support to students.

Ed Davey: [\[2181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to take to tackle the mental ill health incidence increase in university students.

Michelle Donelan:

Student mental health and suicide prevention are key priorities for this government. We continue to work closely with the higher education (HE) sector to promote good practice. Universities are not only experts in their student population, but also best placed to identify the needs of their particular student body.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has overall policy responsibility for young people's mental health. We continue to work closely with them to take steps to develop mental health and wellbeing support.

On 27 March 2021, DHSC published the 'COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan': <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-recovery-action-plan>. It is backed by £500 million of funding, and its aims are to address waiting times for mental health services, to give more people the mental health support they need and to invest in the NHS workforce. £13 million will be used to accelerate progress to support young adults aged 18 to 25. This group includes university students and those not in education or training, who have reported worst mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 outbreak, and who sometimes currently fall between the gaps between children's and adult services.

While it is for HE providers to determine what welfare and counselling services they need to provide to their students to offer that support, the government is proactive in promoting good practice in this area. We continue to work closely with Universities UK on embedding the Stepchange programme within the sector:

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>.

Stepchange calls on HE leaders to adopt mental health as a strategic priority and to take a whole-institution approach, embedding it across all policies, cultures, curricula and practice. The Stepchange programme relaunched in March 2020 as the Mentally Healthy Universities programme. The University Mental Health Charter, announced in June 2018, is backed by the government and led by the HE sector:

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html>. The charter, developed in collaboration with students, staff and partner organisations, aims to drive up standards of practice, including leadership, early intervention and data collection.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, I have stressed the importance of protecting student and staff wellbeing. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the outbreak. I have engaged with universities on this issue and have written to Vice Chancellors on numerous occasions during the past year, most recently last month, outlining that student welfare should remain a priority. I have also convened a working group of representatives from the HE and health sectors to specifically address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

My hon. Friend, the Minister for Children and Families and I have also convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group to drive action to mitigate the impact of the outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities.

We expect HE providers to continue to support their students, which has included making services accessible from a distance whilst restrictions have been in place. We encourage students to stay in touch with the welfare teams at their HE provider, as these services are likely to continue to be an important source of support. Many providers have bolstered their existing mental health services, and adapted delivery mechanisms including reaching out to students who may be more vulnerable. Staff at universities and colleges have been proactive in supporting their students, showing resourcefulness and there are many examples of good practice.

We have worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, a dedicated mental health and wellbeing platform for students. Student Space has been funded by up to £3 million from the OfS in the 2020/21 academic year. We have also asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities grant funding to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing demand for mental health services. This will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard to reach students.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Hedges and Ditches

Virginia Crosbie:

[2491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the environmental and biodiversity gains of promoting the planting of hedgerows.

Rebecca Pow:

Analysis carried out by ADAS consultants in 2020 showed planting hedgerows has a range of environmental gains, including positive impacts on biodiversity, landscape character and protection from, and mitigation of environmental hazards.

Recent reports and research from Natural England and Defra have further evidenced that hedgerows can deliver habitat and resources for a range of important wildlife, support ecosystem services, and sequester and store carbon.

In England, the Environmental Stewardship (ES) and Countryside Stewardship (CS) schemes are currently our primary tools in delivering environmentally beneficial hedgerow management and hedgerow creation, which support the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan. Hedgerow management is one of the most popular options within the CS scheme.

■ Pets: Registration**Zarah Sultana:**[\[2465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to (a) ensure that the running of pet registration databases is fully accountable to pet owners and (b) create a Government-run pet registration database.

Victoria Prentis:

Under the Microchipping of Dogs Regulations 2015, it is compulsory for owners to microchip their dogs and their details must be recorded on a compliant database. The Regulations set out conditions which microchip databases must meet to be compliant. There are 16 compliant microchip databases, which are listed on gov.uk.

We are currently carrying out a post-implementation review of the Regulations, which will be published later this year. It will consider how the current database system is working in practice and will identify whether improvements are required.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Steve Baker:**[\[689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications of Iran's nuclear programme for the Government's policy; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

Iran continues its systematic non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA). On 16 April Iran announced that it had started uranium enrichment up to 60% using advanced centrifuges, which is a serious and deeply worrying development in violation of its nuclear commitments. The production of highly enriched uranium is an important step in the production of a nuclear weapon. Iran has no credible civilian need for enrichment at this level.

The Foreign Secretary has been clear that Iran must never develop a nuclear weapon. Our immediate priority is to find a diplomatic solution to bring Iran back into compliance with its JCPoA commitments and restore the benefits of the deal. We are currently engaged in talks with other JCPoA participants and the US Administration in Vienna to that end. The JCPoA still represents the best and currently the only framework for monitoring and constraining Iran's nuclear programme.

■ **BBC Monitoring: Finance**

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[2166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the announcement of 1 May 2021, whether any of the additional £8 million being made available by his Department to the BBC World Service will be allocated to the work of the BBC Monitoring Service; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO will provide £94.4m to the BBC World Service for 2021-22, including an £8m uplift for 2021-22 to fund disinformation work and digital enhancements. The FCDO has allocated £3m of the £8m uplift to support disinformation work including a boost to investigative journalism and the remaining £5m for digital enhancements to help the BBC develop its digital platforms in order to support audience growth. It is for the BBC to decide how this funding is spent.

■ **Children and Mothers: Death**

Sarah Olney: [\[2394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to end the preventable deaths of mothers, children and newborns by 2030.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains committed to supporting maternal and child health interventions as part of our manifesto commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children by 2030.

Globally, we are working with agencies such as the World Health Organisation, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children, and Adolescents to support governments in strengthening health systems in affected countries, providing technical assistance, improving quality of care, and immunising children.

■ **China: Detainees**

Afzal Khan: [\[2437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to make an assessment of the role of Chinese companies operating in the UK in the construction of detention camps in China.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO has funded research to help build the evidence base on the human rights situation in Xinjiang, and continues to review new open source evidence as it emerges and to work closely with international partners to inform policy development. The Foreign Secretary announced on 12 January a package of measures to help ensure that no UK organisations are complicit in human rights violations occurring in Xinjiang through their supply chains. This includes clear and detailed advice to UK businesses on the risks and the need to conduct due diligence on suppliers that may be directly involved or otherwise complicit in the violations; and additional support to UK government bodies to exclude suppliers on related grounds.

China: Uighurs

Afzal Khan: [\[2436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with the Home Secretary to ensure that Uyghurs who have been persecuted in China are able to find refuge in the UK.

Nigel Adams:

The Home Office publishes guidance used by UK Visas and Immigration to make decisions in asylum and human rights applications. Our assessment of the situation for Uyghurs is set out in our Country Policy and Information Note (CPIN) on opposition to the state in China, available on gov.uk at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/china-country-policy-and-information-notes

Ethiopia: Clergy

Helen Hayes: [\[2378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information he has on the welfare of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox church; and if he will make a statement.

James Duddridge:

We believe the Patriarch to be in good health and at liberty and note that he met with other colleagues from the Diplomatic community in Addis Ababa last week. The Minister of State responsible for Human Rights issues for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, tweeted on 11 May to express his deep sadness at the reported murder of priests in Tigray. I share his sentiments. Civilians must be protected and the violence in Tigray must stop.

Ethiopia: Prisoners' Release

Helen Hayes: [\[2379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he is having with his Ethiopian counterpart on the release of opposition leaders in detention in that country.

James Duddridge:

I have a long-standing concern about the deterioration of political freedoms in Ethiopia, and I raised this when in Ethiopia last summer. The Foreign Secretary also raised the importance of respect for human rights, including political freedoms and the importance of credible elections in maintaining peace and stability, when he met with Prime Minister Abiy during his visit to Ethiopia on 22 January this year.

Most recently, I raised the elections delay with President Sahle-Work during the 17 May Sudan Conference in Paris. On 14 April, the British Ambassador met, alongside Ambassadors and representatives from other Embassies in Addis Ababa, the Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General and pressed concerns about the narrow political and civic space and arrests of candidates.

Haiti: Referendums**Fabian Hamilton:**[\[2196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has plans to send election observers to Haiti for the upcoming referendum on the proposed changes to the Haitian constitution.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is closely following developments in Haiti including the proposed constitutional referendum. We do not have any plans to send election observers to Haiti at the moment. The UK supports the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN Special Political Mission, BINUH, in their ongoing diplomatic engagement with the Haitian authorities on both the proposed constitutional referendum and elections. The UK continues to use its platform both in country and at United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to call for credible and transparent elections as soon as technically feasible, to ensure Haiti is governed by strong democratic institutions chosen by the Haitian people. The UK supported the UNSC's decision for a one year extension for BINUH. We also chaired a meeting on Haiti at the UN Security Council on 22 February 2021.

India: Coronavirus**Afzal Khan:**[\[2435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Indian counterpart on vaccine pricing in India in response to the covid-19 outbreak in that country.

Nigel Adams:

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

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

Abena Oppong-Asare:[\[2477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) financial, (b) logistical and (c) medical support the Government is providing to assist the Indian Government's covid-19 response.

Nigel Adams:

We stand side by side with India as a friend and partner in the fight against Covid-19, and send our solidarity and condolences to the Indian people at this difficult time. Since 2015, the UK has not provided financial assistance to the Indian Government, and until recently, the Indian Government's official position has been to neither seek nor accept official international assistance from foreign governments for humanitarian assistance. Instead, the UK has put together a package focusing on India's most urgent needs, including oxygen concentrators, ventilators, and oxygen generating units. The first shipment was delivered on 27 April. On 2 May, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would send a further 1,000 ventilators to support India's response, these arrived in Delhi on 9 May, bringing the total package of equipment to 495 oxygen concentrators, 1,200 ventilators and three oxygen generating units. Given the importance of effective coordination of the large quantities of assistance arriving in India, the UK is channelling its support through the Indian Government and Indian Red Cross, to ensure the transfer of medical equipment is as efficient as possible and reaches those who need it.

There is also extensive scientific and medical collaboration underway. Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance have spoken to their Indian counterparts to provide advice, insight and expertise to the Indian healthcare system as it deals with the surge in Covid-19 cases. NHS England and NHS Improvement are establishing a clinic advisory group, led by Chief People Officer Prerana Issar, to support India's Covid-19 response.

India: Visits Abroad**Emily Thornberry:**[\[2238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what advance visit was undertaken by his officials to prepare for the Prime Minister's scheduled visit to India on 26 April 2021; on what dates that advance visit began and ended; and how many individuals were involved.

Nigel Adams:

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs officials did not undertake an advance visit to prepare for the Prime Minister's scheduled visit to India on 26 April 2021.

Israel: Palestinians**Sarah Champion:**[\[2303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of (a) the implications for his policies of the escalations in

violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, (b) humanitarian needs and access in the Occupied Palestinian Territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and (c) the implications for UK ODA contributions to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly:

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories must stop. The UK is urging the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire, to prevent further humanitarian impact. We are supporting the continued UN, Egyptian and Qatari efforts to that end, as well as working closely with the US.

The UK is deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure. We remain in close contact with UN agencies and key partners on the ground and will monitor the situation closely.

■ **Jerusalem: Palestinians**

Jessica Morden:

[\[2246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on halting forced evictions of Palestinian families in East Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in his calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 11 and 16 May, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London, to urge them to de-escalate, restore calm and to reiterate our position on this issue. On May 8 I [Mr Cleverly] publicised our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

Afzal Khan:

[\[2438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on the peace process of the attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque and worshippers by Israeli forces during the holy month of Ramadan; and what steps he is taking to recognise the state of Palestine.

