



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 May 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:46 P.M., 21 May 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Additional Restrictions Grant

Sarah Olney:

[\[1161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department plans to extend the scope of Additional Restrictions Grants.

Paul Scully:

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) continues to enable Local Authorities to put in place discretionary business support. Local Authorities are free to provide support that suits their local area including to support those businesses not required to close but which have had their trade severely affected by the restrictions and those businesses that fall outside the business rates system. Local Authorities can use their local expertise to target businesses to support in their local area.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced an additional £425m will be made available via The Additional Restrictions Grant, meaning that more than £2bn has been made available to Local Authorities since November 2020.

■ Carbon Emissions

John Spellar:

[\[981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the UK's CO2 emissions were in (a) in total and (b) per capita in (i) 1990 and (ii) 2019.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Over the last three decades, the UK has achieved record clean growth and has met its world-leading climate change commitments. The UK's total greenhouse gas emissions were 809 million tonnes of CO2-equivalent (MtCO2e) in 1990 and decreased by 44% to 455Mt by 2019. Specifically for CO2, the figures were 608Mt in 1990 and 365Mt in 2019 – a 40% fall.

At the same time, the UK's population grew by 16% between 1990 and 2019. This implies an approximate fall of over 50% in territorial greenhouse gas emissions per person, from 14.1tCO2e to 6.8tCO2e per person. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita fell from 10.6Mt per person to 5.5Mt.

■ Companies: Directors

Dawn Butler:

[\[1022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to prevent directors paying themselves dividends and forcing companies into administration to avoid consumer redress.

Paul Scully:

Under UK company law, directors may pay dividends only where a company has sufficient distributable reserves, based on the company's realised profits minus any realised losses.

In the event of insolvency, it is part of the administrator's role to scrutinise payments made to shareholders in the period before the insolvency to identify any payments which may have been illegal. In such cases, the courts have wide powers to apply a variety of sanctions and remedies, including ordering the recovery of amounts from recipients and compensation orders against directors enforceable against their personal assets.

The Government is currently consulting on proposals to increase transparency in how companies demonstrate that dividends are affordable, as part of the White Paper on *Restoring Trust in Audit and Corporate Governance*. This includes a proposed requirement that directors of large companies should disclose at a minimum the company's known distributable reserve before paying any dividend, and state that it is their reasonable expectation that the proposed dividend would not threaten the company's insolvency over the following two years.

■ Companies: West Midlands**John Spellar:**[\[980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many companies are registered in (a) Sandwell and (b) the West Midlands.

Paul Scully:

Please find below the number of companies and Limited Liability Partnerships for (a) Sandwell and (b) West Midlands as at Friday 14 May 2021:

Sandwell: 18,691 active companies registered;

West Midlands: 377,299 active companies registered.

■ Computers**Chi Onwurah:**[\[720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has read the research paper entitled *Computers trusted and found wanting*, published in *Computer Law and Security Report* by Dr Stephen Castell; and what assessment he has made of the conclusions of that report on the reliability of computers.

Amanda Solloway:

I am grateful to have the paper brought to my attention. The National Cyber Security Centre continue to focus on the security and reliability of computer systems and conduct research, working with research institutes, in order to maintain and develop current understanding.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Clive Lewis:** [\[1132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many contractual commitments the Government has made with pharmaceutical companies involving the transfer of covid-19 vaccine technology to UK based manufacturers; and if he will publish the terms and conditions of those contracts.

Clive Lewis: [\[1133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many new manufacturing facilities the Government has funded in order to facilitate contracts involving the transfer of covid-19 vaccine technology to UK based manufacturers; and whether those new manufacturing facilities will remain in public ownership.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has invested over £300 million in securing and scaling up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to this pandemic. This has included:

- expanding the UK vaccine manufacturing footprint through investments in expanding and accelerating the Vaccine Manufacturing & Innovation Centre's (VMIC) Harwell site which is being run as a not-for profit; and
- collaborating with the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult (CGTC) to fund a state-of-the-art Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Braintree

The Government has step in rights during pandemics at both VMIC and CGTC Braintree.

In addition, the Government has partnered with industry – for example Wockhardt where we have secured fill and finish reservation in the UK to support our vaccine programme.

As a result of these investments, and ongoing support of the Vaccine Taskforce three of the UK's eight COVID-19 vaccines (Oxford/AstraZeneca, Novavax and Valneva) are being or will be manufactured in the UK. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is delivered through a majority UK supply chain. The contracts for supply agreements with these vaccine companies are available on the Contracts Finder website.

Caroline Lucas: [\[673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of intellectual property rights on the ability of vaccine manufacturers around the world to increase production of covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Solloway:

We have seen little evidence that intellectual property rights are hindering the ability of vaccine manufacturers to increase vaccine production. However, we recognise that vaccine production and distribution need to be scaled up. That is why the UK is proud to be playing a leading role in the global effort to develop and distribute vaccines. Our contribution to the development of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine is well known.

The UK has also been one of the most generous nations and has provided £548m to COVAX. Using £250m of matched funding the UK mobilised \$1bn that will supply 1.3 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses to up to 92 lower- and middle-income countries by the end of 2021. The UK is also the single largest country donor to Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance (£1.65bn) and the single largest country donor to the Centre for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). We will continue to explore every opportunity to get vaccines to everyone across the world as quickly as possible.

Caroline Lucas:

[674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of global facilitation of knowledge and technology transfers from pharmaceutical companies that have developed vaccines on the ability of vaccine manufacturers around the world to (a) begin production and (b) increase production of covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK has been and will continue to be a global leader exploring every opportunity to achieve the goal of getting vaccines to everyone across the world as quickly as possible. The UK provided funding for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, which is being produced at cost to low- and middle- income countries. AstraZeneca has also announced a licencing agreement for the Serum Institute India (SII) to produce 1 billion doses of the vaccine candidate for low- and middle-income countries. The UK is also working to encourage partnerships between the manufacturing sector and other multinational pharmaceutical companies to transfer their technology where required, this enables an increase in overall production, to date 280 such partnerships.

Caroline Lucas:

[675]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to support global non-exclusive licensing facilitated by the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 Technology Access Pool in order to increase production of and access to covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Amanda Solloway:

Since the World Health Organisation (WHO) provided initial details on the COVID-19 technology access pool (C-TAP) in October 2020, the UK has, and will continue to engage extensively with all interested parties. We are in ongoing, constructive discussions with the WHO as it refines both governance structures and the operating model for C-TAP.

■ Dismissal: Re-employment

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[1169]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ban fire and rehire practices.

Paul Scully:

We have been very clear that using threats about firing and re-hiring simply as a negotiating tactic is completely unacceptable. We continue to emphasise that we always expect employers to treat employees fairly and in the spirit of partnership.

As we have been concerned by reports of inappropriate use of fire and rehire during negotiations, we engaged Acas to conduct a fact-finding exercise about how fire and rehire has been used in practice. We are now giving this evidence full consideration.

■ **Heating: Housing****Philip Dunne:**[\[647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to incentivise the use of renewable liquid fuels such as hydrotreated vegetable oil in home heating.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department has recently published a Call for Evidence to inform the development of the Biomass Strategy. This strategy will review the amount of sustainable biomass available to the UK, including liquid biofuels, and how this could be best used across the economy to achieve our net zero target. It will also assess the UK's current biomass sustainability standards, which are some of the most stringent in the world, to see where and how we can improve them even further.

■ **Horizon Europe: Quantum Technology and Space Technology****Chi Onwurah:**[\[721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions the Government (a) has had and (b) plans to have with the European Commission on the UK's participation in quantum and space research programmes under the Horizon Europe programme.

Chi Onwurah:[\[722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the UK's associate membership of the EU's Horizon Europe programme on the UK's inclusion in quantum and space research programmes.

Amanda Solloway:

Our association to Horizon will give UK scientists and innovators access to the largest collaborative research funding scheme in the world.

The UK has agreed to participate in the whole of the Horizon Europe programme, except the European Innovation Council Fund.

The work programmes for parts of Horizon Europe have not been finalised by the EU, however under the Horizon Europe regulations, access to calls may be restricted to entities established in EU Member States in certain cases. We expect these cases to be exceptional.

We engage with the Commission on a range of topics relating to Horizon Europe, including supporting research collaboration between the UK and EU, timing of funding opportunities under Horizon Europe and potential exclusions.

■ **Housing: Construction**

Jim Shannon:

[\[734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to support building contract companies to secure sufficient building supplies in the context of the UK having left the EU.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is aware that a range of building materials are in short supply nationally. This is driven by demand and increased global competition to secure supplies.

In light of this, and in view of more local disruptions in the supply of some products, the Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force has established a Product Availability Working Group, comprised of product manufacturers, builders' merchants and suppliers, contractors of all sizes, and housebuilders. The Task Force continues to monitor the supply and demand of products, and identify those in short supply.

■ **Night-time Economy: Coronavirus**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of the night time economy on the possible introduction of covid-19 passports for access to night time venues; what assessment he has made of the potential effect of such passports on the number of people attending night time venues; if he will make it his policy to provide that sector with (a) clear guidance, (b) adequate notice and (c) a time table setting out Government plans to introduce such passports as a requirement to enter a night time venue; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Government has previously set out that it believes that COVID-status Certification could play an important role domestically and as a temporary measure. We have not taken any final decisions but have committed to set out the conclusions of the Review ahead of Step 4 of the Roadmap.

Ministers have engaged regularly with businesses throughout the pandemic including nightclub representatives.

■ Nuclear Power: Coastal Areas

Caroline Lucas:

[672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the effects of the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station on (a) coastal processes affecting the Minsmere-Walberswick designated wildlife sites, (b) water quality and water movement affecting the Minsmere-Walberswick designated wildlife sites and the Sizewell Marshes SSSI, (c) noise and visual disturbance affecting marsh harriers and waterbirds of the Minsmere-Walberswick designated wildlife sites, (d) loss of designated wildlife sites in the area and (e) thermal and chemical discharges and disturbance from shipping affecting red-throated divers and terns from the Outer Thames Estuary SPA; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Planning Inspectorate is currently examining the application for development consent for the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station. The Planning Inspectorate will thoroughly assess all relevant issues before providing its recommendations to the Secretary of State.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State must undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment of potential impacts on designated sites as required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and consider a robust Environmental Impact Assessment under the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 before making his consenting decision.

■ Parental Pay

Ellie Reeves:

[829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, further to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146798 on Paternity Leave, how many people received statutory shared parental pay in (a) Quarter 3 and (b) Quarter 4 of 2020-21.

Ellie Reeves:

[830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146798 on Paternity Leave, how many of the people who received statutory shared parental pay in 2019-20 were in receipt of that pay for more than (a) one month, (b) three months, (c) six months and (d) nine months.

Paul Scully:

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Pay was introduced in December 2014 for the parents of children due or adopted from 5 April 2015. The scheme enables eligible working parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay in the first year, where the mother does not intend to use her full maternity entitlements.

Information provided by employers to HMRC in respect of claims for Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) indicates that 4,100 individuals were in receipt of ShPP in Quarter 3 of 2020-21, and 3,300 individuals were in receipt of ShPP in Quarter 4 of 2020-21.