James Cleverly:

The UK is clear that the violence against peaceful worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque was unacceptable. Respect for the historic Status Quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is important. We encourage all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the Status Quo to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif / Temple Mount and all who worship there.

The UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. We continue to work closely with international partners to strongly advocate

for a two-state solution and encourage a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties.

■ **Medicine: Research**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction in the Official Development Assistance budget on the UK's health research sector and its ability to develop as a science superpower; and for what reason funding for neglected tropical diseases has been reduced by 90 per cent.

James Duddridge:

[Holding answer 19 May 2021]: The Government has had to take the tough but necessary decision to temporarily reduce the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on overseas development assistance (ODA). We recognise there will be visible reductions across our ODA portfolio compared to 0.7%, but we have worked hard to maintain UK support to the world's poorest people. FCDO ODA will be targeted to addressing seven global challenges facing the world poorest, focusing our investments and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference: climate change and biodiversity; Covid and global health security; girls' education; science, research and technology; open societies and conflict resolution; humanitarian preparedness and response; and trade and economic development.

FCDO will now work through what this means for individual research programmes, in line with the priorities we have identified. Scientific and technological innovation runs through all seven priority themes for our ODA spend.

We continue to value the work of researchers based in the UK and are proud that UK expertise in science, research and development has led to one of the first effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines. The UK will remain a global leader on international development, with an ODA budget on track to exceed £10 billion this year.

In respect of interventions for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) the UK is proud of the significant contribution we have made to global efforts to protect hundreds of millions of people from NTDs. Our programmes have worked hard to deliver NTD treatment and care and to strengthen health systems to deliver these services going forward. We will work with countries affected by NTDs to help them strengthen their health systems so that they are able to prevent and treat NTDs in a more sustainable way.

■ Overseas Aid: Poliomyelitis**Jim Shannon:**[\[733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to maintain Official Development Assistance spending on supporting the eradication of polio.

Wendy Morton:

The UK remains strongly committed to polio eradication, and supports the work of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), to which we have provided £1.37 billion since 1995. GPEI have led efforts that have eradicated wild polio from all but 2 countries, with the African region being declared free of wild polio last year. The difficult economic situation has meant that we have had to reduce the aid budget, including for programmes such as GPEI. We will return to spending 0.7% of our Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance when the fiscal situation allows.

■ Switzerland: Foreign Relations**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[2383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last held formal discussions with his Swiss counterpart.

Wendy Morton:

Ministers regularly engage with their Swiss counterparts. The Foreign Secretary last held substantive discussions with Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis in September 2020 and I last held discussions with State Secretary Livia Leu in March 2021.

■ Syria: British Nationals Abroad**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[2385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of British nationals associated with ISIS detained in north-east Syria in areas under the control of the Kurdish authorities; and how many of those British nationals are children.

James Cleverly:

With reference to my earlier reply of 26 April. We are aware that British nationals, including children, are located in IDP camps in north east Syria. Due to the shifting circumstances on the ground we are not in a position to make an accurate estimate of their number.

We endeavour to locate British unaccompanied or orphaned children, who are innocent victims of war, and work with partners to facilitate their return where feasible (taking into account national security concerns). Establishing their whereabouts and identity is not straightforward, but we have facilitated a number of such returns to the UK. The Foreign Secretary noted on 21 November 2019, following the first repatriation of children, that they "should never have been subjected to the horrors of

war" and that their return home was facilitated "because it was the right thing to do." Each case is considered on a case by case basis.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[2232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from Tigray.

James Duddridge:

We are closely monitoring the situation and are clear that the withdrawal of Eritrean forces must be swift, unconditional and verifiable. However, despite Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy's commitment that Eritrean troops would withdraw from Tigray we are yet to see any evidence that this is happening. There are numerous shocking reports of atrocities committed by Eritrean forces in Tigray, and their continued presence is fueling insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately. We continue to press hard for this commitment to be delivered. I made this clear on my call to the Eritrean Ambassador on 16 March.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[2233\]](#)

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 article entitled Tigray Is Being Deliberately Starved to Death by Alex de Waal, published in World Politics Review on 6 April 2021.

James Duddridge:

The UK shares the call, in the report from Alex de Waal, Executive Director of the World Peace Foundation, for all parties to the conflict to place the survival and welfare of the affected people above political and military goals. We also share concerns about a continued lack of information about the humanitarian situation and lack of access. The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray, including reports of people dying from hunger.

To date the UK has provided £22 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. A joint humanitarian and political team from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa visited Tigray 4-5 March, 4-7 April and the week of 19 April. They met with the provisional administration of Tigray, the Mayor of Mekelle, the Interim Head of Administration in Shire and with humanitarian agencies working in the region. They spoke directly to people displaced by violence and heard harrowing accounts of human rights violations.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[2234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent rape being used as a weapon of war in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The UK is appalled by reports of atrocities including widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by different armed groups in Tigray. This is unacceptable. The G7, under the UK Presidency, issued a communique on 5 May which condemned rape and sexual exploitation, and other forms of gender-based violence and called for all parties to cease hostilities immediately, ensure respect for human rights and international law and hold those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, accountable. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account.

We are working to promote justice for survivors of sexual violence, to provide support to survivors and children born of conflict related sexual violence and to prevent sexual violence from occurring. Preparations are underway to deploy expertise from the UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts to the region. British Embassy staff conducted a specific protection mission in Shire in Tigray on 4-7 April. It included the assessment of the current Gender-Based Violence response, specific emergency services provided in camps and the gaps that need to be filled. They interviewed staff and volunteers supporting survivors of sexual violence to identify essential activities required to address the immediate needs of the survivors as well as the accountability needs to ensure well-informed and effective assistance.

Helen Hayes:

[\[2380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of adequacy of steps taken against Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers in response to crimes of sexual violence committed in the conflict in Tigray; and if he will make a statement.

James Duddridge:

The UK is appalled by reports of atrocities including widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by different armed groups in Tigray. This is unacceptable. Both the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea have committed to hold perpetrators of human rights violations to account, but we have yet to see any indication of how they propose to do this. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights violations and abuses are held to account.

We are working to promote justice for survivors of sexual violence, to provide support to survivors and children born of conflict related sexual violence and to prevent sexual violence from occurring. Preparations are underway to deploy expertise from the UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts to the region. British Embassy staff conducted a mission to assess the protection of civilians and humanitarian access in Shire, Tigray, on 4-7 April. It included the assessment of the current Gender-Based Violence response, specific emergency services provided in camps and the gaps that need to be filled. They interviewed staff and volunteers supporting survivors of sexual violence to identify essential activities required to address the immediate needs of the survivors as well as the accountability needs to ensure well-informed and effective assistance.

■ Tigray: Homicide

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[2235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of reports of the use of extra judicial killings in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned at human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia's Tigray region, including those of extra judicial killings. We condemn violations as consistent with an apparent policy of collective punishment of Tigrayans. The UK will support the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that their joint investigations into atrocities in Tigray with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission are independent, transparent and impartial and that those responsible for these human rights violations and abuses are held to account.

■ Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[2236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches all areas in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. Currently 5.2 million are in need of food aid. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray, including reports of people dying from hunger. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. Teams from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa visited Tigray from 4-5 March, 4-7 April and the week of 19 April and met with humanitarian agencies working in the region. To date the UK has provided £22 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray. We continue to call for unfettered humanitarian access.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****John Howell:****[181]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of resolution 2373 on discrimination against persons dealing with chronic and long term illness passed at the Council of Europe on 21 April 2021; and whether the Government plans to take steps following the passing of that resolution.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: We have not made a specific assessment.

We are committed to tackling discrimination. Public authorities, including the Department and all National Health Service providers, must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires them to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination when carrying out their activities.

■ **Accident and Emergency Departments****John McDonnell:****[601]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many type 1 A&E departments there were in NHS England in (a) December 2019 and (b) the most recent month for which figures are available.

Edward Argar:

In December 2019 there were 132 National Health Service trusts reporting type 1 accident and emergency (A&E) departments. In April 2021 there were 126 trusts reporting type 1 A&E departments. However, some trusts may have multiple A&E units.

■ **Acute Beds****Philip Davies:****[164]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data the Government holds on the amount of funding disbursed from the public purse for the provision of critical care beds in each of the last 30 years.

Edward Argar:

This information is not held centrally.

■ **Asthma: Health Services****Liz Twist:****[1363]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Asthma UK's report entitled *Asthma Care in a Crisis*, Annual Asthma Survey 2020, if he will take steps to help ensure that people who are most at risk of having an asthma attack are prioritised and seen face-to-face when clinically necessary.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's Rapid Guidance on severe asthma during the pandemic recommend using technology to reduce in-person appointments.

NHS England's letter of 13 May 2021 outlined that patients and clinicians have a choice of consultation mode. Patients' input into this choice should be sought and practices should respect preferences for face to face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary. The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/B0497-GP-access-letter-May-2021-FINAL.pdf>

■ Bowel Cancer: Drinks**Jim Shannon:****[2990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made for the implications for his policies of the Washington University School of Medicine research published May 2021 on Sugar-sweetened beverage intake in adulthood and adolescence and risk of early-onset colorectal cancer among women.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**John Healey:****[2186]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using the Infection Control Fund to support care home workers who need to stay at home and self-isolate.

John Healey:**[2187]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of care home workers receiving their normal wage in the event that they need to stay at home and self-isolate.

John Healey:**[2188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of care providers using funding from the Infection Control Fund to pay care home workers their normal wage in the event that they need to stay at home and self-isolate.

John Healey:**[2190]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue clear guidance to care providers on the use of the Infection Control Fund to pay care home workers their normal wage in the event that they need to stay at home and self-isolate.

Helen Whately:

Since May 2020 the Government has made an Infection Control Fund available to support adult social care providers take measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission. One of the purposes of this fund is to enable care providers to pay care home workers their full wage in the event they need to self-isolate.

The Department has provided guidance to providers which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-infection-control-and-testing-fund>

Children: Disability**Alex Cunningham:****[2280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of the Disabled Children's Partnership's report entitled No End In Sight Report, published on 14 May 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing support for specific therapies catch-up plans for disabled children as part of the covid-19 recovery.

Helen Whately:

We have no plans to make a specific assessment. However, as part of COVID-19 recovery planning we are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve the provision of therapies to disabled children. NHS England and NHS Improvement published guidance which makes clear that essential community services, including therapies such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, must be prioritised for children and young people aged up to 25 years old with special educational needs and disabilities and who have an Education Health and Care Plan in place or who are going through an assessment for one.

Coronavirus**Dr Julian Lewis:****[2167]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been (a) recorded as infected and (b) hospitalised with the Indian variant of the covid-19 virus; and how many people in each of those categories had previously been vaccinated against the virus.

Jo Churchill:

The statistics for infections for each variant of concern, including the Indian variant, are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-variants-genomically-confirmed-case-numbers/variants-distribution-of-cases-data>

Data on hospitalisations and vaccination status are not currently available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell: [\[2355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence there is on which vaccine provides the highest levels of immunity against each variant of covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The evidence on which vaccine provides the highest levels of immunity against each variant of COVID-19 is not available. Public Health England is monitoring the effects of the vaccines, including the impact of the vaccinations on the COVID-19 variants.

■ Coronavirus: Virtual Wards

Justin Madders: [\[300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have been cared for in covid virtual wards (a) in total and (b) in each region.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Deep Vein Thrombosis

Emma Hardy: [\[2424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to help people with deep vein thrombosis and post thrombotic syndrome to access NHS elective services as part of the NHS restart; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are preparing guidance on the full restoration of deep vein thrombosis and post thrombotic syndrome services which will be issued to the National Health Service shortly.

■ Derriford Hospital Plymouth

Luke Pollard: [\[1393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the planned phasing is of the £600 million in funding for the rebuild of Derriford Hospital in Plymouth.

Luke Pollard: [\[1394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much of the £600 million in funding allocated to the rebuild of Derriford Hospital in Plymouth will be committed by 2023.

Edward Argar:

A national programme has been established to deliver the Government's commitment to build 40 new hospitals by 2030. Whilst we are unable to comment on individual project timings, the programme delivery timetable will ensure that all of the new hospitals, including Derriford, are completed by 2030. As with any major Government

investment, final timings and funding allocations for this hospital will be determined through a robust business case assessment process.

■ **Doctors: Retirement**

David Linden: [\[836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish his Department's projected retirement rates for doctors in 2021-22.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the specific information requested.

■ **Endoscopy: Waiting Lists**

Julian Sturdy: [\[1307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) steps his Department is taking and (b) resources have been allocated to reduce NHS endoscopy waiting times.

Edward Argar:

Endoscopy is a key part of diagnostic activity. The 2020 Spending Review committed £325 million for diagnostics in 2021/22, including the development of community diagnostics hubs. The exact allocations of this funding will be confirmed in due course.

In addition, the Accelerator programme has commenced in May 2021 which supports 13 integrated care systems and £160 million has been allocated to support new rapid programmes of work over a 13 week period, which include diagnostic recovery. Learning from these sites will be applied rapidly across England to support wider elective recovery. Alongside the Accelerator programme, £1 billion is being invested in 2021/22 through the Elective Recovery Fund. Endoscopy activity is one of the activities included as part of the Elective Recovery Fund. This fund is available across England for all providers of secondary care services to increase levels of elective activity including diagnostics.

■ **Functional Neurological Disorder**

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[1096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 184486 on Functional Neurological Disorder, what plans he has to ensure consistent coding and recording among clinical commissioning groups and Health Boards of Functional Neurological Disorder through a nationally agreed data code and definition.

Helen Whately:

There are currently no specific plans to do so. The Department is currently funding research projects into functional neurological disorder through the National Institute for Health Research, which will improve understanding of the condition.

■ Gambling

Carolyn Harris: [\[1335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the arrangements for the commissioning of clinical treatment for gambling disorders in proposals for a new Health and Care Bill.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

Carolyn Harris: [\[1336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether proposals for the introduction of a new medical examiner system are planned to make provision for recording the number of deaths where gambling disorder is a factor.

Jo Churchill:

Medical practitioners who are responsible for completing the medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD) are expected to state the cause of death to the best of their knowledge and belief. The medical practitioner is able to record gambling disorder as a factor if they consider this is relevant. The Office of National Statistics publishes mortality statistics taking account of all health conditions mentioned on the MCCD. There is currently no International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) code for gambling disorder but this is expected to be introduced in ICD-11.

The Medical Examiner system will introduce a new level of independent scrutiny improving the quality and accuracy of the MCCD. We remain committed to making the medical examiner system statutory subject to Parliamentary approval and when time allows.

■ Gender Recognition: Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [R] [\[786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many months on average it took between General Practitioners' referring people to gender dysphoria services and treatment being started in (a) England, (b) each NHS England area, (c) Yorkshire and (d) York in each year since 2010.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ General Practitioners

Emma Hardy: [\[1371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department are taking to improve waiting times for patients seeking consultation with their GP.

Jo Churchill:

We have committed to expanding the workforce and supporting general practice to deliver an extra 50 million appointments a year within the next five years and to help

expand general practice capacity. In addition, we have made available an extra £270 million funding from November 2020 until September 2021 to ensure general practitioners and their teams are able to continue to support all patients.

In March, there was 1.24 million appointments per working day, a 5% increase compared to 1.19 million in February 2021. This includes 15.8 million face to face appointments, more than half all appointments.

■ **General Practitioners: Disability Aids**

Holly Mumby-Croft: [\[1227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the availability of hoists in (a) GP and (b) Primary Care settings to ensure that patients with conditions that affect mobility are able to be examined.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made. General practitioner practices are required to ensure that their premises are suitable for the delivery of essential services and that these services are sufficient to meet the reasonable needs of their patients, including those with disabilities. In dental primary care settings, adults with moderate and severe physical disabilities, including those requiring specialised equipment such as hoists, may be referred to specialised dental services.

■ **Health Professions and Social Services: Training**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[1013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what training is provided to (a) healthcare workers and (b) social care workers to communicate appropriately with deaf people.

Helen Whately:

The standard of training for all regulated health care professionals is the responsibility of the health care independent statutory regulatory bodies. Higher education institutions' curricula content enables their students to meet the regulators' outcome standards including how to communicate with deaf people.

Under the Equalities Act 2010, mandatory employee training and monitoring compliance with equality and diversity policies are the responsibilities of employing organisations. To support the training of staff, Health Education England produces e-learning for healthcare modules to assist and support mandatory training and has dedicated sessions on communicating with deaf people within their modules.

■ **Health Services: EU Nationals**

Paul Blomfield: [\[1300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps EU citizens with Settled Status or non-EU family members with Settled Status should take to evidence that status and the date on which it was received; and what steps EU citizens with Settled

Status or non-EU family members who have applied for Settled Status but not yet received it should take to evidence the date of their application to the EU Settlement Scheme upon receiving NHS treatment or care.

Edward Argar:

European Union citizens and non-EU family members that have applied to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) can provide their Certificate of Application as evidence of this when accessing National Health Service treatment. Those granted EUSS status will be able to provide a share code, through which NHS trusts can establish their immigration status. EU citizens and non-EU family members will still need to meet the ordinarily residence test to be eligible for free healthcare. Primary medical care is free of charge to all overseas visitors. Health services are not withheld from anyone in urgent need.

Stephen Farry:

[\[1411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether unpaid NHS charges of over £500 from EU citizens and non-EU family members who do not apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by the 30 June 2021 deadline will be reported to the Home Office; and whether such unpaid fines will affect EU Settlement Scheme application decisions.

Edward Argar:

Unpaid National Health Service debts will not affect European Union Settlement Scheme applications.

Stephen Farry:

[\[1412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether EU citizens and non-EU family members eligible for the EU Settlement Scheme who do not make an application by the 30 June 2021 deadline will be chargeable for NHS treatment (a) after the deadline until a late application is submitted and (b) after a late application is submitted.

Edward Argar:

An individual who is eligible to apply to the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) but who has not submitted an application by 30 June 2021 will be chargeable. If they receive and pay for relevant services and then later make a late application which is granted, they will not be refunded for the earlier treatment.

Where the Home Office accepts a late application to the EUSS and grant a person status under that scheme, the person is non-chargeable from the date on which the late application was made. Primary medical care is free of charge to all overseas visitors. Health services are not withheld from anyone in urgent need.

■ **Health Services: Migrants**

Sarah Owen:

[\[2459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health on the effect of the Immigration Health Surcharge on the health of migrants who are (a) new parents and (b) children.

Edward Argar:

There have been no specific discussions.

■ **Hospitals****John McDonnell:****[600]**

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

Edward Argar:

As at December 2019, there were 1,433 hospitals in England. In March 2020, the most recent data available showed that there were 1,433 hospitals.

■ **Hospitals: Food****Elliot Colburn:****[3174]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure hospital patients from the Jewish community are being served fresh Kosher foods that allow a comparable choice at mealtimes, without compromising on the strict dietary laws that they must follow.

Edward Argar:

The independent review of National Health Service hospital food was published on the 20 October 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-nhs-hospital-food>

It includes recommendations to improve hospital food for patients, staff and visitors, including the religious requirements of patients, visitors and staff. An expert group is being assembled to implement the recommendations of this report, with a sub-group to look at how food is best provided to patients given their medical conditions, personal or cultural preferences and religious requirements. This sub-group will include representatives from religious organisations. While Kosher foods are not mentioned specifically, it is part of wider cultural and diversity work.

■ **Kidney Diseases: Young People****Dan Jarvis:****[242]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 186169 on Kidney Diseases: Young People, what steps his Department is taking is to ensure that young people on dialysis are able to access psychosocial support under the paediatric renal service specification.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The NHS England and NHS Improvement national paediatric renal service specification specifies that having a multi-disciplinary team is essential to running a paediatric nephrology service and would include social workers, psychologists, play specialists and youth workers. It is expected that each

specialised paediatric renal unit would have access to appropriate psychosocial support. Providers of all specialised services are asked to assess their service against the key requirements of the service specifications on an annual basis.

■ Lung Diseases: Health Services

Liz Twist: [\[1364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to restore normal levels of respiratory care.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement asked general practice to restore activity to usual levels where clinically appropriate and reach out proactively to clinically vulnerable patients and those whose care may have been delayed.

The cardiovascular disease and respiratory programme focussed its work in 2020/21 on the response to COVID-19 and has spent £5.5 million to support the response to the disease, including work on 'long COVID-19'. This included bringing forward the implementation of respiratory clinical networks by one year. The networks are vital in promoting an integrated approach to respiratory care during COVID-19, in parallel with supporting delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan's priorities.

■ Medical Equipment: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry: [\[556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the forthcoming EU Medical Devices Regulation on the movement of medical devices from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Stephen Farry: [\[557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders moving medical devices from Great Britain to Northern Ireland on providing clear guidelines to assist compliance with the EU Medical Devices Regulation.

Stephen Farry: [\[558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mitigations he is seeking from the European Commission to enable the movement of medical devices between Great Britain and Northern Ireland with regard to the forthcoming EU Medical Devices Regulation.

Edward Argar:

The Government is committed to helping ensure there is no disruption to the supply of medical devices into Northern Ireland. The Department of Health and Social Care, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the Department of Health in Northern Ireland have been working closely with industry to support them in their preparations to comply with the European Union Medical Device

Regulation (MDR), which will come into effect in Northern Ireland from 26 May this year.

The Government is not seeking any mitigations from the European Commission regarding the MDR. Following feedback from industry stakeholders and in recognition that guidance from the EU is pending, on 5 March 2021 the MHRA published guidance on importation requirements to assist with compliance in moving medical devices from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. On 10 May 2021, the MHRA wrote to industry to provide further support and clarification on the implementation of the MDR in Northern Ireland.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr Owen Paterson: [\[1273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the correspondence from the hon. Member for North Shropshire of 2 December 2020, 5 March 2021 and 25 April 2021 on his constituent Richard Liver.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 18 May 2021.

Robert Largan: [\[3205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for High Peak of 12 February 2021, reference RL18801.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 19 May 2021.

■ **Neurology**

Peter Dowd: [\[2308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans are in place to fund and deliver a national NHS care pathway for functional neurological disorder.

Helen Whately:

The National Neuro Advisory Group (NNAG), which includes NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England, expert bodies, clinicians, academics, and patient voice organisations, develops and coordinates the national programme of neurology service improvement. The NNAG has a priority in their work plan for 2021/2022 to support development of a clinical pathway for functional neurological conditions, including functional neurological disorder.