Please note that HMRC does not hold information which calculates the total duration of ShPP received by individual claimants. However, the following table sets out the number of individuals in receipt of ShPP in 2019-20 by the number of months in the year that they made a claim:

NUMBER OF MONTHS CLAIMED IN 2019-20 (SEE NOTE 4)	NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS
1	4,400
2	3,100
3	2,300
4	1,500
5	800
6	500
7	300
8	100
9	100

Please note:

1. The data collected uses HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) system and was extracted in May 2021. RTI is subject to revision or updates, and so there may be small fluctuations in figures reported, and these figures should not be considered "final".
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred.
3. The number of individuals in receipt of ShPP per quarter are based on the total number of individuals in that quarter irrespective of when the payment first started. Quarterly figures should not be added together to make a yearly count of individuals in receipt of ShPP due to double counting claimants from quarter to quarter.
4. "Number of months claimed" counts each month the same individual was in receipt of ShPP in a given tax year (2019-20). This should not be interpreted as the total duration of pay received. Where individuals are in receipt of pay that spans two financial years HMRC data can only count the period within a single year and where individuals have received pay spanning months, however briefly, will be recorded as two months.
5. This data represents individuals in receipt of Shared Parental Pay only, so those who take unpaid Shared Parental Leave are not included.

■ Paternity Leave**Ellie Reeves:** [\[831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146798 on Paternity Leave, what estimate his Department has made of the number of eligible fathers who took unpaid statutory shared parental leave in 2019-20.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy does not routinely collect data on the take-up of parental leave entitlements, including unpaid Shared Parental Leave. However, we are currently completing an extensive evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay schemes. This has included commissioning and interrogating information collected through large scale, representative, surveys of employers and parents. We also commissioned a qualitative study of parents who have used the schemes. The various data sources will give us a fuller picture of the level of take-up of paid and unpaid entitlements to Shared Parental Leave, tell us how the schemes are being used in practice, and help us to better understand the barriers and enablers to parents taking Shared Parental Leave. We will publish our findings later this year.

■ Post Offices: Finance**Esther McVey:** [\[700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish an update on the distribution plans for the £177 million investment announced in the November 2020 spending review for the future of the post office network.

Paul Scully:

In the most recent Spending Review for 2021/2022, the Government announced Post Office investment funding of £177 million. This reflects the Government's commitment to the role that post offices play in our communities. This funding will allow Post Office Ltd to invest for the future and to ensure the Post Office remains a vital force on our high streets.

The management of the Post Office network is an operational matter for the Company.

■ Post Offices: Rural Areas**Esther McVey:** [\[698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of outreach post office services as a substitute for traditional post offices in (a) the Tatton constituency and (b) rural constituencies more widely.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to safeguarding the Post Office network and protecting existing rural services as we recognise the important role post offices play in serving their communities. The Government promotes access to rural post offices by setting accessibility criteria which the Post Office must meet. This ensures that in rural areas over 95% of people are within 3 miles of their nearest post office service. In remote and rural areas where it is difficult to deliver services to consumers via a permanent site, Post Office Limited use outreach services, such as a mobile van, or a village hall. These offer the same products and services as bricks-and-mortar branches. Within the Tatton constituency, there is one outreach service in Chelford.

■ Postal Services: Homelessness**Esther McVey:****[699]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that vulnerable people without an address can still access postal services.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises how important access to post is for all, especially for those that are homeless or without stable abode. Government is working with a wide range of stakeholders to consider how to support these vulnerable groups. The universal postal service is intended to provide an accessible postal service for all.

Royal Mail operates two services to help vulnerable customers access their post. The first is its redirection service, which can be specially accessed by people with personal safety concerns. The second is its PO Box service, which provides options for vulnerable customers and is designed to meet specific circumstances and preferences.

The Government will continue to work with a wide range of stakeholder to find the best ways to support vulnerable people.

■ Public Houses: Coronavirus**Chi Onwurah:****[715]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made with the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the average increase in debt taken on by independent pubs since the start of the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps he is taking to support those independent pubs that have taken on debt in that period.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the impact the pandemic has had on hospitality businesses including independent pubs. That is why we have provided an unprecedented support package of £352 billion including grants, loans, business rates relief, VAT cuts and the job retention scheme. In order to help pubs recover and reopen, we are providing restart grants of up to £18,000.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support wet pubs to manage (a) business loan repayments and (b) the reintroduction of business rates in 2021.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the impact the pandemic has had on hospitality businesses including wet led pubs. That is why we have provided an unprecedented support package of £352 billion including grants, loans, business rates relief, VAT cuts and the job retention scheme. Pubs are eligible for our restart grants of up to £18,000 to help them recover and reopen.

■ **Restart Grant Scheme: Travel Agents**

Apsana Begum:

[\[908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will change the classification of travel agents to strand two of the restart grant in the context of ongoing restrictions being placed on international travel and the emergence of novel covid-19 variants in India.

Paul Scully:

Travel agents are eligible for strand 1 of Restart Grants as they are classified as non-essential retail.

Strand 2 of Restart Grants is for hospitality, leisure, accommodation, personal care and gym & sport businesses, most of which will not fully reopen until step 3 of the Roadmap out of lockdown and which are likely to continue to be most significantly affected by social distancing rules, cleaning protocols and other measures in place to tackle Covid-19.

There are currently no plans to change the eligibility criteria for the Restart Grant scheme.

■ **Solar Events**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[1168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to better understand the changing risks from the expansion of small satellite constellations that use cheaper commercial components and the increased reliance on space-enabled technologies, to allow the Government to better plan for and mitigate the impact of severe space weather.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) works closely across Government and other infrastructure operators to ensure that the impacts of a severe space weather event are well understood, and the appropriate steps are taken to ensure Great Britain's preparedness for major space weather events.

BEIS is due to publish a new space weather strategy later this year, which proposes undertaking targeted work to better understand the impact of space weather on space-enabled technologies.

■ Solar Power

Sarah Olney:

[1155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of installing solar panels on (a) government, (b) commercial and (c) industrial buildings.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The generation of renewable electricity from rooftop solar on commercial, industrial and public sector buildings reduces carbon emissions, helps save money on energy bills, protects against electricity price fluctuations and puts unused roof space to good use. Consuming most of the electricity generated on site can also reduce the amount of electricity lost in networks. Projects can be installed relatively quickly, creating new local jobs and contributing to green recovery.

There is currently around 13.5GW of solar PV in the UK of which up to around 3GW is installed on non-domestic roofs[1]. We will need to see sustained increases in deployment of all types of solar, alongside other renewables, to meet our ambitious net zero targets.

Those installing rooftop solar (and other small scale low carbon technologies) can receive payment for any surplus electricity that is exported to the grid through the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG). The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme launched in October 2020 provides grants to install low carbon energy efficiency and heating solutions, including rooftop solar panels, in government and public sector buildings.

[1] Source: BEIS solar PV deployment statistics (April 2021) at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/solar-photovoltaics-deployment>

■ UK Seabed Resources: Deep Sea Mining

Kerry McCarthy:

[2226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of his Department's sponsorship of UK Seabed Resources for deep sea mining exploration with (a) global ocean conservation and (b) the Government's commitment to protecting at least 30 per cent of global oceans by 2030.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 20 May 2021]: The UK is a global leader in protecting the seas, the ocean and our marine life - and works with stakeholders in the UK and partners overseas to help achieve these aims. The UK will be an ambitious participant in the Super Year 2021. We continue to nurture and grow the Blue Belt Programme of large marine protected areas around the British Overseas Territories, which amount now to

a protected area larger than India. We are about to launch our new £500 million Blue Planet fund to support a broad range of activities to protect and restore precious marine ecosystems. And we have been leading the Global Ocean Alliance of countries committed to protecting at least 30% of the world's ocean by 2030.

As a part of our belief in strong multilateral action on the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean, we will continue to support the requirement for the highest possible environmental standards for the regulation of any deep sea mining which happens in future in areas beyond national jurisdictions.

The licences issued to UK Seabed Resources Ltd include significant conditions in relation to environmental considerations, including sections on protection of the environment and environmental monitoring & reporting. In addition, the licences are issued in line with prevailing legislation which provides further environmental safeguards.

Kerry McCarthy:

[2227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on extending UK Seabed Resources' first exploration licence for deep sea mining beyond 2022.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 20 May 2021]: There have been no recent discussions. The two licences issued to UK Seabed Resources in 2012 and 2013 are for exploration, and not exploitation (mining) activity. The licences are granted subject to periodic review, and so would not be extended beyond 10 years without a review by my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State, which is in line with the relevant legislation.

Exploitation is not currently permitted to be conducted, and the International Seabed Authority is still working towards exploitation regulations that would need to be in place. A full Environmental Impact Assessment – subject to public consultation – would be required before any mining could be conducted by UK Seabed Resources or any other operator.

Critical materials, and particularly certain types of minerals and metals, will be vital to delivering the green transition and safeguarding our future economic resilience. Technology-critical minerals and metals are important, and often irreplaceable, in electric vehicle batteries, offshore wind turbines, and other technologies. The World Bank estimates that three billion tonnes of metals and minerals will be needed to decarbonise the global energy system by 2050. The Government will therefore continue to consider possible mechanisms that could support this green transition, including the possible role of deep sea mining.

■ Unite: Annual Reports

John Spellar:

[982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, , pursuant to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to Question 180920 on Unite: Annual Reports, for what

reason it was not feasible for the Certification Officer to publish the annual return for Unite from 18 December 2020 to early March 2021.

Paul Scully:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 29th April 2021 to Question [187136](#).

CABINET OFFICE

■ 11 Downing Street: Repairs and Maintenance

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[914\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish evidence to show (a) that the Prime Minister paid for the refurbishment of the apartment at 11 Downing Street, and (b) to whom those payments were made.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Hon. Member to the press notice of 28 April 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-rt-hon-lord-geidt-appointed-as-independent-adviser-on-ministers-interests>.

■ Census: Advisory Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1124\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the extent to which people seeking support to complete Census 2021 experienced technical and communication problems in accessing that support.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ1124 [UKSA's final response to PQ1124.pdf]

■ Census: Students

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1332\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, (a) what assessment he has made of adequacy of communication on the need for students to complete Census forms for both their home and term-time address, and ((b) whether fines will be administered to students who have not completed both versions of the Census.

Julia Lopez:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ1332 [UKSA's final response to PQ1332.pdf]

■ Departmental Coordination

John McDonnell: [\[603\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to consult Civil Service unions on the implementation of the Shared Services Strategy for Government.

John McDonnell: [\[604\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will outline the Strategic Business Case for implementing the Shared Services Strategy for Government.

John McDonnell: [\[605\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has under the Shared Services Strategy for Government to externally-tender out existing work done by the Civil Service to private sector bodies.

John McDonnell: [\[606\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the planned scope is of the framework the Crown Commercial Service plans to establish on the provision of outsourced contact centre services, shared services and operational business process services, with publication reference: 2021/S 000-006901.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[952\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what consultation was undertaken with Civil Service unions on the Shared Services Strategy for Government before that strategy was published.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[953\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the strategy for the Government Business Services' role is in leading the Shared Services Strategy for Government; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Hopkins: [\[954\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the governance arrangements within the Civil Service for delivering the Shared Services Strategy for Government.

Julia Lopez:

The Shared Services Strategy for Government was published on 9 March 2021. The Strategy sets the framework for groups of departments to form Shared Service Centres to implement the Strategy. Part of Cabinet Office, Government Business Services is responsible for coordinating delivery of the Strategy.

The Strategy will deliver better, streamlined services and lower costs, to offer better value for money for the taxpayer. Each group of departments forming a Shared Service Centre will develop its own business case for implementing the strategy.

The final specification and all bidding documents for the Outsourced Contact Centre and Business Services (RM6181) framework agreement were published on the government's Contracts Finder website in April 2021.

It is for Departments to determine their approach to consulting with Civil Service unions. Cabinet Office officials have had two constructive meetings with the National Trade Union Congress since publication of the Strategy, and welcome continuing dialogue.

■ General Elections: Fraud

Richard Burgon:

[2377]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many convictions of voter personation in general elections there have been in the 21st Century.

Julia Lopez:

The forthcoming Elections Bill will have a package of measures to tackle different types of electoral fraud – including personation in polling stations, postal voting personation and interference, proxy voting fraud, intimidation and undue influence.