■ **NHS: Topwood**

Karin Smyth: [\[320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he made contact with those responsible for the procurement of the Shared Business Services framework contract for Waste Management and Minimisation in 2019 to disclose his personal connection with Topwood Limited.

Karin Smyth: [\[321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on how many occasions his departmental Permanent Secretary has been involved in discussions with Ministers in his Department on potential conflicts of interest in the last three years.

Karin Smyth: [\[322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what record was taken of the discussions with his departmental Permanent Secretary on the transfer of shares in Topwood Ltd to his ownership.

Karin Smyth: [\[323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has received advice from his (a) departmental Permanent Secretary and (b) the Cabinet Secretary on the transfer of shares in Topwood Ltd to his ownership.

Karin Smyth: [\[324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he had discussions with the departmental Permanent Secretary on the matter of Topwood Ltd after that company had already been placed on the framework contract for NHS Waste Management and Minimisation Services.

Karin Smyth: [\[325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he received advice from his departmental Permanent Secretary when Topwood Ltd was placed on the framework contract for NHS Waste Management and Minimisation Services.

Karin Smyth: [\[326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he had with his departmental Permanent Secretary or other officials when or after Topwood Limited was awarded a contract with NHS Wales.

Karin Smyth: [\[779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when discussions took place with the departmental permanent secretary about the transfer of shares in Topwood Limited to the ownership of the Secretary of State.

Karin Smyth: [\[780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what procedures or guidance governs and discussions between him and his departmental Permanent Secretary; and in what circumstances are Ministers in his department required to consult the departmental Permanent Secretary on potential conflicts of interest.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: The Permanent Secretary discusses a range of issues with Ministers, including on propriety matters. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has discussed his declarations of interests with the

Permanent Secretary and advice was provided. A record of all specific occasions where potential conflicts of interests were discussed is not held. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care discussed his declarations of interests with the then Deputy Cabinet Secretary.

Ministers have a duty to abide by the Ministerial Code, which states that:

“It is the personal responsibility of each Minister to decide whether and what action is needed to avoid a conflict or the perception of a conflict, taking account of advice received from their Permanent Secretary and the independent adviser on Ministers’ interests.”

■ Overseas Students: Coronavirus

Stephen Timms: [\[2175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what preparations his Department has made for covid-19 hotel quarantine for international students from (a) India and (b) other countries in autumn 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Department will continue to ensure that the system has enough capacity to meet the challenges of arrivals from overseas, which includes international students arriving from red-list countries. The Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education are working together on this issue.

■ Prescription Drugs: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh: [\[2374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether UK-licensed pharmaceutical suppliers will be able to supply their products to the NHS in Northern Ireland from 1 January 2022, or whether they will be required to split supplies into separate Northern Ireland and Great Britain licences.

Edward Argar:

The Government is working closely with pharmaceutical suppliers to the National Health Service in Northern Ireland to ensure their readiness for the full implementation of the Protocol from 1 January 2022.

■ Tobacco

Andrew Rosindell: [\[1014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions official in his Department have had with the Committee on Toxicity on a potential evaluation of non-tobacco oral nicotine pouches.

Jo Churchill:

We have asked the Committee on Toxicity (COT) to consider the toxicological risks from tobacco-free oral nicotine pouches. The COT held an initial discussion around the paper ‘A summary of data on the bioavailability of nicotine and other ingredients

from the use of oral nicotine pouches and assessment of risk to users of the topic (TOX/2021/22)' at its meeting on 4 May 2021, in which the Department participated.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

Imran Hussain:

[2305]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support his Department is providing to travellers on low incomes with limited savings that are required to pay for a managed quarantine hotel on returning to the UK from countries on the covid-19 red list travel ban.

Jo Churchill:

For those facing significant financial hardship as a result of the managed quarantine charge, there is an opportunity to apply for a deferred repayment plan when booking. We have updated the guidance on GOV.UK as it previously referred only to those on income-related benefits.

■ **Use of Health Data for Research and Analysis Review**

Justin Madders:

[2334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the findings of the Goldacre rapid review on the use of health data for research and analysis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Dr Goldacre is finalising his recommendations. The report will be published as soon as possible.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Animal Experiments**

Alex Sobel:

[2430]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference the commitment in the Queen's Speech 2021 to the UK having and promoting high standards of animal welfare, what steps she is taking to improve the protection of animals used in scientific research and to accelerate their replacement with animal free, human relevant methods.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government has published a code of practice for the care and accommodation of animals used for scientific purposes. The code provides details of appropriate standards to support animal welfare in science. Published guidance is available on the operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act to assist establishments meet the legislative requirements in the application of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement).

Bail**Mr David Davis:****[900291]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the length of time that suspects are held on pre-charge bail.

Kit Malthouse:

Following public consultation, we are legislating in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to adjust the timescales to better reflect operational realities, while retaining the important independent oversight of the court within the process. Magistrates will continue to make key decisions on more complex, lengthier cases.

The Government is committed to restoring confidence in the criminal justice system and there is significant activity under way to increase the speed, capacity, and efficiency of every stage of a case. The Crown Prosecution Service, National Police Chief's Council and College of Policing have recently published the Case Progression Commitment which outlines the measures that will be taken to improve efficient case progression.

As part of the government's recruitment drive which will increase the police's capacity, police forces have already hired nearly 9,000 officers from its target to recruit 20,000 by 2023.

Crime: Hornsey and Wood Green**Catherine West:****[2387]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level (a) youth crime and (b) violent crime in Hornsey and Wood Green constituency in the last three years; and what (i) steps she is taking and (ii) resources she is allocating to tackle those crimes.

Kit Malthouse:

It is vitally important that we prevent young people from being drawn into violent crime. The Government is committed to reducing serious violence and putting an end to the tragedies afflicting our communities.

The Home Office collects data from police forces on police recorded crime, broken down by Police Force Area and Community Safety Partnership Area, including the London borough of Haringey. Data is not collected at parliamentary constituency level. The latest data can be found here (This includes the number of recorded offences of violence against the person):

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

In March the Home Office announced its £130.5 million investment in tackling serious violent crime, including homicide and knife crime, in 2021-22. This includes an extra £30 million to support the police in taking targeted action in parts of England and Wales most affected by serious violence, and up to £23 million for new early intervention programmes that will help stop young people from being drawn into violence. This includes programmes which use significant moments in a young

person's life – such as when they enter police custody or Accident and Emergency – as opportunities for trained professionals to engage and divert young people away from violence.

In total, £105.5 million, over three years (2018 – 2021), has been invested in multi-agency Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) in the 18 areas most affected by serious violence, which bring together local partners to deliver an effective, joined up approach to tackling violent crime and its drivers. £21 million was allocated to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to develop the London VRU, covering all London boroughs. £136.5 million, over three years (2018 – 2021), has also been allocated to the same 18 police forces to fund a surge in police operational activity. The Metropolitan Police Service have been allocated £42,547,955 of this funding.

In addition we have invested £200 million in early intervention and prevention support initiatives over 10 years to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF). The government has awarded an extra £5 million towards the expedited development of a national Centre of Excellence (CofE) to help guide government investment and national policies.

In March a new criminal justice bill was introduced to Parliament – the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. The bill includes a duty on public sector bodies to take a joined-up approach to addressing serious violence; the requirement for local agencies to review the circumstances when an adult homicide takes place involving an offensive weapon; and Serious Violence Reduction Orders, which give the police the authority to stop and search known knife and weapons carriers.

■ **Drugs: Misuse**

Crispin Blunt:

[R] [\[2169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which Minister is responsible for reporting to the Drug Strategy Board on the implementation of recommendations in the 2019 ACMD report on Custody-Community Transitions, published on 12 June 2019; and when that Minister plans to make that report.

Kit Malthouse:

As set out in the Government's response to the ACMD's report on custody-to-community transitions, published in October 2019, the Prisons Minister at the Ministry of Justice has overarching responsibility for this issue, working in partnership with the relevant departments, agencies and devolved administrations to respond to recommendations where appropriate.

The Crime and Justice Taskforce (CJTF), chaired by the Prime Minister, has responsibility for oversight of matters including both drugs and prisons. The Drug Strategy Board has been superseded by the CJTF.

In January, the Government announced £80 million additional funding for drug treatment services in England, including a focus on increasing the number of

treatment places for prison leavers, and £70 million investment in accommodation and wider support for prison leavers, including for those with substance misuse problems. In addition, part two of Dame Carol Black's independent review of drugs focused on prevention, treatment and recovery and this included an examination of the criminal justice response to people with drug misuse problems. Part two of the review will be published shortly.

■ **Forced Labour: Uighurs**

Afzal Khan: [\[2502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to amend the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to prevent UK companies from using forced Uyghur labour in their supply chains.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has serious concerns about the gross human rights violations being perpetrated against Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

In January 2021, the Foreign Secretary announced a package of cross-Government policy measures seeking to ensure that UK private and public bodies are not complicit in, nor profiting from, the human rights violations in Xinjiang.

These measures included strengthening the Overseas Business Risk guidance; a review of export controls; increasing support for UK government bodies to exclude suppliers complicit in violations or abuses; and a commitment to introduce financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act.

The commitment to introduce financial penalties for organisations which fail to meet their statutory obligations under the Modern Slavery Act builds on a wider package of measures to strengthen section 54 of the Act, including plans to extend transparency to large public bodies, mandate the specific reporting topics statements must cover, such as due diligence, and require organisations to submit their statements to a new centralised Government registry. These measures require legislative change and will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

The Government continues to encourage businesses to monitor their supply chains, including any links to Xinjiang, with rigour and conduct appropriate due diligence to uncover and remedy any associations they find with modern slavery, including forced labour.

■ **Hemp: Hemp: Businesses**

Dave Doogan: [\[2447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason HMRC officers continue to seize imports of hemp product containing less than 0.2 per cent THC at UK airports and which comply with UK regulation and World Health Organisation and United Nation guidance on controlled substances; and what urgent steps he will take to ensure HMRC officers understand the law in this area to prevent ongoing delay and cost to UK hemp businesses.

Kit Malthouse:

Hemp products containing controlled cannabinoids are unlawful unless accompanied by the requisite Home Office licence and Border Force may seize and destroy them.

The only hemp items which can be imported without a licence are those which are not controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act and derived from the fibre and seed of low THC EU approved seed varieties.

Immigration: Welsh Language**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[2386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2020 to Question 71114, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to amend the immigration rules to ensure that Welsh language skills are awarded equal points as English, including a date whereby final conclusions of that assessment will be published.

Chris Philp:

We are continuing to explore the role of the Welsh language in our immigration system, reflecting its importance to both the communities where it is spoken and to the UK as a whole. Language skills are an important part of integration for those coming to work, study or settle in the UK.

Migrants**Stephen Timms:**[\[2171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the judgment in *ST (a child, by his Litigation Friend VW) & VW v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2021] EWHC 1085 (Admin), what plans she has to update guidance for no recourse to public funds change of conditions applications to reflect her discretion over transferring applicants from the five year to the 10 year route; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) policy is by its nature an evolving one and is subject to amendment from time to time. We have studied the judgment in *ST (a child, by his Litigation Friend VW) & VW v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2021] EWHC 1085 (Admin), and are planning to make amendments to the NRPF policy that are required by that judgment. This includes decisions made following a Change of Conditions application. The different ways in which an individual can be transferred from the five-year route to the 10-year route did not form part of the Court's findings and is currently undergoing separate consideration by the Home Office.