Voter fraud is a crime that we cannot allow room for, so the Government is stamping out any potential for it to take place in elections, in line with our manifesto pledge.

The Electoral Commission publishes electoral fraud data on its website:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/electoral-fraud-data>.

Personation in polling stations is very difficult to identify and prove: by definition, it is a crime of deception. The 2015 Tower Hamlets election court judgment found that personation was one of the interlinked types of corrupt and illegal practices that took place.

By contrast, as the Electoral Commission has previously noted: 'Since the introduction of photo ID in Northern Ireland there have been no reported cases of personation. Voters' confidence that elections are well-run in Northern Ireland is consistently higher than in Great Britain, and there are virtually no allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations' (December 2015).

■ Government Departments: Correspondence

Dan Carden:

[1195]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his Department's news story, Statement on government procurement following this week's NAO report, published on 19 November 2020, how and to whom the high priority mailbox was advertised.

Julia Lopez:

The mailbox was available across government and with Parliamentarians. This was done through email correspondence to ministerial private offices and senior officials in the PPE sourcing programme, who then onward shared as they considered appropriate.

■ Opinion Polls: Coronavirus**Mr William Wragg:**[\[1102\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his correspondence of 7 May 2021 on Government polling, reference MC2021/08351, if he will provide the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee with a list of all the topics on which polling has been commissioned by (a) the Cabinet Office, (b) its associated bodies and (c) the Prime Minister's Office since 1 March 2020.

Mr William Wragg:[\[1103\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his correspondence of 7 May 2021 on Government polling, reference MC2021/08351, if he will provide the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee with copies of the reports that have been compiled on polling related to the covid-19 since 1 March 2020.

Mr William Wragg:[\[1104\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his correspondence of 7 May 2021 on Government polling, reference MC2021/08351, if he will provide the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee with copies of all the questions that have been used in the polling related to the covid-19 since 1 March 2020.

Mr William Wragg:[\[1105\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to his correspondence of 7 May 2021 on Government polling, reference MC2021/08351, if he will provide the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee with a list of the companies contracted to conduct polling by the Cabinet Office since 1 March 2020.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQs [82315 and 82316](#) on 9 September 2020, and PQ [156454](#) on 2 March 2021.

Covid-19 polling for the cross-government public information campaign has been conducted regularly since the start of the pandemic. This work allows the Cabinet Office to optimise campaign messaging and maximise effectiveness, ensuring vital public health information reaches as many people as possible. The insight gathered continues to inform the Government's ongoing communications strategy and response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and so shall not be published at this time.

The Cabinet Office publishes details of all contracts over £10,000 on Contracts Finder and spend over £500, including on public information campaigns, on a rolling basis. This will include expenditure on this campaign and will be broken down by supplier.

COP26

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Third Sector

Rachael Maskell:

[2365]

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to help ensure there are opportunities for civil society to engage with the COP26.

Alok Sharma:

Civil society, with their links to on-the-ground communities and practitioners, are key partners to achieve the goals we have set for COP26. We want to work with civil society to amplify and learn from the voices of those most affected by climate change, to inspire increased climate ambition and to deliver a truly all-of-society and inclusive COP.

This is why I have set up an International COP26 Civil Society and Youth Advisory Council so that we can hear and act on the expertise of civil society groups. I have also committed to, and have been meeting young people and civil society in every country that I visit in the run up to November. Finally, I have a dedicated civil society engagement team in the COP26 Unit to ensure civil society voices are heard at COP26. My officials run regular calls with a large network of civil society organisations to share updates on our planning for COP26.

DEFENCE

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

Bob Blackman:

[2950]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the latest timeline is for the Fleet Solid Support competition.

Mr Ben Wallace:

In keeping with the timescales I set out in the Autumn last year, the Contract Notice, signaling the start of the new competition for the Fleet Solid Support Ships was issued on 21 May. On current plans manufacture contract award is due within two years.

■ Military Aircraft: Procurement

John Healey:

[992]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his timetable is for the Tempest project to begin production.

John Healey:

[\[993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions has he had with his European counterparts on the Tempest project.

Jeremy Quin:

The Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper committed £2billion in funding over the four years to develop a world leading future combat air system, bringing MOD and industry partners together to deliver the technology, skills, and intellectual property needed to stay at the cutting edge.

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

The UK signed a trilateral MOU with Italy and Sweden in December 2020 to enable joint work on the Future Combat Air System.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Bingo

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[1086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will allocate sector-specific funding to bingo clubs.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[1087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government has made an assessment of the reasons for the closure of 39 bingo clubs across the UK during the outbreak of covid-19.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises that the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be extremely challenging for businesses, including in the bingo sector. In recognition of the impact of requiring some businesses to remain closed for a longer period, an enhanced package of support was introduced, including Restart Grants of up to £18,000 per premises, specifically for those which were required to remain closed beyond Step 2. The package also included extensions to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, with further discretionary funding for allocation by Local Authorities. Bingo clubs have accessed £44m of government support via the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (£26.8m), Eat Out to Help Out (£600k), Business Rates Relief (£15.9m) and Grant funding (£1.6m). We are continuing to work with organisations in the land-based gambling sector to understand the impacts and how we may be able to support them.

■ Camelot Group: Advertising

Alexander Stafford:

[1420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Questions 188087 and 188086, how much Camelot UK Lotteries Limited has spent on advertising in each year since 1994.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Available data covers marketing spend, of which advertising is one element. The table below shows total marketing expenditure during the course of the Third Licence period. We do not hold advertising or marketing data for the period prior to the start of the Third Licence.

YEAR	MARKETING SPEND (£M)
2009/2010	£75.6
2010/2011	£69.3
2011/2012	£81.4
2012/2013	£78.3
2013/2014	£81.8
2014/2015	£79.1
2015/2016	£89.5
2016/2017	£97.0
2017/2018	£96.1
2018/2019	£126.6
2019/2020	£146.6

The amount the operator spends on marketing is subject to conditions set out in the licence, which specify minimum amounts that must be spent on marketing as a whole, of which advertising is one element. More information can be found at Schedule 10, Condition 11, Part 1 of the [Third Licence](#).

■ Gambling

Carolyn Harris:

[1338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the responsibility for assessing gambling affordability following the recent Gambling Commission consultation has been transferred from the regulator to his Department; and what the statutory basis is for that responsibility.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[1339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will ensure that steps are taken in the forthcoming gambling review to ensure gambling operators are required follow a strict affordability criteria when accepting payments from customers.

Mr John Whittingdale:

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

Government remains in close contact with the Commission as this progresses, and the Commission is sharing key evidence with the Department on this and other topics where it could be relevant to our Review of the Gambling Act 2005. We are considering all evidence submitted to our Review, and any proposed changes will be led by that evidence.

■ Internet: Safety

Chi Onwurah:

[\[2285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what level of parliamentary scrutiny is planned to apply to the modification of the codes of practice as outlined in clause 33 of the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

Any amendments to the codes of practice resulting from the process outlined in clause 33 of the Online Safety Bill would, as set out in clause 33(6) of the draft Bill, be subject to the negative resolution procedure set out in clause 32(3) - (6).

Chi Onwurah:

[\[2287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what conditions would disqualify a person's worldwide revenue from being subject to penalty under conditions outlined in clause 86 of the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Online Safety Bill allows Ofcom, in certain circumstances, to find (i) parent companies jointly and severally liable for breaches by its subsidiaries where the parent has sufficient control over the non-compliant subsidiary; and (ii) subsidiaries jointly and severally liable for its parent's or fellow subsidiaries' breaches where their acts or omissions contributed to the failure.

Clause 86 sets out how the maximum amount for penalties operates where two entities are jointly and severally liable for a penalty. It specifies that Ofcom can impose penalties of up to the greater of £18 million or 10% of 'qualifying worldwide revenue' of the group of entities of which the two liable entities are members. The conditions under which Clause 86 penalties can apply therefore depends on the final definition of 'qualifying worldwide revenue'. Ofcom will consult with industry in order to identify an appropriate definition.

Chi Onwurah:

[2289]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what considerations he is planned to be required to make when defining an entity eligible to make a super complaint under clause 106 of the draft Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Secretary of State will set out in secondary legislation the criteria that super-complainants must meet in order to be eligible for submitting a super-complaint to Ofcom. The regulations made by the Secretary of State must specify, as one of the criteria, that the entity must be a body representing the interests of users, or members of the public, or a particular group of users or members of the public. The Secretary of State will also be required to consult on the criteria with Ofcom and anyone else they consider appropriate. Organisations will be required to submit evidence to Ofcom setting out how they meet this criteria. Any organisations that meet the criteria will be able to submit a super-complaint to Ofcom. The assessment of evidence will be fair and objective, and further details on the criteria will be set out in secondary legislation following consultation.

Sarah Champion:

[2301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when his Department plans to publish the online media literacy strategy.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper confirmed our commitment to publishing a Media Literacy Strategy. The Strategy will review the existing UK media literacy landscape and set out plans to ensure a strategic and coordinated approach to online media literacy education. The Strategy will be published later this year.

■ **Journalism: Internet**

Chi Onwurah:

[2282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will provide a definition of journalistic content in the context of the Online Safety Bill; and what his Department's policy is on the criteria that qualify a piece of content to have been generated for the purposes of journalism.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Online Safety legislation will create a positive obligation on platforms with the largest audiences and a range of high-risk features ('Category 1' platforms) to put in place safeguards for all journalistic content shared on their services. Further details will be set out in codes of practice. Category 1 platforms will be required to specify how they identify content as being journalistic in their terms of service.

■ Museums and Galleries: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[3080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the (a) scientific and (b) medical evidential basis for the decisions to (i) ease and (ii) not ease covid-19 restrictions for (A) commercial art galleries and (B) public art galleries on 12 April 2021.

Caroline Dinenage:

The government published the roadmap on 22 February 2021, which set out a step-by-step plan to ease restrictions in England cautiously. In advance of the publication of the roadmap, the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling, Operational sub-group (SPI-M-O) published an assessment of the evidence available on 17 February. The purpose of the report was to summarise modelling on easing restrictions for England. It can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spi-m-o-summary-of-modelling-on-roadmap-scenarios-17-february-2021>

The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. The scientific evidence shows that opening too early or too quickly risks a further lockdown.

Under the roadmap, non-essential retail, including commercial art galleries, and the outdoor elements of public art galleries in England were allowed to reopen in Step 2 on 12 April, and the indoor elements of public art galleries were allowed to reopen in Step 3 on 17 May. The distinction between the reopening dates for the outdoor elements of public art galleries and the indoor elements acknowledged the higher transmission risk posed by indoor settings.

■ National Lottery Distribution Fund

Alexander Stafford:

[1419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 188088, how much good cause income was generated through National Lottery sales and placed into the National Lottery Distribution Fund in each year since 1994.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Proceeds from the National Lottery due to the National Lottery Distribution Fund (NLDF) from the operator are calculated as set out in the terms of the third National Lottery [Licence](#). Total annual National Lottery good cause income since 1994, is shown in the table below.

Total NLDF income is set out in the table below. In addition to income received through sales, good cause income received into the NLDF also includes unclaimed prizes and investment income, amongst other additions, although sales income

makes up c 92% of the total. More detailed information is available in the National Lottery Distribution Fund [Annual Report](#).

YEAR	TOTAL RETURNS TO GOOD CAUSES (£M)
1994/95	£299*
1995/96	£1,536
1996/97	£1,588
1997/98	£1,952
1998/99	£1,919
1999/00	£1,766
2000/01	£1,773
2001/02	£1,842
2002/03	£1,592
2003/04	£1,394
2004/05	£1,475
2005/06	£1,500
2006/07	£1,296
2007/08	£1,301
2008/09	£1,316
2009/10	£1,496
2010/11	£1,569
2011/12	£1,693
2012/13	£1,936
2013/14	£1,700
2014/15	£1,963
2015/16	£1,934
2016/17	£1,638
2017/18	£1,644

YEAR	TOTAL RETURNS TO GOOD CAUSES (£M)
2018/19	£1,615
2019/20	£1,801

* As the Lottery began in November 1994, data from 1994/1995 is only for a partial year.

■ Newspaper Press: Social Media

Emma Hardy: [\[1373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of online harms occurring in the comments sections of recognised news publisher websites.

Emma Hardy: [\[1374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of moderator systems of comments sections on recognised news publisher websites.

Emma Hardy: [\[1375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what data his Department holds on the volume of harmful comments appearing in comments sections of recognised news publisher websites.

Emma Hardy: [\[1376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with newspaper proprietors, editors, or staff on the moderation of recognised news publisher websites.

Emma Hardy: [\[1377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to introduce transparency reports for recognised news publisher websites in respect of harm occurring on their comments boards.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government is committed to a free and independent press. This is vital to a strong and fully functioning democracy where the powerful can be held to account without fear. The government does not intervene in editorial or moderation decisions made by news publishers. DCMS does not hold data on comments sections of news publisher websites.

Anyone concerned by material published on a news website's comment section can complain directly to the publisher or to the relevant independent self regulator. The majority of traditional publishers—including 95% of national newspapers by circulation—are members of The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO).

A number of smaller publishers have joined The Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS).

There are no plans to introduce transparency reporting requirements for news publishers; websites.

DCMS ministers and officials regularly meet with a range of stakeholders to discuss a range of issues.

■ **Social Media: Antisemitism**

Elliot Colburn:

[3171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism is included in any discussions with a potential regulator on holding social media companies accountable for content hosted on their platforms.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government is committed to tackling racism, including the spread of antisemitic content online. On 12 May 2021, we published the draft Online Safety Bill, which sets out new expectations on companies to keep their users safe online. Under a new legal duty of care, in-scope companies, including social media, will need to tackle illegal antisemitic content and activity on their services.

In addition, companies providing high-risk, high-reach services will need to assess the risk to adults of legal but harmful content on their services and set clear terms and conditions stating what legal but harmful material they accept (and do not accept) on their service. Companies will have to do this for both priority harms which the government will set out in secondary legislation and for any emerging harms they identify in their risk assessments.

These duties will apply to antisemitic hate speech, which does not meet the threshold of a criminal offence. Companies will need to enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently, and could face enforcement action if they do not. All companies in scope will be required to have effective and accessible user reporting and redress mechanisms.

From now onwards we will be working with stakeholders and parliamentarians alike on identifying priority harms, and they will be subject to the usual secondary legislation processes. Ofcom will be responsible for advising the government regarding the list of priority categories of harm, based on evidence of the prevalence and impact of harmful content. Government will not be bound to follow this advice.

■ **Social Media: Harassment**

Chi Onwurah:

[2283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the algorithms used by social media firms to moderate hate speech and online abuse on their platforms.

Caroline Dinenage:

Companies are not doing enough to prevent hate speech and online abuse.

The Online Safety Bill, which has now been published in draft, will require all companies to take swift and effective action against hate speech and online abuse.

The Bill will ensure that all companies remove and limit the spread of illegal content, and that they keep their promises to stamp out this sort of abuse. Major platforms will also need to deal with abuse that falls below the criminal threshold. They will need to set and enforce clear terms and conditions on how they will tackle this content.

For the first time, companies will be held accountable for keeping their users safe on their platforms, and Ofcom will have robust powers to enforce the rules if companies do not comply.

■ Social Media: Regulation**Chi Onwurah:**[\[2284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring social media companies to report on the algorithms they use to monitor online hate speech on their platforms and any biases found within those algorithms.

Caroline Dinenage:

Hate speech is completely unacceptable in an open and tolerant society. Our new laws will mean social media companies must keep promises to their users about their standards and stamp out this sort of abuse. Companies will need to take steps to mitigate the risks of harm associated with their algorithms. This will apply in the case of illegal content and, in particular, companies will need to ensure that systems for targeting content to children, such as the use of algorithms, protect them from harmful material.

Ofcom will have a range of powers at its disposal to help it assess whether companies are fulfilling their duties. The largest and most high risk companies will also be required to produce transparency reports, which will include information about the steps companies are taking to protect users. These reports may include information about the processes and tools in place to address illegal and harmful content and activity, including, where appropriate, tools to identify, flag, block or remove illegal and harmful content.

■ Sportsgrounds: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of when all seated outdoor stadiums will re-open to sports fans.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

We have now entered a period of loosening restrictions under Step 3 of the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' which permits fans to return to both indoor and outdoor elite sporting events, albeit under capacity caps.

Large seated outdoor stadiums with over 16,000 seated capacity, where crowds can be safely distributed, are eligible to utilise a special provision allowing up to 10,000 people or 25% of total seated capacity (whichever is lower), helping more fans to return safely to some of our iconic venues.

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

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

■ Telecommunications: Codes of Practice**Chi Onwurah:****[708]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish any assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the 2017 changes to the Electronic Communications Code in increasing digital connectivity.

Matt Warman:

The Department has not completed a formal assessment of the impact of the 2017 reforms to the Electronic Communications Code in increasing digital coverage and connectivity. The progress that has been made since the Code reforms came into effect will be due to a wide range of factors and it would not be feasible to conduct an assessment looking exclusively at the impact of the Code.

We have engaged with stakeholders on an ongoing basis since the 2017 reforms came into effect and we are aware that further changes may be needed to support the delivery of coverage and connectivity targets. We have also recently consulted about this through a public consultation which closed on 24 March 2021. Responses to that consultation are being considered and legislative proposals forming part of the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill will be laid before this House in due course.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure

Chi Onwurah: [709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the average reduction in rental for site owners who lease their land to telecommunications companies for infrastructure has been more or less than 40 per cent proposed by the Government's Impact Assessment accompanying the 2017 Electronic Communications Code.

Matt Warman:

The Impact Assessment that accompanied the 2017 reforms did not propose a 40 per cent reduction in rents. The 40% figure estimate referred to in the Impact Assessment was drawn from a report by independent economic analysts (Nordicity). The Impact Assessment made clear the difficulty of predicting the exact amount by which rents would fall, given the fact that the price paid for rights to install digital infrastructure is, in the first instance, a matter for private negotiation between operators and site providers.

Government's aim was to reduce the cost of deployment, including the amounts paid for access to land, overall. We have not completed a formal assessment on average rent reductions since the 2017 reforms came into effect and therefore cannot comment on what the average rent reductions have been.

Chi Onwurah: [710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what communication he has had with the Speed Up Britain campaign on the Electronic Communications Code.

Matt Warman:

I held an introductory meeting with members of the Speed Up Britain campaign on 29 July 2020, at which we discussed Government's coverage and connectivity aims and general issues regarding operation of the Code in practice.

On 16 September 2020, representatives from the Speed Up Britain campaign attended one of a series of roundtables that I held with different stakeholder groups to discuss views on how the Electronic Communications Code was working. On 14 October 2020, Speed Up Britain wrote to me following that roundtable, which I responded to on 23 November 2020.

Since the public consultation on further reforms to the Code was published, it has been made clear to all stakeholders who have requested meetings about the Electronic Communications Code that detailed discussions about the Code cannot take place while responses to the consultation are being considered.

Chi Onwurah: [711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the cost to the public purse of rent reductions received by public sector bodies as a result of changes to the Electronic Communications Code in 2017.

Matt Warman:

There has been no formal assessment of rent reductions received by public sector bodies since the 2017 reforms came into effect.

The purpose of the Electronic Communications Code is to support the fast and efficient deployment of digital networks, while providing adequate protection for individual property rights, and it is important to maintain that balance. The 2017 reforms to the Code were intended to make it cheaper and easier for digital networks to be installed, maintained and upgraded.

We believe that much progress has been made, and today, over two in five premises can access gigabit-capable networks. By the end of the year, 60% will have access, and by 2025 the Government is targeting a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage, working with industry to reach as close to 100% as possible.

Chi Onwurah:[\[712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support he is making available to altnets in fibreoptic broadband rollout with significant existing plans to build in areas that have been deemed as Area 3 in Ofcom's Statement entitled Promoting investment and competition in fibre networks: Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review 2021-26.

Matt Warman:

Building Digital UK is determined to take a pro-competition approach, with all suppliers able to play their part. Over the last 18 months BDUK has engaged with over 80 suppliers through market engagement events and workshops.

Thorough local market reviews will shape the type, size and boundaries of each contract to maximise competition and ensure public money is targeted at places that would otherwise be left behind.

Building Digital UK will survey the market and their plans in hard to reach areas before starting procurements to ensure interventions do not encroach on altnet suppliers' build areas or allowing them time to pursue commercial investment plans.

Our mixed procurement approach includes competitions specifically targeted at specialist (altnet) network providers, typically with a geographic focus. We will assess whether local or regional focused contracts are likely to achieve greater overall pace and offer better value on a case-by-case basis. We will be seeking to identify and develop such procurement opportunities and will continue to engage with the market and local authorities.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Prime Minister's statement that the Government will be doing much more over the winter to support the voluntary sector, Official Report, 2 November 2020, Vol. 683, col. 41, what recent assessment he has made of the progress the he has made on that commitment.

Matt Warman:

Government recognises the huge contribution of charities in the national effort against coronavirus, and the significant challenges that many in the sector have experienced.

Charities continue to benefit from a multi-billion-pound package of government support. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, now extended to the end of September. Many charity shops have benefited from the Chancellor's £4.6 billion in lockdown grants for premises required to close, and will have been able to access Restart Grants to safely relaunch trading. My department has also worked with the Fundraising Regulator and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising to support the development of guidance to help make responsible and safe fundraising a possibility.

This support builds on over £1 billion in targeted funding, including the £750 million charities package, which has helped more than 14,000 organisations across the country respond to the impact of Covid-19.

We will continue to work with the sector to assess their emerging needs as we move into recovery.

EDUCATION■ **Adult Education: Finance****Meg Hillier:**[\[1276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has conducted an impact assessment of the decision to change the reconciliation threshold rate for Education and Skills Funding Agency grant funded AEB adult skills.

Gillian Keegan:

We are lowering the reconciliation threshold for the Education and Skills Funding Agency grant funded Adult Education Budget (AEB) (adult skills including non-formula funded community learning and 19-24 traineeships) and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary fund providers for the 2020-21 academic year, from 97% and 100% respectively to 90%.

The 90% now proposed for the current funding year is, therefore, a relaxation of the normal rules for the benefit of all grant-funded providers and their learners.

In areas where the AEB has been devolved, Mayoral Combined Authorities or the Greater London Authority are responsible for considering any provider flexibilities in their areas.

We are monitoring the situation carefully and, in particular, if there are providers that may need further support.

■ Apprentices: Greater London

Sir David Evennett:

[2199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to encourage the uptake of apprenticeships in (a) the London Borough of Bexley and (b) Greater London.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships provide people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in a wide range of industries, including artificial intelligence, archaeology, data science, business management, and banking. We want more people to benefit from high-quality apprenticeships. Since May 2010, there have been 7,190 apprenticeship starts in Bexleyheath and Crayford (constituency).

We are supporting employers to offer new apprenticeship opportunities by increasing the incentive payment to £3,000 for every new apprentice hired between 1 April and 30 September 2021 as part of the government's Plan for Jobs. We continue to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to enable Kickstart placements to turn into apprenticeships where that is the right thing for the employer and the young person.

In addition, we are supporting the largest-ever expansion of traineeships and are working with employers to develop new occupational traineeships in rail, construction and engineering which will create a pathway for young people to progress into apprenticeships or other employment. The government confirmed an additional £126 million at Budget to fund a further 43,000 traineeship places in the 2021/22 academic year, and we have extended the £1,000 incentive payments for employers who offer traineeship work placement opportunities to July 2022.