■ Psilocybin: Health Hazards

Crispin Blunt: [R] [2168]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Government's response to the Health and Social Care Committee's First Report of Session 2019, on Drugs policy, HC 1178, what scientific and medical analysis showed the Class A, Schedule 1 drug psilocybin to be harmful to human health; on what dates that analysis was (a) commissioned and (b) published; and who conducted that analysis.

Crispin Blunt: [R] [2170]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Government's response to the Health and Social Care Committee's First Report of Session 2019, on Drugs policy, HC 1178, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Committee's recommendation that policy responsibility for drugs should move from the Home Office to the Department of Health and Social Care.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has not commissioned or published any recent analysis of the harms of psilocybin. Psilocybin, as an "ester of psilocin", is controlled as a Class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and is placed in Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001. Psilocin is also subject to the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, to which the United Kingdom is signatory.

We have no plans to move responsibility for drugs from the Home Office to the Department of Health and Social Care. Both departments have an important role to play in tackling the current issues around drug misuse.

This Government takes a balanced approach which brings together policing, health, community and global partners to tackle the illicit drug trade, protect the most vulnerable and help those with a drug dependency to recover and turn their lives around.

We have recently announced a £148million package aimed at dismantling the organised criminal gangs who encourage this terrible trade, helping those in drug treatment and recovery to stop drug-related crime, and dealing with the significant health-related harms drugs pose.

We know there is more to do which is why the Government commissioned a major independent review, led by Dame Carol Black, to inform the Government's thinking on what more can be done to tackle the harm that drugs cause. Part One of Dame Carol Black's review of drugs was published on 27 February 2020 at the Government's UK Drugs Summit in Glasgow. It provides a detailed analysis of the challenges posed by drug supply and demand, including the ways in which drugs fuel serious violence. It is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-one-report.

Part Two of Dame Carol Black's Review of Drugs was announced at the Drugs Summit and is focusing on prevention, treatment services and recovery. The final

report will be made available to Ministers later this year. The Review findings will feed into wider Government work to tackle the serious harms caused by substance misuse.

■ Retail Trade: Abuse

Andrea Leadsom: [2279]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect shopworkers from abusive customers.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government conducted a call for evidence on violence and abuse toward shop staff to understand the extent of the issue and how we can improve the response to these crimes. The Government's formal response was published 7 July 2020 and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-call-for-evidence>

To address the actions raised in the call for evidence the Home Office has worked closely with retailers and trade organisations through the National Retail Crime Steering Group. We have developed resources to assist retailers to report crimes when they occur, resources for shop staff who are victims of violence and abuse, and the #Shopkind communications campaign. The downloadable resources are free to use and are available here: <https://brc.org.uk/nrcsg-against-shop-worker-abuse-and-violence/>

The next phase of the work will look at the causes of retail violence, such as drug and alcohol addiction, and what can be done to address these in the retail setting.

■ Sexual Offences: Victims

Chi Onwurah: [726]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 26 March 2021 to Question 169852, on Sexual Offences, who is responsible for safeguarding people who may be being exploited as a result of receiving sexually explicit emails; and what investigations have been undertaken to date.

Victoria Atkins:

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will assess and forward information it receives through its complaints process to other organisations who may have an interest or a responsibility. This information is shared according to the specific nature of the issue raised with the ICO and may include the Police. We would expect all agencies to share information with the relevant bodies and take appropriate action to ensure the safeguarding of individuals where there is cause for concern. The ICO does not publish information on enforcement action which they have taken specifically against email spam, including those emails which are sexually explicit. Further information on their enforcement activity relating to broader marketing is available here: <https://ico.org.uk/action-weve->

[taken/enforcement/?facet_type=&facet_sector=Marketing&facet_date=&date_from=&date_to=](#)

We know that women are disproportionately abused online, which impedes their rights to participate in society. We are introducing the Online Safety Bill which will give effect to the regulatory framework outlined in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper and will be ready this year. The Bill will set out a new duty of care on companies to keep their users safe online; including that all companies in scope must tackle illegal content on their platforms and be clear on what legal but harmful content accessed by adults is acceptable on their platform.

Whilst sexually explicit email is not in scope of this legislation, women will be better protected by a range of online abuse, and should expect to receive an appropriate response from a platform. This could include removal of harmful content, sanctions against offending users, or changing processes and policies to better protect users. The new regulatory framework will be overseen and enforced by an independent regulator.

■ Visas: EU Countries

Sarah Olney:

[2395]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to progress the discussions on the expansion of visa-free travel between the UK and the EU from the end of 2022.

Kevin Foster:

European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens do not require a visa to spend up to 180 days in the UK under the visitor route. There is also no visa requirement for British citizens visiting the Schengen area for a short stay (up to 90 days in any 180 days).

Full details of the UK's immigration system are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration>

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy have also produced guides for UK citizens travelling for work which are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/travelling-to-the-eu-switzerland-norway-iceland-or-liechtenstein-for-work>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Daisy Cooper:

[2449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 25 January 2021 to Question 140940, when his Department plans to publish the standard template documents for the (a) Short Form Funding Agreement for Pre-Tender Support and (b) Grant Funding Agreement that must be

signed by (i) building owners and (ii) property management companies to access the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

We plan to publish a template funding agreement shortly.

■ **High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention**

Mike Amesbury:

[\[1381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of buildings outside London over 17.7 metres in height with (a) unsafe cladding and (b) other fire safety issues that have had waking watches put in place since 15 March 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 May 2021]: The Department continues to work closely with the National Fire Chiefs Council to understand the extent to which waking watch measures are used in Residential Buildings. We do not hold specific information on the number of buildings over 17.7 metres in height which have had waking watches put in place since 15 March 2021.

The Government's £30 million Waking Watch Relief Fund is designed to incentivise buildings to install a common alarm system and to reduce the dependency on waking watch measures. The Government funding does not remove responsibilities for fire safety from the responsible persons. We are keeping the operation of the Waking Watch Relief Fund under review.

■ **Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Luton**

Sarah Owen:

[\[2460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including Luton in the Cambridge-Oxford Arc.

Christopher Pincher:

Luton is indeed part of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Luton's strong automotive and engineering sectors, leading airport and links to the Central Area of the Arc make it a key part of Government's plan to transform the Oxford-Cambridge Arc into one of the world's premier economic growth corridors. The Government has been working closely with colleagues in Luton to shape the Spatial Framework as we plan for sustainable growth and levelling up in the Arc.

■ **Public Lavatories: Non-domestic Rates**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[2475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when town, parish and other local authority bodies will receive reimbursement for their business rates as a result of the Public Lavatories (non-domestic ratings) Act 2021.

Luke Hall:

The Non-Domestic Rating (Public Lavatories) Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April. The Act provides a 100 per cent business rates relief for eligible separately-assessed public toilets in England. This relief applies retrospectively from 1 April 2020.

As with other business rates reliefs, local billing authorities are responsible for putting in place the arrangements to award this relief. Owners or operators of public toilets, including local authorities, that consider that they may be eligible for the relief should contact their billing authority about any refunds which may be due. The Government will compensate billing authorities for income lost as a result of awarding the relief.

Regional Planning and Development: Consultation Papers**Dan Jarvis:****[R] [2295]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has been made on the English Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper.

Luke Hall:

Levelling up all areas of the country remains at the centre of Government's agenda. Later this year we will publish a Levelling Up White Paper setting out how bold new policy interventions will improve livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic. Our plans for strengthening local leadership will now be included in the Levelling Up White Paper.

Rents: Arrears**Stephen Timms:****[2174]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of tenants that have built up rent arrears since covid-19 lockdown measures were introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

Government support has ensured that the vast majority of tenants have maintained their rent payments. Data from the English Housing Survey (EHS) Household Resilience Study November-December 2020 suggests that around 9 per cent of households in the private rented sector are in rent arrears and two thirds of those are in less than 2 months of arrears.

The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to tenants. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September, helping private renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-

22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180 million provided last year.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability

Emily Thornberry: [\[2240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential for the UK to participate in the initiative towards an Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government is actively considering whether the United Kingdom should join the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS) negotiations. To inform our decision, we are assessing the three policy areas that comprise ACCTS – environmental goods and services liberalisation, ecolabelling and fossil fuel subsidies.

Emily Thornberry: [\[2241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts in (a) Costa Rica, (b) Fiji, (c) Iceland, (d) New Zealand, (e) Norway and (f) Switzerland on the initiative towards an Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Secretary of State for International Trade has previously discussed the United Kingdom's interest in joining the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS) with her counterpart in New Zealand. While these have been high level discussions, officials have been engaging with all ACCTS member states, particularly New Zealand, on each area of the agreement – environmental goods and services liberalisation, fossil fuel subsidies, and ecolabelling – as we consider whether the United Kingdom should seek to join the negotiations.

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Claire Hanna: [\[2478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what arms have been exported from the UK to Israel in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021 to date.

Claire Hanna: [\[2479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what risk assessment measures are used in the Government's ongoing monitoring of arms exports to Israel.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government publishes Official Statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) on export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations on GOV.UK

containing detailed information including the overall value, type (e.g. Military, Other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This information is available at: [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and the most recent publication was on 13th April 2021, covering the period 1st October – 31st December 2020. Information covering 1st January – 31st March 2021 will be published on 13th July 2021.

HM Government continues to monitor closely the situation in Israel. We have procedures in place to review licences – and suspend or revoke as necessary – when circumstances require.

HM Government takes its export responsibilities seriously and will continue to assess all export licences in accordance with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria'). HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

■ Department for International Trade: India

Emily Thornberry:

[\[2239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what advance visit was undertaken by her officials to prepare for the Prime Minister's scheduled visit to India on 26 April 2021; on what dates that advance visit began and ended; and how many individuals were involved.

Greg Hands:

DIT officials did not conduct an advance visit to prepare for the Prime Minister's scheduled visit to India on 26th April 2021. DIT officials, based in both London and the British High Commission in India, supported preparations for the Prime Minister's Summit with Prime Minister Modi on 4th May 2021. Following the Summit, the Prime Minister announced an Enhanced Trade Partnership with India, including the intent to begin negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement later this year, and over 6,500 new jobs created from export wins and investments.

■ Ecolabelling

Emily Thornberry:

[\[2244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps the UK is taking in multilateral and plurilateral forums to improve eco-labelling; and whether she plans to apply for the UK to participate in the initiative towards an Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability as a means of promoting that goal.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government recognise the important role that eco-labelling and other forms of consumer information can play in supporting environmental outcomes. HM Government are developing an evidence base of existing voluntary schemes and the effectiveness of eco-labelling. In addition, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is seeking powers to introduce mandatory eco-labelling schemes for certain products as part of the Environment Bill.

The Department for International Trade is considering how trade policy can support eco-labelling. We recognise that the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability, and other plurilateral and multilateral forums like the Structured Discussions on Trade and Environmental Sustainability, could be useful platforms for the United Kingdom to influence international partners on a variety of green trade issues, from deforestation to carbon content.

■ Fossil Fuels: Subsidies

Emily Thornberry:

[\[2243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps the UK is taking in multilateral and plurilateral forums to eliminate harmful fossil fuel subsidies; and whether she plans to apply for the UK to participate in the initiative towards an Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability as a means of promoting that goal.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom has been a longstanding supporter of multilateral efforts to promote fossil fuel subsidy reform (FFSR) since these were first proposed in 2009.

In December 2020, the United Kingdom announced her endorsement to support for the “Statement on Global Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform” of the Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform group led by New Zealand, aiming to build political consensus on the importance of fossil fuel subsidy reform.

The United Kingdom will continue her efforts to progress FFSR, including through trade policy, and is considering options for how best to do so.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Proceedings

Jeff Smith:

[\[900287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of cases being withdrawn as a result of court delays and case backlogs.

Chris Philp:

In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the CPS and the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) introduced an [Interim Charging Protocol](#) in April 2020. This enabled the prioritisation of the right cases to facilitate the effective working of police, CPS and courts during a time of crisis. The interim protocol sets out how cases should be managed by the police and the CPS by identifying three categories of cases:

- A. Immediate – Custody and all Coronavirus related cases;
- B. High Priority – Non custody bail cases;
- C. Other cases – Released under investigation or no arrest required

In the courts we have taken decisive action to address the impact of the pandemic on how quickly cases can be heard. We spent over £250 million on recovery last

financial year roll-out out new technology for remote hearings, make the court estate COVID-secure, and set up 60 new Nightingale courtrooms. This has enabled disposals to return to pre-pandemic levels in the Crown Court, which is over 2000 cases per week, and we completed over 7000 jury trials last year.

We will continue to address the outstanding caseload and reduce delays by increasing capacity in our physical estate, running Crown Courts to the fullest possible extent, using every judge and courtroom to maximise court sitting days.

We have increased funding for victim support services, with £151 million this year, including £27 million to increase the number of independent advisors for sexual violence and domestic abuse victims by over 40 per cent. Beyond significant increases in funding to victims' services, the Government has taken a range of actions to ensure that victims and witnesses receive the support they need in the face of delays caused by the court backlogs.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Drew Hendry:

[\[2351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of (a) the adequacy of covid-19 restrictions at airports designed to avoid the mixing of travellers from outbound and inbound air traffic from multiple destinations and (b) whether he plans to publish additional guidance to strengthen those restrictions as international air travel rules become segmented for different destinations.

Robert Courts:

The government has introduced a range of health measures such as the wearing of face coverings and social distancing to help reduce the risk of transmission at airports, as well as issuing clear guidance for both passengers and operators. Where social distancing is not possible, airlines are advised to carry out a risk assessment and implement appropriate risk controls. For example, wearing a face covering can play a role in helping us to protect other passengers, which is why it is mandatory to wear one at airports.

Additionally, operators are encouraged to introduce clear signage and one-way passenger flows where appropriate. Arrangements may vary depending on the airport and guidance is available to support operators to manage flows in a COVID-secure way. We continue to improve processes which maintain the checks we need to carry out to keep the public safe, while minimising disruption, and passengers can support this process by ensuring they have completed the necessary requirements to enter the UK. The government continues to engage with the aviation sector to ensure they are supported in implementing best practices.

■ Car Sharing: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[2203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is his Department's policy that car sharing is permitted in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

In line with the easing on the rules of households mixing indoors at Step 3 of the roadmap, car sharing is now permitted. People may travel in a group of up to 6 people from any number of households, or a group of any size from no more than 2 households. Due to certain exemptions mean, these restrictions do not apply in all circumstances.

■ Cycling

Kerry McCarthy: [\[2228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations of the Cycle to Work Alliance in their report entitled, Future-proofing the Cycle to Work scheme: Unlocking access for all workers, on making the Cycle to Work scheme more widely accessible to (a) lower earners, (b) self-employed people and (c) employees of SMEs who are currently excluded or restricted from participating.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[2229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a specific exemption for the Cycle to Work scheme, allowing employers to enter staff into a salary sacrifice arrangement for the specific purpose of obtaining a bike and safety accessories through the scheme, even if that eligibility brings employees' take-home pay below national minimum wage.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government welcomes the report from the Cycle to Work Alliance. Officials from the Department for Transport, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and Her Majesty's Treasury met with the Cycle to Work Alliance to discuss the report's findings and recommendations on 29 April. The recommendations, including the possible change to allow those on the minimum wage to access the scheme, will be considered carefully to establish whether and how the Cycle to Work scheme could be improved.

■ Driving Licences

Andrea Leadsom: [\[2278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that people who are waiting for driving licences from the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency receive those licences in a timely manner in the event of planned strike action by staff at that agency.

Rachel Maclean:

The quickest and easiest way to apply for or renew a driving licence is online, and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online services are working as normal.

Paper driving licence applications must be dealt with in person and are taking longer to process as the DVLA has a reduced number of staff on-site to comply with social distancing requirements and ensure staff safety. Drivers with a medical condition may experience delays because the DVLA is often reliant on receiving information from medical professionals before a licence can be issued to ensure drivers can meet the required medical standards.

Drivers who have submitted an application to renew their driving licence may be able to continue driving while their application is being processed, provided they meet certain criteria.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inf1886-can-i-drive-while-my-application-is-with-dvla>

■ Legrave Station: Disability

Sarah Owen: [2461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to visit Legrave Station to discuss with relevant stakeholders step-free accessibility for passengers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

With the lifting of restrictions, I am keen to visit stations where improvements have been delivered or stations that are potential candidates.

Around 75% of rail journeys are now through step-free stations, compared with only 50% in 2005, and I am committed to further improving accessibility across the network.

■ Leicester Station: Construction

Claudia Webbe: [1408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeframe is for a decision on proposals to four-track Leicester Station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail will be producing a Strategic Outline Business Case for the suite of interventions identified in their Leicester Strategic Area Advice to accommodate future growth. The business case will consider enhancement proposals including four-tracking to the south of Leicester Station and we expect the case to be submitted to the Department for assessment in Spring 2022.

Claudia Webbe: [1409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, dependent on a positive business case, when construction of the Leicester Station four-tracking scheme would commence.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Following Network Rail's publication of Strategic Advice for improving capacity in the Leicester area, which identified a suite of interventions for improvements at Leicester including four-tracking south of the station, they will now produce a Strategic Outline Business Case. We expect to receive the business case by Spring 2022, and it will include proposed delivery dates for the phasing of possible interventions.

■ Railway Stations: Visual Impairment**Navendu Mishra:**[\[2471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to allocate funding to Network Rail to expedite the installation of tactile surface markings at stations (a) in Stockport, (b) in Greater Manchester and (c) across the UK.

Navendu Mishra:[\[2472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to install tactile surface markings at train stations across the UK.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I have asked Network Rail to work up a plan to add tactile warning strips to the edges of all mainline station platforms across England, Scotland and Wales, and I will make a further announcement in due course.

■ Railways: Infrastructure**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[1178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of introducing infrastructure changes to ensure all train journeys in the UK were fully accessible.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Further measures to improve rail accessibility will be included in the forthcoming rail reform White Paper, to build on progress already made – around 75% of rail journeys are now through step-free stations, which compares with only 50% in 2005.

■ Railways: Season Tickets**Caroline Lucas:**[\[2251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 25 March 2021 to Question 171561 on Railways: Season Tickets, what progress he has made on his work with the Treasury to develop part-time and flexible season tickets (a) for people who need them and (b) as part of the Government's four-step covid-19 roadmap; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government recognises the change in travel patterns, the impact of COVID-19 and therefore the need to accommodate a more flexible style of working and travelling.

The Department is actively working with train operators to develop a solution that offers better value and convenience for those who commute flexibly, and we will provide further details shortly.

■ Roads: Shropshire

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[2249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding from the public purse was allocated to Shropshire Council for pot hole repairs in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

There is a duty placed on highway authorities such as Shropshire Council, by Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended) to maintain the highways network in their area.

The highways maintenance funding provided by Government is entirely for each highway authority to determine how it is utilised to meet local needs in their respective areas, based upon their local knowledge and circumstances.

FINANCIAL YEAR	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Highways Maintenance Funding allocated to Shropshire UA (total)	16,002,000	24,328,234	16,948,396	27,610,000

*Funding includes Highways Maintenance Block, Pothole Fund, Flood/Resilience Funding, and the Pothole Action Fund funding streams

■ Shipping: Technology

Virginia Crosbie: [\[2493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to support essential transitional technologies in the marine industry.

Robert Courts:

The Maritime 2050 Strategy highlights the importance of new technologies to the future of the maritime sector and sets out the ambition to become a world leader in marine innovation. To support this, DfT has provided over £5m in funding to Maritime Research and Innovation UK (MarRI-UK), which acts as a national body to coordinate research and development in maritime innovation.

Technology development is also critical to support the UK's wider decarbonisation agenda. The Department's Clean Maritime Plan (CMP), published in July 2019, outlined the UK's pathway to zero carbon emissions in the domestic maritime arena. In March, DfT launched the £20 million Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition

(CMD C) to enable the development and commercialisation of novel solutions for clean maritime technologies. Further details of our policies will be set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which will be published this year.

■ Trains: Hitachi

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [2412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether any Hitachi Intercity Class 800 series found to have cracks in the bogies have been released back into service.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Following rigorous safety tests and mitigations, operators, working closely with Hitachi and the Office of Rail and Road, confirmed on Thursday 13 May that many trains can return to the network.

A number of trains have returned to service after further inspections, helping to safely restore the reliable and punctual services on GWR and LNER that passengers deserve.

Safety is our absolute focus, which is why Hitachi will continue to carry out a comprehensive daily testing regime on affected trains. Over time, trains will be subject to a forward repair plan, which will ensure the long-term continued safe running of the fleet.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Margaret Ferrier: [1319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to publish the criteria being used for the traffic light system for reopening international travel including the assigning of countries to the amber list.

Robert Courts:

A summary of the JBC methodology used to produce risk assessments for the “traffic light” country system is published on gov.uk, alongside key data that supports Ministers' decisions. It can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-risk-assessment-methodology-to-inform-international-travel-traffic-light-system/risk-assessment-methodology-to-inform-international-travel-traffic-light-system

Margaret Ferrier: [1320]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of how the limited number of countries being given green light status during the covid-19 outbreak will affect the aviation, travel and tourism industries.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the aviation industry and wider tourism sector because of Covid-19. Firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor.

We continue to take a flexible approach and keep all impacts and policies under review. Ongoing engagement with the sector is critical for the Government to be prepared and able to react in a timely manner.

In total, we estimate that the air transport sector (airlines, airports and related services) has benefited from around £7bn of Government support since the start of the pandemic. This includes support through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[1321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department's traffic light system for reopening international travel will include an island policy to reopen routes to relatively low risk regions of nations as was implemented in Summer 2020.

Robert Courts:

The Government will take an island approach for border measures where possible.

Changes to the traffic light country system will be reviewed and implemented every three weeks, unless concerning evidence means we need to act faster to protect public health.

Mrs Pauline Latham: [\[2267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to reduce the covid-19 restrictions on international travel for passengers who have been vaccinated.

Robert Courts:

All arrivals into the country, irrespective of vaccination status, must follow the same testing and isolation requirements as per the traffic light system. We are considering evidence and policy options relating to the role of vaccinations in facilitating more seamless inbound travel where it is safe and fair to do so, and will set out our position in due course.

Mrs Pauline Latham: [\[2268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how third country hubs are dealt with in his Department's plan for reopening international travel as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Robert Courts:

The UK government has introduced a traffic light system to support the safe restart of international travel. Decisions on red, amber and green list countries are taken by ministers informed by risk assessments provided by the Joint Biosecurity Centre alongside wider public health factors. This includes international transport hubs.