To encourage more young people to consider apprenticeships, we are promoting apprenticeships in schools across the country through our Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme. This free service provides schools and teachers with resources and interventions to help better educate young people about apprenticeships. In the Skills for Jobs white paper, published in January 2021, we announced that we will be introducing a 3-point-plan to enforce the Baker Clause, our requirement that all maintained schools and academies provide opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to visit schools to talk to all year 8 to 13 pupils. This includes creating clear minimum legal requirements, specifying who is to be given access to which pupils and when. This is an important step towards real choice for every pupil.

■ Educational Institutions: Carbon Emissions

Dawn Butler:

[1023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government plans to retrofit all education buildings to help achieve the Net Zero target by 2030.

Nick Gibb:

The Department supports sustainability through our capital funding and programmes, both to reduce carbon and save schools money on energy.

Since 2015, the Department has allocated £11.3 billion to maintain and improve school buildings, including improving energy efficiency. This includes £1.8 billion in the current financial year 2021/22.

In addition, the ten year school rebuilding programme has launched with a commitment to 500 rebuilding projects over the next decade. This will replace poor condition and ageing school buildings with modern, energy efficient designs, transforming education for thousands of pupils.

The Further Education (FE) Capital Transformation Fund delivers the Government's £1.5 billion commitment to upgrade the estate of both FE colleges and designated institutions in England. This will target colleges in the worst condition whilst supporting the Government's objectives on achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2020, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy set up the £1 billion Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme which provided grants for eligible public sector bodies, including schools, to fund energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures. Higher education institutions were also eligible for these grants. Phase 2 of this scheme has recently been announced and will allocate £75 million of funding.

More broadly, the Department is working with colleagues across government on carbon reduction and energy efficiency and developing thinking on how future capital programmes can contribute further.

Further details on capital funding for the period beyond this financial year will be set out at the next Spending Review.

■ National Curriculum Tests: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:****[1192]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of postponing SATs assessments for the academic year 2021-22 in the context of the disruption to learning caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is continuing to plan for a full programme of primary assessments to take place in the 2021/22 academic year, including the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment and multiplication tables check, as previously announced. The assessments will help gauge the impact of lost time in education and will enable the Department to better understand the effectiveness of education recovery initiatives. Full details for 2021/22 primary assessments will be confirmed in due course.

■ Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education: Gambling

Philip Davies:

[R] [1032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to make teaching on the risks of gambling addiction compulsory in PSHE lessons in secondary schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has made relationships education compulsory for all primary schools, relationships and sex education compulsory for all secondary school pupils and health education compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools. Health education includes teaching pupils about the risks associated with gambling. The statutory guidance is available here:

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

These subjects will make sure that children and young people are taught about the risks associated with gambling and are able to make informed decisions about their own actions. These subjects will also support pupils to understand the importance of their mental wellbeing and promote safe online behaviour. For example, under the topic of internet safety and harms, the guidance sets out that young people should be taught about the risks related to online gambling, including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.

To support schools to deliver this content, the Department has produced teacher training modules. This includes teaching pupils about the risks associated with gambling as part of health education. A link to the training modules is available on GOV.UK and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health#primary-teacher-training-modules>.

■ Primary Education: Standards

Zarah Sultana:

[885]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the evidence published by More Than A Score, what plans he has to implement the recommendations of that organisation on (a) cancelling the introduction of the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) in English and maths for four-year-olds in September 2021, (b) pausing all other statutory assessments in years one, two, four and six and (c) setting up an independent profession-led review into primary assessment.

Nick Gibb:

Assessment is a crucial part of a child's schooling and fundamental in a high performing education system. Statutory assessments at primary school are an essential part of ensuring that all pupils master the basics of reading, writing and Mathematics to prepare them for secondary school. Assessment data will also enable parents, schools and the Department to understand the impact of lost time in education and recovery initiatives. As such, the Department has no plans to cancel

the statutory implementation of the Reception Baseline Assessment in September 2021, and the Department continues to plan for a return to a full programme of primary assessments in the 2021/22 academic year. In 2017, the Government carried out a consultation into primary assessment in England. The consultation received over 4,000 responses from a diverse range of backgrounds and specialisms, providing a broad and informed range of views that informed policy on the current primary assessment system. In addition, the Department engages with relevant stakeholders on a regular basis to understand their views on primary assessment.

■ Primary Schools: Assessments

Emma Hardy:

[1193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to reform the statutory assessment system in primary schools.

Nick Gibb:

Assessment is an important part of a child's schooling and is fundamental in a high performing education system. Statutory assessments at primary school are an essential part of ensuring that all pupils master the basics of reading, writing, and Mathematics to prepare them for secondary school. Assessment data also enable parents, schools, and the Department to understand the impact of lost time in education and recovery initiatives.

In 2017, the Government carried out a consultation into primary assessment in England. The consultation received over 4000 responses from a diverse range of backgrounds and specialisms, providing a broad and informed range of views that informed policy on the current primary assessment system. In addition, the Department engages with relevant stakeholders on a regular basis to understand their views on primary assessment.

■ Pupil Exclusions

Preet Kaur Gill:

[1164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress he has made in implementing the recommendations of the Timpson Review on school exclusions.

Nick Gibb:

Good behaviour and discipline in schools is crucial if children are to reach their full potential. The Department backs head teachers to use suspensions and expulsions when required as part of creating the calm and disciplined classrooms needed to support effective teaching. The Department is also clear that expulsions should only be used as a last resort and expulsion from school should not mean exclusion from education.

Since the publication of the Timpson Review and agreeing the recommendations in principle, the Government has been pursuing a programme of work to support effective behaviour management across the school system. In April, the Department commenced the Behaviour Hubs programme, investing £10 million to help schools

develop and sustain cultures where good pupil behaviour is normal. The Department has reformed training and development for teachers as part of the Early Career Framework, so that all new teachers will be shown how to effectively manage behaviour in their first two years in the profession from September 2021. The Department has also continued to work with Ofsted to tackle 'off-rolling' which is an unacceptable practice. Additionally, the Department will be consulting on how to help head teachers to remove phones in schools, and other revisions to the Department's behaviour, discipline and suspensions and expulsions guidance, later in the year.

The Department intends to go further and is committed to improving outcomes for children and young people in alternative provision who are most at risk of expulsion and disengaging from education. The Department will set out its plans in the forthcoming SEND review.

■ **Schools: Coronavirus**

Anthony Browne:

[\[916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date his Department plans to withdraw the requirement on schools to complete the daily Educational Settings Status Form required by covid-19 regulations.

Nick Gibb:

The request that schools complete the daily educational settings status form is kept under continuous review. The information supplied by schools has been valuable in enabling the Government to manage the COVID-19 outbreak. There is no requirement on schools to complete the daily educational settings status form in COVID-19 regulations – it is a voluntary collection. The Government is grateful to the large proportions of schools and colleges who respond every day to help us understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the education sector, both at a national and local level.

■ **Schools: Public Health**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government plans to introduce education on public health in schools as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The new subject of health education became compulsory in all state-funded schools from September 2020, alongside relationships education in primary schools and relationships and sex education in secondary schools.

The statutory guidance provides a clear description of what pupils should be taught about in health education. This includes mental wellbeing, internet safety and harms, physical health and fitness, healthy eating, drugs, alcohol and tobacco, health, and prevention, basic first aid and the changing adolescent body.

The topic of health and prevention includes content that is particularly relevant to the COVID-19 outbreak, such as how bacteria and viruses are spread and treated and

the importance of hygiene, including handwashing. The subject also covers the facts and science relating to immunisation and vaccination.

To support schools to deliver this content, the Department has produced teacher training modules which are available on GOV.UK. The Department's guidance for schools during the COVID-19 outbreak includes detailed advice on public health duties, and is available to view here:

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture and Food: Genetically Modified Organisms

Dawn Butler:

[1025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to ease restrictions on (a) allowing the growing of genetically modified crops and (b) the use of other genetic technologies in food and farming.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is committed to following a science-based approach to GM crop approval for marketing as food and feed. Under current rules, GM crops and the products derived from them must be authorised before they can be used. This authorisation is dependent on a favourable risk assessment from our independent scientific experts. Defra's policy is to maintain high standards that protect people, animals and the environment.

Defra is currently reviewing the responses to the Government's recent consultation on the regulation of genetic technologies, which also sought views on wider GM reform. The consultation ended on 17 March and a Government response will be published in due course.

■ Agriculture: Plums

Jim Shannon:

[1062]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will provide support to farmers whose plum crops have failed as a result of experiencing frost in spring 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises the crucial role that the UK's horticulture industry plays in both feeding the country and in promoting people's health and well-being. Our plum farmers play an important role in this as well as to our wider economy, with production at the farm gate worth £3.4 million in 2018.

We have not received any representations from the plum sector as a result of the frost their crop has experienced this spring. However, Defra and the Devolved Administrations have established mechanisms to monitor and assess the impact of

market developments across the UK and will continue to do so paying particular attention to this sector in the coming months.

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Daniel Zeichner:

[755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of agricultural workers for the harvesting of crops in 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

This year Defra is working closely with industry to ensure that our farmers and growers have the labour they need for 2021 and beyond. Defra is regularly speaking with recruiters, growers, unions and associations, and making use of all available information to understand the national labour supply picture.

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

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

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

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Daniel Zeichner:

[764]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the transition away from Basic Payments Schemes on commoners and upland agricultural businesses.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government published a comprehensive evidence compendium, updated in September 2019. This set out the impacts of removing Direct Payments, including analysis by sector, location in England and type of land tenure. It also provided analysis on how farm businesses, across all sectors, can offset the impact of Direct Payments.

We are planning to publish further analysis by autumn this year. This will analyse farm incomes and how these will change between now and 2027.

Our latest preliminary findings are consistent with previous analysis that is publicly available. We know that those farm types which are prevalent in the uplands and areas of common land, particularly grazing livestock and tenanted farmers, currently have a high reliance on Direct Payments.

These farms can be rewarded under our new environmental land management schemes. They are therefore well placed to benefit as more public money is provided through such schemes and we will ensure that these schemes work for upland farmers. In designing these schemes, we know that the payment rates need to be attractive to achieve the levels of uptake and environmental outcomes we need to see, as well as set at a fair rate.

■ Agriculture: Weed Killers

Lee Rowley:

[1196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what herbicide and sprout suppressants have been approved by his Department for use in the UK following the ban on the use of CIPC; and whether his Department has issued guidance to farmers switching from using CIPC to alternative herbicide and sprout suppressants.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is aware that the loss of chlorpropham (CIPC), has left a gap in availability of products to control sprouting in stored potatoes, and that in some situations, particularly where potatoes are intended for processing, there are no similarly effective solutions currently available.

Before an alternative pesticide can be used, its active substance must be approved and the pesticide product itself must be authorised. Decisions on approval and authorisation are based on an assessment of the risks posed to people and to the environment. Such decisions are devolved and so are taken by the relevant government or by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on its behalf.

The active substance 1,4-dimethylnaphthalene (1,4-DMN) is an alternative to chlorpropham (CIPC). At present there is no authorised product. The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have granted an emergency authorisation allowing the limited and controlled use until 31 May 2021 of the 1,4-DMN product, 1,4-Sight, to prevent sprouting of harvested potatoes. This emergency authorisation is granted in recognition of the need for sprout suppression and the lack, in certain circumstances, of alternative means of control. The application for full authorisation is being considered by the HSE. Advice on the availability and use of alternative products is provided by industry bodies.

■ Crops and Food: Waste Disposal

Daniel Zeichner:

[757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of (a) food and (b) ornamental crops that could go to waste in 2021 as a result of shortages of labour for crop picking and processing.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises the importance of a reliable source of labour for crop picking and packing, and that it is a key part of bringing in the harvest for the horticultural sector. Defra is working closely with industry to understand labour demand and supply and help our world-leading growers access the labour they need.

The Seasonal Workers Pilot opened in 2019 and is designed to test the effectiveness of our immigration system at supporting UK growers during peak production periods, whilst maintaining robust immigration control. It is also providing a valuable source of labour for the fruit and vegetable growers of the UK helping to ensure the food security of the country. On 22 December 2020, the Government extended the Seasonal Workers Pilot for one year, and expanded the number of visas from 10,000 to 30,000.

The expanded Seasonal Workers Pilot will continue to operate in the edible horticulture sector, to support farmers growing UK fruit and vegetables. This is the sector of agriculture which has the highest dependency on seasonal labour, and is needed to ensure critical food supply chains in the UK are maintained.

This Pilot is not designed to meet the full labour needs of the horticultural sector. Rather we are seeking to evaluate the immigration pilot's ability to assist in alleviating labour shortages during peak production periods.

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

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

The information requested on estimates made for the amounts of horticultural produce that went to waste in 2020, or that could go to waste in 2021 is not held by Defra.

Daniel Zeichner:**[758]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of (a) food and (b) ornamental crops that went to waste in 2020 as a result of a shortage of labour for crop picking and processing.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises the importance of a reliable source of labour for crop picking and packing, and that it is a key part of bringing in the harvest for the horticultural sector. Defra is working closely with industry to understand labour demand and supply and help our world-leading growers access the labour they need.

The Seasonal Workers Pilot opened in 2019 and is designed to test the effectiveness of our immigration system at supporting UK growers during peak production periods,

whilst maintaining robust immigration control. It is also providing a valuable source of labour for the fruit and vegetable growers of the UK helping to ensure the food security of the country. On 22 December 2020, the Government extended the Seasonal Workers Pilot for one year, and expanded the number of visas from 10,000 to 30,000.

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The information requested on estimates made for the amounts of horticultural produce that went to waste in 2020, or that could go to waste in 2021 is not held by Defra.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Staff**

Luke Pollard:

[843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of officials employed by his Department receive remuneration as a result of working for an organisation or company outside of government.

Victoria Prentis:

On 23 April, the Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on the management of outside interests in the Civil Service.

The Committee published this letter on 26 April. It can be found here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/5623/documents/55584/default/>

The Cabinet Secretary's letter sets out a series of steps to improve processes. This programme of work will also take account of any recommendations that emerge from Nigel Boardman's review.

The Civil Service Management Code sets out, at paragraph 4.3.4, the requirement that civil servants must seek permission before accepting any outside employment which might affect their work either directly or indirectly. The applicable principles are

those set out in the Business Appointment Rules. The Civil Service Management Code is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-servants-terms-and-conditions>.

Where the civil servant is a member of the departmental board, any outside employment as well as other relevant interests will be published as part of the Annual Report and Accounts or other transparency publication.

■ Environmental Land Management Scheme

Daniel Zeichner:

[766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the take-up of environmental land management schemes amongst upland agricultural businesses.

Victoria Prentis:

The new environmental land management schemes will be most successful if as many land managers as possible across England take up the schemes, as this will help us to maximise the environmental benefits. More than 3,000 farmers and land managers with a wide range of farm and land types are helping to co-design the new schemes through tests and trials. Uplands provide rich opportunities for the provision of environmental public goods and participation in agri-environment schemes is currently higher for upland farmers than any other farm type, suggesting they should be well placed to participate in future agri-environment schemes. We know there have been some barriers to participation in previous agri-environment schemes for uplands land managers. Over the course of the scheme pilots we will continue to work with farmers and experts including uplands agricultural businesses to make sure we make the right offer for the environmental land management schemes.

■ Fish: Supermarkets

Luke Pollard:

[846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of UK supermarkets on increasing their purchasing of UK-caught fish.

Victoria Prentis:

Evidence shows that UK consumers prefer a relatively narrow range of species which limits the market for UK caught seafood. As a result, we are working in partnership with industry and retailers to build greater consumer awareness of the wide range of species that can be found in UK waters, with the aim of increasing domestic consumption of seafood.

One example is the 'Sea for Yourself' campaign run by Defra and Seafish in 2020, as part of which we secured a retail partnership with Morrisons and campaign branding featured on 60,000 fish boxes in Morrisons UK stores.

We are strongly committed to encouraging consumers to buy and eat more locally caught fish and shellfish from UK waters.

■ Flood Control

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a National Flood Resilience Centre.

Rebecca Pow:

The National Flood Response Centre (NFRC) was developed in response to the National Flood Resilience Review, after the flooding in the winter of 2015/16. The review recommended that the Government should establish a single national flood emergency operations room to improve shared situational awareness between Government departments during severe flooding events.

The strategic objectives for the NFRC are to develop and maintain shared situational awareness between departments, Devolved Administrations and agencies, optimise central government's response to flooding and to support COBR, providing Ministers with accurate information and recommendations to address any challenges or decision points.

Typically, relevant Government departments and agencies move all or part of their crisis team and emergency operations to the NFRC when severe flooding has occurred or is expected. Where co-location is not possible then partners will be represented virtually. Recent use of the NFRC includes November 2019 (flooding in North England), February and March 2020 (Wales, West Mercia and Yorkshire) and in January 2021 it was scaled up virtually in response to Storm Christoph.

■ Food: Waste Disposal

Daniel Zeichner:

[756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of food that has gone to waste since 1 January 2021 as a result of export checks introduced following the UK's departure from the EU.

Victoria Prentis:

In the early months of 2021, Defra officials have made themselves readily available to work with UK traders, EU port officials and colleagues in other Government departments to rapidly unblock issues, ensure that there is feedback from Member States and keep trade flowing.

Between January and March 2021 the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) issued 40,300 certificates for exports to the EU, although some of these may be for consignments not yet exported. We are aware of 17 consignments that were rejected at EU Border Control Posts during this period. There may be more not known to Defra or APHA. Of the 17 rejected consignments, solutions may have been found to ensure safe entry into the EU.

■ Hill Farming: Subsidies

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the potential number of upland farmers that will go out of business in the transition away from Basic Payments Schemes.

Victoria Prentis:

We know that many farmers in the uplands currently rely on Direct Payments. That is why we have designed policies to allow for a managed adjustment, a seven-year transition, that will give farmers, including in upland areas, time to adapt to the changes.

Farmers will be able to offset the removal of these payments in a number of ways, including farm efficiency improvements, diversification and receiving money under our new environmental land management schemes.

There is clear evidence showing that the scope for productivity improvement would enable farms, on average, to remain profitable following the withdrawal of the current payments. We are providing grants and targeted resilience support to facilitate that, as well as investing in longer term measures such as research and development. We also anticipate rent adjustments which could benefit upland tenant farmers.

We are planning to publish further analysis by autumn this year. This will analyse farm incomes and how these will change between now and 2027.

Our latest preliminary findings are consistent with previous analysis that is publicly available, and we find that uplands farmers are reliant on Direct Payments, to the extent that their Direct Payments make up essentially all of their annual profit or farm business income.

However, the analysis also shows that there are opportunities for upland farmers. For instance, uplands farmers currently provide significant environmental benefits and will be well placed to benefit as more public money shall be provided through environmental land management payments.

■ Inland Waterways: Pesticides

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department or its agencies (a) are carrying out monitoring to determine whether Vydate 10G is persistent in the water course in East Anglia or (b) have plans to carry out that monitoring later in 2021.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether Vydate 10G has been detected in the water course in East Anglia since April 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

There have been no detections of Oxamyl, the Active ingredient of Vydate 10G, in the Anglian region since April 2021. Monitoring for Oxamyl is included in the Environment Agency's regular sample collections taken weekly at three sites in Anglian region. This will continue in 2021.

Following an assessment of all monitoring data for Oxamyl in Anglian region since 1 January 2016 (886 samples), Oxamyl is not classed as persistent in either soil or water.

■ Inland Waterways: Sewage**Nicola Richards:****[943]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the amount of raw sewage being discharged into the UK's waterways.

Rebecca Pow:

Tackling the harm caused by sewer overflows is a top priority for this department.

I have met water company CEOs and made clear that the volume of sewage discharged into rivers and other waterways in extreme weather must be reduced.

To achieve this, the new Storm Overflows Taskforce - bringing together the Government, the water industry, regulators and environmental NGOs - has agreed to set a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. The Taskforce is meeting regularly and working on plans to make progress towards that goal, and has commissioned research to gather evidence on the costs, benefits and feasibility of different options.

As announced on 11 May, we are putting forward amendments to the Environment Bill that will help to reduce the harm that storm overflows cause to our waterways. We are introducing new duties that will require the Government to publish a plan by September 2022 to reduce sewage discharges from storm overflows and to report progress to Parliament on implementing that plan. We are also introducing duties requiring water companies and the Environment Agency to publish data on storm overflow operations on an annual basis. These legally binding obligations on water companies and the Government will reduce pollution in rivers – protecting wildlife and public health.

Water companies are currently committed in the 5-year business planning period (2020-25) to a significant programme of improvements to the monitoring and management of storm overflows at a cost of around £1.1 billion. This investment includes undertaking 800 investigations and 798 improvement schemes to provide environmental improvements by reducing spills from frequently spilling overflows.

■ International Waters: Marine Environment

Luke Pollard:

[850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to support limiting industrial activities with the greatest environmental impact taking place in international waters.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is a global leader on marine protection. Through leading the Global Ocean Alliance and co-chairing the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, the UK is championing a target under the Convention on Biological Diversity to protect at least 30% of the global ocean in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures by 2030 ('the 30by30 target').

The UK believes that the whole ocean should be sustainably managed to allow both the marine environment and sustainable marine economies to thrive. In line with this, we support a global network of MPAs that includes both highly protected sites and those that deliver conservation outcomes alongside sustainable economic activities (i.e. the sustainable use of resources).

The UK also supports the conclusion of negotiations on a new implementing Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction ('BBNJ Agreement'). This will have provisions that allow for the creation of MPAs in international waters, a key mechanism to deliver the '30by30' target. The UK is in favour of a strong obligation on Parties to the BBNJ Agreement to work within relevant bodies to deliver measures for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

As part of our work to ensure the sustainable use of the ocean, the UK has agreed not to sponsor or support the issuing of any exploitation licences for deep sea mining projects until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impact on deep sea ecosystems, and strong and enforceable environmental standards have been developed by the International Seabed Authority and are in place.

■ Marine Environment: Plastics

Rachael Maskell:

[801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of an ocean recovery strategy to tackle plastic pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is committed to protecting the marine environment from all human-induced stressors. The UK Marine Strategy sets out how we will take action at a national and international level to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status in UK seas, including by reducing marine litter.

In addition, the Resources and Waste Strategy for England, published in December 2018, sets out our plans to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste, working towards our 25 Year Environment Plan target to reduce all types of marine plastic pollution.

As a Contracting Party to the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, the UK develops and implements actions under the OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter and participates in monitoring programmes to assess regional trends in marine litter.

As the issue of marine plastic litter cannot be solved by one country alone the UK has announced support to start negotiations on a new global agreement to coordinate global action on marine litter and microplastics.

■ Organic Farming

Daniel Zeichner: [\[767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the proportion of UK farming that will be organic by 2030.

Victoria Prentis:

In 2019, the UK had a total area of 485,000 hectares of land farmed organically (i.e. the fully converted area and area under conversion), an increase of 2.4% compared with 2018. The organically farmed area represents 2.7% of the total farmed area on agricultural holdings in the UK. The newly updated figures from the Defra statistics team covering 2020 will be available next month.