Passengers must follow the applicable requirements for the highest risk country or territory that they have been in or passed through in the previous 10 days. This includes transit stops. Passengers are also required to record the countries and territories they have transited through on their Passenger Locator Form.

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

Peter Dowd: [\[2315\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions officials in his Department have had with relevant stakeholders on the provision of green finance for the Green Belt and Road.

John Glen:

The government engages with a range of stakeholders on the provision of green finance, particularly in the run to COP26. This involves working with international partners and the financial sector to promote advancement of and adherence to international green standards that support the delivery of sustainable infrastructure, including via initiatives such as the Belt and Road.

Peter Dowd: [\[2316\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions officials in his Department have had with relevant stakeholders on the allocation of funding for the UK-China Cooperation Fund.

Peter Dowd: [\[2317\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) officials and (b) Ministers in his Department have met representatives of the UK-China Cooperation Fund in the last twelve months.

John Glen:

The UK-China Cooperation Fund is a private sector initiative. Treasury ministers and officials have not met with representatives of the UK-China Cooperation Fund in the last twelve months, nor have officials discussed with relevant stakeholders the allocation of its funding, which is an independent commercial matter.

■ **Bank Services: Gambling**

Carolyn Harris: [\[1337\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of proposals to mandate the provision of spending blocks for gambling activity for current accounts.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the potential merits in mandating the provision of spending blocks which allow gamblers to self-exclude themselves from making payments to gambling operators.

However, in recent years there has been considerable voluntary progress in this area by the industry. Almost all of the largest UK banks, as well as the larger digital banks, now have voluntary gambling block features on their debit cards. This gives

consumers a considerable market choice in this area to choose a current account that has the right features for them.

The Government acknowledges that despite the enormous amount that has been achieved by the industry on a voluntary basis, it can go even further. That is why the Government will shortly write to industry to organise a new Ministerial roundtable with the sector to discuss what action has taken place to date and look for opportunities to further support UK consumers.

■ Cash Dispensing

Ronnie Cowan: [\[2349\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress he is making on ensuring people have access to cash throughout the UK; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash is important to the daily lives of millions of people across the UK, and has committed to legislating to protect access to cash for those who need it and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long term.

Last year, the Treasury published a Call for Evidence, which sought views on the key considerations associated with cash access, including deposit and withdrawal facilities, cash acceptance, and regulatory oversight of the cash system. The Government has recently announced that it will consult this Summer on legislative proposals for protecting cash for the long term.

The Government has also made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses as part of the Financial Services Act 2021. These changes will come into effect in late June of this year. The Government's view is that cashback without a purchase has the potential to be a valuable facility to cash users, and to play an important role in the UK's cash infrastructure.

■ Cycling: Voucher Schemes

Kerry McCarthy: [\[2230\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including the cost of a bike as an allowable expense on self-employed workers' self-assessment, to ensure all workers can participate in the Cycle to Work scheme, regardless of their employment status.

Jesse Norman:

On 29 April 2021 officials from the Department for Transport met with the Cycle to Work Alliance along with officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and Her Majesty's Treasury to discuss the Alliance's Report, which included a proposal to extend the Cycle to Work scheme to the self-employed. The report's recommendations will be considered carefully to establish whether and how the Cycle to Work scheme could be improved.

■ Economic Growth

Jim Shannon:

[\[732\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of projected economic growth in the next 12 months.

John Glen:

HM Treasury does not prepare formal forecasts for the UK economy, which are the responsibility of the independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). In its March forecast, the OBR expects that GDP will grow by 4% in 2021 and return to its pre-Covid peak in 2022. Further details can be found in Table 1.1 of the OBR's latest Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in March 2021:

<https://obr.uk/download/march-2021-economic-and-fiscal-outlook-executive-summary/>

In addition to the OBR's forecast, the Government has published a significant amount of analysis on the health, economic and social impact of COVID-19 and public health measures throughout the pandemic. This includes the analysis that underpinned the steps announced as part of the Government's Roadmap out of lockdown. For the economy, this included the impacts on GVA and jobs in those sectors affected by restrictions over the last year, as well as information about the distribution of those impacts. The published report can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/944823/Analysis_of_the_health_economic_and_social_effects_of_COVID-19_and_the_approach_to_tiering_FINAL_-_accessible_v2.pdf

■ Financial Conduct Authority: Reviews

Emma Hardy:

[\[1194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to support calls for an independent review of the Financial Conduct Authority.

John Glen:

The FCA is an independent non-governmental body responsible for regulating and supervising the financial services industry. The Treasury therefore has no general power of direction over the FCA and cannot intervene in its day-to-day operations.

There are a number of mechanisms already in place which enable Parliament and Treasury respectively to hold the FCA to account. In addition, there is nothing preventing a Select Committee from either House launching inquiries into the activities of the FCA, taking evidence from witnesses and reporting with recommendations.

The government also welcome the FCA's commitment to reporting publicly on the progress of its Transformation Programme. A number of significant changes have already been introduced, including important structural changes within the organisation. The government will continue to regularly discuss the Transformation Programme with the FCA in order to monitor progress.

■ Funerals: Pre-payment

Sir John Hayes: [\[2183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of changes to the regulation of pre-paid funeral plans on smaller providers within that sector.

Sir John Hayes: [\[2184\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will work with the (a) Financial Conduct Authority and (b) death care sector on a solution for pre-paid funeral plans that takes account of (i) consumers and (ii) businesses.

Sir John Hayes: [\[2185\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish his timetable for bringing forward legislative proposals on pre-paid funeral plans.

John Glen:

Following comprehensive consultation and stakeholder engagement, in January 2021 secondary legislation was made to bring pre-paid funeral plan firms within the remit of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). This change will protect consumers by ensuring that, for the first time, all firms that sell and administer pre-paid funeral plans are subject to compulsory and robust regulation.

The new regulatory framework will come fully into force in July 2022, following an 18-month transition period. The FCA's consultation on rules for the sector closed on 13 April 2021, and the Government will continue to work closely with the FCA to ensure that the implementation of the new regulatory framework goes well.

The legislation allows intermediaries such as funeral directors to become "appointed representatives" of the funeral plan providers whose plans they sell or intermediate. The provider, known as the "principal" firm, would be responsible for ensuring their appointed representatives comply with the relevant rules for selling plans. This results in a proportionate approach, whereby smaller firms that operate as intermediaries will be required to follow the rules that protect consumers, without necessarily needing to undergo full FCA authorisation. To support these small firms during the transition period the FCA will reach out to the industry to explain their regulatory standards and expectations regarding the authorisation gateway.

The FCA is examining feedback concerning competition and smaller plan providers, among other things, as part of its consideration of responses to its consultation. The FCA will consider this feedback in the context of its operational objectives - which include ensuring an appropriate degree of protection for consumers and promoting effective competition in consumers' interests - as part of its decisions on the regime. The FCA's consultation proposed that funeral plans should be brought within the scope of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. The Government is currently considering whether further legislation is required to ensure the Compensation Scheme would operate effectively for consumers, if it covered this sector.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Asthma

Liz Twist: [\[1367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 21 April 2021 to Question 179362, if she will make an assessment of the causes of inequality in pay and job prospects for people with severe asthma.

Justin Tomlinson:

Analysis published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that disabled employees are generally under-represented in higher skilled and typically higher paying occupation groups, while they are over-represented in lower-skilled and lower paying occupations when compared to non-disabled employees. Disabled workers are also less likely to move into and be in work, as well as more likely to move out of work.

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith is currently leading a commission looking at how DWP, wider Government and employers can best support people to progress out of low pay, especially for those groups more likely to be in persistent low pay, such as disabled workers.

The Government is committed to ensuring that everybody, including people with asthma, has equal access to employment opportunities and offers a range of support to help disabled people to stay in or move into work.

In 2019, the Government consulted on ways to support and encourage employers to minimise the risk of ill-health related job loss among their employees in Health is Everyone's Business: proposals to reduce ill-health related job loss. Our response is due shortly.

The Government will also publish a National Strategy for Disabled People which will focus on issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects of life, including employment.

■ Children: Maintenance

Rachael Maskell: [\[1115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on how many occasions in respect of the Child Maintenance Service instigating court action for wilful refusal or culpable neglect in paying child maintenance has led to (a) disqualifying the paying parent from holding or obtaining a driving licence for up to two years, (b) disqualifying the paying parent from holding or obtaining a passport and (c) committing the paying parent to prison for a maximum of six weeks since that service was established.

Guy Opperman:

Child Maintenance Service (CMS) sanctions (sending Paying Parents to prison, or disqualifying them from holding or obtaining a passport or driving licence) are a last

resort and only used when every other method of recovering unpaid child maintenance has been tried.

The number of cases referred to court by CMS, along with the outcomes, are only available from July 2019 and are published quarterly. The latest published figures for Child Maintenance Service (CMS) are up to the end of December 2020 and can be found in "Table 7.2: Enforcement Actions - Detail on Sanctions" of the National Tables here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-maintenance-service-statistics-data-to-december-2020-experimental>

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Migrants

Stephen Timms:

[2173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department plans to take to support people with No Recourse to Public Funds when the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ends.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-employed Income Support Scheme have been extended to the end of September 2021 to recognise some industries will return no earlier than 21 June.

Immigration status holders who do not return to work because they have lost their employment will need to check the conditions attached to their leave. Where their immigration status is linked to a particular job, they may need to find alternative employment or another basis of stay, and make a further application if they wish to remain in the UK.

Non-UK nationals and family members who are issued with a residence permit with a NRPF condition are not eligible to access taxpayer-funded benefits such as Universal Credit, Child Benefit or housing assistance for the duration of their leave. DWP has no powers to award taxpayer-funded benefits to an individual whose Home Office immigration status specifies no recourse to public funds.

People with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have their NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if they are destitute or at risk of destitution, or if the welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income. NRPF 'change of conditions' applications are prioritised and dealt with compassionately.

Other support is available to people with an NRPF condition once the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme comes to an end. Contribution-based benefits, such as New Style JSA, will continue to be available for those who meet the eligibility criteria.

■ Employment Schemes: Asthma

Liz Twist: [\[1368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the economic benefits of assisting people with severe asthma to participate fully in the labour market.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government recognises the important economic contribution of disabled people in the labour market and is committed to seeing 1 million more disabled people in work. DWP delivers a range of programmes to support disabled people, including those with severe asthma, to stay in or move into work.

These include the Work and Health Programme, Intensive Personalised Employment Support, Access to Work, Disability Confident and initiatives in partnership with the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services and Individual Placement and Support.

■ Employment: Asthma

Liz Twist: [\[1366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference Demos' report entitled the economic cost of uncontrolled asthma, published February 2021, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people with asthma are able to stay in work.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities and health conditions are able to stay in work and offers a range of support. Access to Work (ATW) is a demand-led, discretionary grant scheme administered by Jobcentre Plus (JCP). The scheme facilitates recruitment and retention of disabled people for employers by contributing towards covering the costs of employment –related support above the level of reasonable adjustment. The scheme can fund up to £60,700 worth of flexible, personalised support per person per year.

In 2019, the Government consulted on ways to support and encourage employers to minimise the risk of ill-health related job loss among their employees in Health is Everyone's Business. Our response is due shortly.