It is difficult to make a prediction of what the figures will be in 2030 given the inherent uncertainties in predicting growth of the sector, which will ultimately be up to the business decisions of individual producers.

We believe that the best way to ensure a sustainable and productive organics sector is to take a producer led approach, allowing individual farmers to make decisions about the rate at which they want to expand their land under organic management based on their own best judgement and the market conditions. The schemes that reward environmental land management will also provide incentives for farmers to support the environment and communities.

■ Pesticides

Daniel Zeichner: [\[760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the rejection in February 2021 by the Health and Safety Executive of the use of Vydate 10G on carrot, parsnip, bulb onion, garlic and potato crops, for what reason emergency authorisation was given for the use of that pesticide on sugar beet crops in March 2021.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what criteria were met that led to his Department granting the emergency authorisation of Vydate 10G for use on sugar beet crops in 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Emergency authorisation allows, in narrow circumstances, a short-term derogation from the normal requirements for pesticide authorisation. Emergency authorisation of a pesticide product for limited and controlled use may be granted in special circumstances where, strict regulatory requirements are met, and the authorisation appears necessary to control a danger that cannot be controlled by any other reasonable means. In assessing whether the requirements are met, the decision maker considers the benefit of granting an emergency authorisation and the potential harm from the proposed use of the product, taking into account relevant mitigation measures.

In the case of Vydate 10G, used to control nematodes, grower groups submitted applications earlier this year for emergency authorisation for use on a range of crops. The application for use on a small proportion of the sugar beet crop was granted, with conditions, as the requirements for emergency authorisation were considered to be met.

■ Pigs: Animal Welfare**Zarah Sultana:****[891]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to increase animal welfare standards for the pig farming industry.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government shares the public's high regard for animal welfare. As referenced in the recently published Action Plan for Animal Welfare we are actively exploring options for strengthening the UK system moving forward and are currently examining the evidence around the use of cages for farm animals.

We introduced a new pig welfare code of practice, which came into force in March last year, and this provides guidance to keepers and farmers on legal requirements and encourages high standards of husbandry. The pig code states that the aim is for farrowing crates to no longer be necessary and for any new system to protect the welfare of the sow, as well as her piglets. We are continuing to discuss and work with the industry on this issue.

We are co-designing an Animal Health and Welfare Pathway with industry, to promote the production of healthier, higher-welfare animals at a level beyond compliance with current regulations, underpinning our high international reputation for health and welfare and future increases to regulatory standards.

We are committed to maintaining our position as world leaders in animal welfare and want to improve and build upon that record, working in partnership with farmers to support healthier, higher welfare animals.

■ Plastics: Companies

Rachael Maskell:

[800]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle the use of single-use plastics and (b) encourage the use of more sustainable alternatives to those plastics by companies.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. We are making great strides to tackle plastic pollution. In December 2018 we published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how we want to achieve this and move towards a circular economy and keep resources in the system for as long as possible. In October 2020, we introduced measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds. The single-use carrier bag charge, which has led to a 95% reduction in the use of single-use carrier bags by the main supermarkets, will increase to 10p and be extended to all retailers on 21 May 2021. This will further encourage customers to bring their own bags to carry shopping and reduce the volumes of single-use plastic being used.

The Government welcomes innovations that have a positive impact on the environment and incentivises business-led technology innovation through the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK. Innovate UK's role is to fund business-led innovation through the allocation of competitively awarded grants, delivered through competitions. More details are available at: www.gov.uk/innovate-uk.

The Government has put together a package of over £100 million for research and innovation to tackle the issues that arise from plastic waste. £38 million has been set aside through the Plastics Research and Innovation Fund and the Resource Action Fund including £10 million specifically to pioneer innovative approaches to boosting recycling and reducing litter. The Government has also announced £60 million of funding through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, alongside a £150 million investment from industry, towards the development of smart, sustainable plastic packaging, which will aim to make the UK a world leader in sustainable packaging for consumer products.

■ Recycling

Rachael Maskell:

[802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to take steps to mitigate the environmental effect of the introduction of the Deposit Return Scheme being scheduled for 2024.

Rebecca Pow:

The department is currently undertaking a public consultation on the introduction of a deposit return scheme to seek views on how a future scheme can be designed in the most coherent and effective way possible to deliver on the objectives set out for introducing such a policy. The net environmental effect of introducing the deposit

return scheme will be positive and any negative environmental effects arising as a result of the scheme will be mitigated as far as possible.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. We know more needs to be done, and for the most problematic plastics we are going faster - which is why we have committed to work towards all plastic packaging on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. We have made significant progress, by introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and have significantly reduced the use of single-use carrier bags by the main supermarket retailers by 95% with our 5p charge. The charge has now been increased to 10p and extended to all retailers to build on its success so far and create a level playing field for all retailers. In October 2020, we introduced measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

We will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/ or materials to take a systematic approach to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products, including product bans where necessary. However, we must carefully weigh up the different factors at play in considering policy interventions such as bans to avoid unintended consequences.

■ Roads: Litter

Rachael Maskell:

[799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle (a) plastic litter and (b) other litter on UK roads.

Rebecca Pow:

In the 2017 Litter Strategy, the Government set out a number of commitments to tackle litter, including that on our roads, through education, improved infrastructure and better enforcement.

Since publishing the Strategy we have given councils new powers to hold the keeper of a vehicle responsible for litter thrown from it by issuing a civil penalty. We have also carried out a pilot survey of roadside cleanliness on those parts of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) which are litter-picked by local authorities and engaged over 100 of those authorities in research to explore associated issues, challenges and good practice. We expect to publish a report on our findings later this year.

On those roads where Highways England are responsible for clearing litter, we have introduced a litter performance indicator (PI). Litter on these roads will be reported annually from the end of the 2020/21 financial year and will be published in Highways England's Delivery Plan Update this summer. The PI measures what percentage of these roads are predominantly free of litter, or Grade B, in line with the Code

We are taking steps to address packaging litter both at roadsides and elsewhere. Our recently published consultation on extended producer responsibility for packaging proposes that producers of commonly littered packaging items be made responsible for the costs that are directly attributable to their management, for both binned and

ground litter. We also expect the introduction of a deposit return scheme for drinks containers to incentivise proper disposal, and we are currently consulting on these proposals.

■ Tree Planting: Finance

Feryal Clark: [926]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase funding for tree-planting and urban greening schemes in Enfield North constituency.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to increasing tree planting, and will set out policies to achieve this in the England Tree Strategy, including planting and protecting trees in and around urban areas, which are vital to creating healthy places to live.

We have announced a third round of bidding for the [Urban Tree Challenge Fund](#) (UTCf) on the 26 April 2021. Currently there are no UTCf funded projects in Enfield North however, applications are open to anyone who wants to plant trees in urban or peri-urban areas.

We have also announced the [Local Authority Treescapes Fund \(LATF\)](#) to increase tree planting and natural regeneration in local communities. £2.7 million will be available this year (2021/22) and is aimed at establishing more trees in non-woodland settings such as along riverbanks or footpaths. Applications will be accepted from unitary and top tier local authorities in England, including London Boroughs.

These funds are part of the Government's Nature for Climate Fund and support trees in locations with the greatest levels of benefit to ecosystems and society, such as climate adaptation, health, and wellbeing, as well as connecting fragmented habitats.

The London Borough of Enfield was awarded a grant of £678,700 in the first round of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund which was for large scale ecological improvements to Enfield's rivers, including planting 60ha of new accessible woodland which was separately funded by the Forestry Commissions' Woodland Carbon Fund and installing 20 rural sustainable drainage systems to reduce flood risk to over 1,000 properties.

■ Tree Planting: North of England

Rachael Maskell: [1125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees have been planted in (a) York, (b) Yorkshire's White Rose Forest and (c) the Northern Forest in each of the last three years.

Rebecca Pow:

As set out in our new England Trees Action Plan, we are working with charities, landowners and local communities to increase tree planting across England. This includes partnerships such as the Northern Forest, which we kick-started with £5.7

million of investment, and the Community Forests Network, with whom we aim to plant at least 6000 hectares of new woodlands and invested £12.1 million in last year.

The Northern Forest stretches from Liverpool and Chester to Hull, through Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield. The Northern Forest covers community forest areas such as Yorkshire's White Rose Forest, which includes York. Our Nature for Climate Fund supported programme of tree planting by the Community Forests and White Rose Forest will see many more trees planted across these areas over this parliament.

PLANTING SEASON
(DATA ON TREES
PLANTED ACROSS
THESE AREAS MAY
OVERLAP.)

	YORK	THE WHITE ROSE FOREST	THE NORTHERN FOREST
2018-2019	0	7,453	103,980
2019-2020	0	21,069	200,235
2020-2021	675	365,935	860,167
TOTAL	675	394,457	1,164,382

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid

Jim Shannon:

[\[1064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to Afghanistan in response to the bombing near a girls' school in Kabal on 8 May 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The UK utterly condemns the attack near Sayed-ul-Shuhada girls school in Kabul. Schools should never be a target. We continue to call for an immediate end to attacks on civilians, as well as a significant reduction in violence as a pathway to a comprehensive ceasefire. We also underline to all sides that any political settlement must protect the progress made in the country, including protection for women and minorities. Our support for girls' education in Afghanistan is ongoing and we constantly work with our partners to ensure our assistance responds to changing circumstances on the ground.

■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[1179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date the Government was first informed by the US Administration that it was planning to withdraw all US armed forces personnel from Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

The US and Taliban agreement of 29 February 2020 set out a timetable for all international troops to leave Afghanistan. This was expected to be 1 May 2021. The UK has been in regular contact with the US on many issues, including Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary discussed Afghanistan with US Secretary Blinken ahead of the US and NATO announcement on 14 April. We remain in close contact, including on our future approach.

■ Bahrain: Political Prisoners

John McDonnell: [\[598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 178778 Bahrain: Political Prisoners, what visits have taken place at Jau Prison during the covid-19 pandemic.

John McDonnell: [\[599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 178778, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the treatment of prisoners in Jau Prison during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly:

We regularly discuss the challenges of managing Covid-19 in prisons with senior members of the Bahraini Government and continue to engage with the Government of Bahrain to support its reform agenda. 70% of prisoners are vaccinated and, since February, visits from vaccinated family members have been allowed in person.

■ China: Falun Gong

Sarah Olney: [\[1158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on the persecution of followers and practitioners of Falun Gong.

Nigel Adams:

We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practice, change or share one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We regularly raise our concerns about the human rights situation with the Chinese authorities, and will continue to do so.

■ Human Rights

Sarah Olney:

[\[1154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to improve support and protection for human rights defenders across the world.

Nigel Adams:

The UK strongly supports Human Rights Defenders worldwide to enable them to carry out their work safely and without fear. In 2019, the Minister of State responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, launched the document 'UK support for Human Rights Defenders' which was drawn up with significant and important input from relevant stakeholders, including Amnesty International, and which sets out how the UK Government engages with Human Rights Defenders to advance the human rights agenda globally.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help de-escalate the situation in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US administration on the potential role of the US in helping de-escalate tensions in Israel.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. The UK offers our condolences to the families of those civilians killed. The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts to that end, working closely with the US. Hamas must now end all attacks on Israel. It is also important for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza. As the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have made clear, this cycle of violence must stop, and every effort must be made to avoid loss of life.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what counter measures his Department has considered in the event of further Israeli annexation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly:

We remain strongly opposed to any move to annex all or part of the West Bank. Such a move would be contrary to international law and deeply damaging to prospects for lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

■ Israel: Violence

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the causes of the intercommunal violence in the Israeli city of Lod on the 11 May and 12 May 2021.

James Cleverly:

Scenes of violence between Arab and Jewish Israelis in Green Line Israel are very worrying. We remain in contact with Israeli authorities, and continue to urge them to take steps to reduce further violence. The Foreign Secretary did so with Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 11 May and 16 May.