■ Independent Case Examiner: Complaints

Rachael Maskell: [\[788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time taken was from receipt of a complaint by the Independent Case Examiner to the allocation to a case worker for investigation in each year since 2010.

Rachael Maskell: [\[790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints to the Independent Case Examiner about child maintenance were waiting more than 12 months to be allocated to a case worker for investigation in each year since 2010.

Rachael Maskell: [\[792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints to the Independent Case Examiner about benefits were waiting more than 12 months to be allocated to a case worker for investigation in each year since 2010.

Guy Opperman:

When the Independent Case Examiner (ICE) Office accept a complaint for investigation, they will initially try to broker a solution between the complainant and the relevant department or supplier, without having to request evidence to inform an investigation, this is known as “resolution”. If it is not possible to resolve the complaint, the evidence will be requested and the case will await allocation to an Investigation Case Manager (ICM). The cases that reach the ICE are the most complex and usually require investigation. Complainants are kept updated about the timings involved with their case and 82.6 per cent are satisfied with the service they receive (2020/21 customer satisfaction score).

The Unit has received additional resource to help reduce the time complaints wait to be brought into investigation, and whilst progress has been constrained by the effects of Covid, the number of cases awaiting investigation has been falling steadily since April 2020.

In order to provide the information requested, it is necessary to generate reports from electronic case specific records which are only retained for 26 months following case closure. Complete information about the average allocation timescales is therefore only available for the last two reporting years – detailed in the table below:

	2019/20	2020/21
Average time taken from complaint acceptance to allocation to an Investigation Case Manager (in all ICE cases).	59.9 weeks	63.8 weeks
How many child maintenance complaints that were allocated to an Investigation Case Manager waited over 12 months to be brought into investigation.	240	387

	2019/20	2020/21
How many benefit complaints that were allocated to an Investigation Case Manager waited over 12 months to be brought into investigation.	415	424

Rachael Maskell: [\[789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints the Independent Case Examiner received on child maintenance cases in each year since 2010.

Rachael Maskell: [\[791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints about benefits have been received by the Independent Case Examiner in each year since 2010.

Guy Opperman:

Information about the number of complaints received by the Unit is routinely included in the Independent Case Examiner's Annual Report, which is published on gov.uk. The information requested is summarised in the table below – it excludes complaints received about contracted service provision.

Please note that the Independent Case Examiner can only review complaints which have received a final response from the Department, as such not all the complaints that are received are accepted for examination.

YEAR	CSA & CMS COMPLAINTS	
	RECEIVED	BENEFIT COMPLAINTS RECEIVED
2010/11	2241	1083
2011/12	1670	961
2012/13	1457	1481
2013/14	1354	1544
2014/15	1169	1783
2015/16	936	1363
2016/17	869	1623
2017/18	896	*4417
2018/19	1255	*2832

YEAR	CSA & CMS COMPLAINTS	
	RECEIVED	BENEFIT COMPLAINTS RECEIVED
2019/20	1330	1807
2020/21	1465	2282

* Includes complaints about changes to Women's State Pension retirement age.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Alison McGovern: [\[2271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the proportion of organisations offering kickstart placements that are SMEs.

Mims Davies:

We are unable to provide an estimate of the proportion of SME employers participating in the Kickstart Scheme. However, we know that many small businesses have applied through approved gateway organisations. In February, the department removed the 30 job minimum requirement for applications to Kickstart to make the scheme more accessible to small businesses and sole traders giving them choice to apply direct or via one of over 900 Kickstart gateways organisations.

Alison McGovern: [\[2273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans the Government has to provide data on the next destination of people who have completed their Kickstart scheme placement.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart Scheme throughout and after its implementation. This will include a longer term evaluation of the outcomes and impact on young people after they have completed their six month Kickstart job placement.

■ Poverty: Children

Feryal Clark: [\[928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of reductions in universal credit and working tax credit from October 2021 on child poverty in Enfield North constituency.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

This Government is wholly committed to tackling child poverty. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to protect family incomes including by spending an additional £7.4 billion last year to strengthen the welfare system for those most in

need, taking our total expenditure on welfare support for people of working age to an estimated £112bn in 2020/21.

As the economy recovers, our ambition is to help parents move into and progress in work as quickly as possible based on clear evidence around the importance of parental employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty. We are investing over £30 billion in our ambitious Plan for Jobs which is already delivering for people of all ages right across the country.

■ Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq:

[2382]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to (a) increase the rate of sick pay and (b) introduce immediate, automatic payment to people required to self-isolate as a result of a positive covid-19 test.

Justin Tomlinson:

This government has a strong safety net that helps people who are facing hardship and are unable to support themselves financially and we have taken steps to strengthen that safety net as part of the government's response to the pandemic.

As part of strengthening this safety net we have made Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) payable from the first day of sickness absence from work, rather than the fourth – where an individual is self-isolating due to coronavirus and meets all SSP eligibility conditions.

SSP provides a minimum level of income for employees when they are sick or incapable of work. Employers are legally required to pay SSP to eligible employees who are off work sick or incapable of work, where employees meet the qualifying conditions. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay. More than half of employees receive more than SSP from their employer.

SSP is just one part of our welfare safety net and our wider government offer to support people in times of need. Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on their personal circumstances.

Working people on low incomes who are required to remain at home by NHS Test and Trace to help stop the spread of the virus and cannot work from home could be eligible for a £500 payment to financially support them while self-isolating.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Government Consulting Hub**

Parliamentary Secretary (Julia Lopez):

[\[HCWS43\]](#)

My noble Friend, the Minister of State for Efficiency and Transformation (Lord Agnew of Oulton), has today made the following written statement.

I am pleased today to formally launch the new Government Consulting Hub, a centre of expertise for Her Majesty's Government on management consultancy.

As the Minister for Efficiency and Transformation in the Cabinet Office and Her Majesty's Treasury, I am aware of the enormous potential that the Civil Service has, and I am committed to ensuring that the work of the Civil Service offers public value and upholds the highest standards of performance.

As our centre of excellence for consultancy, the Government Consulting Hub will establish new approaches to knowledge generation and sharing and to training in partnership with the Government Skills and Curriculum Unit. It will drive up capacity and the capacity to work jointly across departments to reuse thinking and work, and to be our own experts where it is reasonable to do so.

These core elements will provide the Civil Service with a powerful resource, helping to reduce the amount spent on consultancy, maximise value where consultants are needed, and support the growth and use of the Civil Service's internal capability to deliver consultancy-type work and to deploy consultancy type skills.

This is not just a savings exercise. This is a real opportunity to invest in the future of the Civil Service, to build capability, skills and experience, and to have a much greater impact in the work that is delivered. An overview of the work of the Government Consulting Hub has been published today on GOV.UK.

■ **The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks Report**

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):

[\[HCWS44\]](#)

I am today laying before Parliament a report: 'The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 December 2020 to 25 March 2021'.

I am laying this report because it is a legal requirement under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for quarterly reports to be made to Parliament on the progress of the work to develop Common Frameworks.

The report is available on GOV.UK and details the progress made between the UK Government and devolved administrations regarding the development of Common Frameworks.

This report details progress made during the eleventh 3-month reporting period and sets out that no ‘freezing’ regulations have been brought forward under Section 12 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act.

A copy of the ‘The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 December 2020 to 25 March 2021’ report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The publication of the report reflects the Government’s continued commitment to transparency.

TRANSPORT

■ Future of Britain’s Railways

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS42\]](#)

Today, 20 May 2021, we are announcing our plan for the transformation of Britain’s railways. The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail fully reflects the independent recommendations of Keith Williams, to whom the government is grateful for his thorough work since 2018. Williams identified serious issues facing the railways before Covid struck; the pandemic has exacerbated some of these and added more. The government has provided unprecedented support to keep the railways running during the pandemic. Now, we look to the future – today we are setting out an ambitious plan to ensure that the system is ready to meet these challenges.

Today’s railway is fragmented – numerous bodies with different incentives lead to a lack of joined-up thinking. No single organisation is accountable for integration, planning and leadership across infrastructure, passenger services and freight operations.

Even before Covid, the franchising model for passenger services had become unsustainable, with multiple failing franchises, delayed competitions and dwindling market confidence. East Coast and Northern had already failed and the government had to step in.

To meet these challenges this government is introducing the biggest reform to the railway in three decades. We are committed to delivering a rail system that is the backbone of a cleaner, greener public transport system, offering passengers a better deal and greater value for money for taxpayers. That means getting the trains to run on time, providing a better quality of service and having a firm control of the sector’s costs.

To bring about change on the scale that is needed:

- We will end three decades of fragmentation by bringing the railways back together under a new public body with a single, national leadership and a new brand and identity, built on the famous double arrow. Great British Railways (GBR) will run and plan the network, own the infrastructure, and collect most fare revenue. It will procure passenger services and set most fares and timetables.
- We will make the railways easier to use by simplifying fares and ticketing, providing more convenient ways to pay with contactless, smartphone and online, and protecting affordable walk-on fares and season tickets. Rail services will be better

coordinated with each other, and better integrated with other transport services such as trams, buses and bikes.

- We will keep the best elements of the private sector that have helped to drive growth. GBR will contract private partners to operate the trains to the timetable it sets. These contracts will include strong incentives for operators to run high-quality services and increase passenger demand. The contracts are not one-size-fits-all, so as demand recovers long-distance routes will have more commercial freedom to attract new passengers. Freight is already a nimble, largely private sector market and will remain so, while benefitting from the national coordination, new safeguards, and rules-based access system that will help it thrive.
- We will grow, not shrink, the network, continuing to invest tens of billions of pounds in new lines, trains, services and electrification.
- We will make the railways more efficient. Simpler structures and clear leadership will make decision making easier and more transparent, reduce costs and make it cheaper to invest in modern ways to pay, upgrade the network and deliver new lines. The adversarial blame culture will end, and everyone across the sector, including train operators, will be incentivised to work towards common goals, not least managing costs.

These changes will transform the railways for the better. They will also make the sector more accountable to taxpayers and government. Government ministers will have strong levers to set direction, pursue government policies and oversee delivery to ensure the railways are managed effectively and spend public money efficiently. Great British Railways will be empowered – a single, familiar brand with united, accountable leadership.

These reforms represent a bold new vision for passengers – of punctual and reliable services, simpler tickets and a modern, green and innovative railway that meets the needs of the nation. In summary our ambitious rail transformation programme will deliver 10 key outcomes:

- A modern passenger experience
- A retail revolution
- New ways of working with the private sector
- Economic recovery and financial sustainable railways
- Greater control for local people and places
- Cleaner, greener railways
- Bold, new opportunities for rail freight
- Increased speed of delivery and efficient enhancements
- Skilled, innovative workforce, and
- A simpler industry structure

This is not renationalisation, which failed the railways, rather it is simplification. While Great British Railways acts as the guiding mind to coordinate the whole network, our plan will see greater involvement of the private sector – private companies will be contracted to run the trains, with stronger competition to run services. Our reforms will also unleash huge new opportunities for the private sector to innovate in areas such as ticket retailing and data that can be used by passengers to better plan their journeys.

We look forward to building this new vision for Britain's railways in collaboration with the sector. We are proud to set out plans to support our railways and serve our country with a system that is efficient, sustainable and run in the public interest.

Attachments:

1. British Railways Williams Shapps [(CP 423) - Great British Railways Williams.Shapps.Plan for rail.pdf]