■ Israeli Settlements

Caroline Lucas: [\[679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's statements criticising Israel's settlement expansion in influencing the Government of Israel to halt its expansion of settlements.

James Cleverly:

We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including settlement expansion within the West Bank. The UK regularly raises settlement expansion with the Israeli authorities. The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We continue to urge Israel to halt settlement expansion.

■ Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[662\]](#)

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 entry into the Al-Aqsa Mosque by armed Israeli police on the 10 May 2021.

James Cleverly:

The UK is clear that the violence against peaceful worshippers at the al-Aqsa mosque was unacceptable. Attacks on peaceful worshippers must stop. Respect for the historic Status Quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is important at all times, especially during religious festivals such as Ramadan. 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.

■ Meir Kahane

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the recent effect of the activities of organisations associated with the ideology of Meir Kahane on (a) incitement to violence in Israel, (b) violence against Palestinian people and their property, (c) regional security in the Middle East, and (d) the prospects for a lasting peace between two states of Israel and of Palestine.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing restrictions on the UK activities of organisations associated with the ideology of Meir Kahane.

James Cleverly:

Scenes of violence within Arab and Jewish Israelis in Green Line Israel are very worrying. We remain in close contact with Israeli authorities, and continue to urge them to take steps to reduce further violence. The Foreign Secretary did so with FM Ashkenazi on 11 May and 16 May.

■ Middle East: Security

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on Middle East security and stability of the (a) continued annexation by Israel of East Jerusalem, (b) application of policies by Israel to prevent construction of homes by Palestinians in East Jerusalem, (c) application of policies by Israel to evict Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem, and (d) application of policies by Israel to promote construction and possession of homes in East Jerusalem by Jewish settlers.

James Cleverly:

Our concerns about evictions of Palestinians from their homes are long-standing and well-known. I [Middle East Minister James Cleverly] spoke to the Israeli Ambassador and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London on the 11 May, to urge them to de-escalate, restore calm and to reiterate our position on this issue. I publicised on the 8 May outlining our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace.

■ Overseas Aid: Nutrition**Dr Dan Poulter:****[2257]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date his Department plans to publish a confirmed budget for future UK aid for nutrition.

Wendy Morton:

Information about our nutrition spend in the financial year 2021-22 will be publicly available through the Development Tracker in due course.

The portfolio, as agreed by the Foreign Secretary, will focus our investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money.

Dr Dan Poulter:**[2258]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what impact assessment his Department undertook prior to the decision to reduce UK aid funding for nutrition programmes.

Wendy Morton:

The FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against the challenging financial climate of the COVID-19 pandemic, after a cross-government review of how we spend ODA. The Foreign Secretary has agreed he will focus our investment and expertise where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum impact. Officials considered any impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities, and people from other protected groups, when developing advice for Ministers.

■ Overseas Aid: Research**Harriett Baldwin:****[703]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to reinstate research programmes which have been discontinued as a result of a reduction to Official Development Assistance (ODA) when ODA returns to 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income; and what steps he is taking to mitigate the effect of temporary reductions in funding to those programmes.

Nigel Adams:

We have prioritised our aid to be more strategic and remain a force for good across the world. Following a thorough review, the FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate caused by COVID-19. FCDO will now work through what this means for individual research programmes, in line with the priorities we have identified

While we recognise some programmes will close, this will be done in a measured and responsible way, working closely with our delivery partners. We will return to spending 0.7 per cent as soon as the financial climate allows. All FCDO teams will now plan their work based on the budget that has been allocated to them. We will

discuss specifics with each individual project. Budgets for 2022/23 and beyond will be determined through the spending review process later this year.

■ **Oveseas Aid: Mortality Rates**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[2403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department made an assessment (a) before and (b) after the decision to reduce UK ODA spending from 2021 of the potential effect of the reduction in UK's Official Development Assistance budget on mortality rates.

Wendy Morton:

The aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, after a cross-government review of how we spend ODA. The Foreign Secretary has agreed he will focus our investment and expertise where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum impact. Officials considered any impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities, and people from other protected groups, when developing advice for Ministers. Standalone impact assessments on mortality rates were not carried out, given the multiple overlapping scenarios.

■ **West Bank: Demolition**

Caroline Lucas:

[678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 185340, West Bank: Demolition, whether the UK collects data on the (a) number and (b) cost of the UK-funded humanitarian aid structures demolished or seized by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises the demolition of Palestinian property with the Government of Israel, including over the repeated confiscation and demolition of donor-funded assistance and structures. We work closely with key partners to monitor any incidents. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Imran Ahmad Khan:****[540]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of digital exclusion on the delivery of remote NHS mental health services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department has made no such assessment.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with the NHS Confederation and the Association of Mental Health Providers to develop a guide on digital inclusion in mental health which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsconfed.org/resources/2020/12/digital-inclusion-guide>

Local efforts to tackle digital exclusion have been supported by additional capital funding, and the launch of the Attend Anywhere video consultation platform to ensure that staff and service users have the technology they need. NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked integrated care systems to develop digitally-enabled care pathways in ways which increase inclusion, including reviewing new primary, outpatient and mental health digitally-enabled care pathways.

The 2021/22 NHS Operational Planning Guidance, asked health systems to ensure providers offer face-to-face care to patients who cannot use remote services and to ensure more complete data collection on consultation mediums is carried out.

Imran Ahmad Khan:**[541]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of remote mental health services on patient outcomes.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Data on access to mental health services on people with mental health conditions is collated in the Mental Health Services Dataset and the Improving access to Psychological Therapies dataset. While both these datasets are able to record the consultation medium and show increased use of remote consultations for people in contact with services, it is too early to determine the overall effect of this change on service users and outcomes.

Imran Ahmad Khan:**[543]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to help ensure that people are safeguarded when accessing NHS mental health services through (a) computer programmes, (b) video calls and (c) telephones.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement published guidance for digital mental health services to support their response to the pandemic, which included the importance of safeguarding. This guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhsconfed.org/resources/2020/12/digital-inclusion-guide>

■ Asthma: Health Services**Liz Twist:****[1362]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Asthma UK's report, Asthma Care in a Crisis, Annual Asthma Survey 2020, what plans he has to improve the percentage of people with asthma who are receiving all elements of basic asthma care.

Jo Churchill:

The content of the Quality Outcomes Framework (QOF) asthma review, which ensures all general practitioner practices establish and maintain a register of patients with an asthma diagnosis, has been amended to incorporate the key elements of basic asthma care positively associated with better patient outcomes and self-management, including:

- An assessment of asthma control;
- A recording of the number of exacerbations;
- An assessment of inhaler technique; and
- A written personalised asthma action plan.

The QOF for 2021/22 has been implemented from April 2021 with these updated indicators for asthma.

■ Bereavement Counselling**Rachael Maskell:****[2364]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that bereavement services are provided in (a) York and (b) England as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 20 May 2021]: A wide range of bereavement services will continue to be available across England, including York. Since March 2020, the Government has given over £10.2 million to mental health charities, including bereavement support charities, to support adults and children struggling with their mental wellbeing due to the impact of COVID-19. We will continue to work closely with bereavement services across England to ensure support is available.

Breast Cancer: Screening**Anthony Browne:** [915]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering mammography screening on a biennial basis instead of a three-year interval.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is not currently considering the potential merits of offering mammography screening on a biennial basis instead of the current three-year interval. The NHS Breast Screening Programme is currently focussed on inviting all eligible women to participate in breast screening for screening that may have been delayed due to COVID-19.

A proposal to change the current screening interval from three yearly to biennial would be for the UK NSC to consider through its programme modification proposal process, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process>

Cancer: Havering**Andrew Rosindell:** [628]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the additional resources required to treat the backlog of cancer diagnoses and treatment in Havering.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no specific assessment.

Nationally, the Government confirmed in the Spending Review 2020 an additional £3 billion for the National Health Service on top of the long-term settlement, to support the NHS recovery from the impact of COVID-19. Cancer patients will continue to be prioritised within the NHS and will benefit from approximately £1 billion to begin tackling the elective backlog.

We are using capacity in the private sector and rapid diagnostic centre pathways to build on the 21 cancer alliances across England who have arrangements in place for surgical hubs.

Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Government: Finance**Sarah Olney:** [823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential long-term economic merits of increasing core funding for (a) local authorities and (b) Clinical Commissioning Groups for services that support families from conception to age two.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: We have made no recent assessment.

Local authorities receive funding to commission services that provide support to families from conception to the age of two. The public health grant to local authorities in England will increase from £3.279 billion in 2020/21 to £3.324 billion in 2021/22, an increase of 1% in cash terms. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are allocated funding from NHS England using the CCG funding allocation formula, which takes into consideration attributes of its local population to assess the level of need.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Charlotte Nichols:

[1403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the surge in the Indian covid-19 variant while ensuring that social distancing restrictions can continue to ease.

Jo Churchill:

Additional rapid response measures will be implemented in areas where clusters of cases have been detected to stop further spread. These measures include:

- enhanced testing and contact tracing, including enhanced community and surge testing in areas defined by the local authorities and regional teams;
- increased genome sequencing of positive cases;
- increased community engagement, including ensuring that messages are accessible in languages that are used by communities;
- working closely with communities and community leaders to ensure that individuals are supported to test and self-isolate; and
- ensuring access to vaccination in the age and risk groups currently prioritised for vaccination and encouraging uptake.

■ **Coronavirus: Health Services**

Paul Bristow:

[2468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with non-emergency patient service providers on the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on their workload.

Edward Argar:

We have had no recent discussions.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Justin Madders:

[1099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department monitors in advance of adding or removing a company from the Government's approved list of providers for covid-19 testing.

Jo Churchill:

Private testing providers must meet the minimum standards for COVID-19 testing services for international arrivals, including being at the relevant stage of United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) process. The minimum standards are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/testing-on-day-2-and-day-8-for-international-arrivals>

Laboratories are required to show that they meet minimum standards before delivering testing. This evidence is assessed by UKAS at 'stage one', laboratories or their partner providers who evidence they meet standards are added to the GOV.UK list. UKAS accreditation provides an assurance of the competence, impartiality and integrity of laboratories.

Justin Madders:**[1100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the provision of a courier collection service for covid-19 testing companies is a requirement for inclusion on the Government's approved list of covid-19 testing companies for people returning to the UK from overseas.

Jo Churchill:

A courier collection service is not a requirement. However, we are working alongside test providers and delivery providers to ensure that delivery systems used are both timely and reliable.

Justin Madders:**[1101]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the public health regulations on quarantining when re-entering the UK from abroad, whether it is his policy that people are permitted to leave their homes to post their day two and day eight covid-19 tests.

Jo Churchill:

International arrivals who are quarantining at home are permitted to leave their house in order to post their COVID-19 test or attend a testing site. They must travel directly to and from the testing site or priority post box and avoid public transport where possible.

John McDonnell:**[597]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he make an urgent assessment of the quality of the services provided by the company, 001Doctor.uk, listed on the Government's website as a provider of tests under the Government's quarantine procedures.

Jo Churchill:

001 Doctor is not listed as a provider of quarantine testing.

Steve Reed:**[743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests shipped in the last 12 months have produced a recorded result.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Between 28 May 2020 to 28 April 2021 the total number of polymerase chain reaction tests which produced a recorded result was 8,726,870 test results.

The total number of lateral flow device tests which recorded a result between 22 October 2020 and 28 April 2021 in England was 63,852,593.

Feryal Clark:[\[927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the performance of (a) 001 Doctor and (b) other private companies included on the list of providers approved by the Government to offer covid-19 testing services.

Jo Churchill:

001 Doctor is not listed as a provider of quarantine testing.

Those providers listed on the GOV.UK list have demonstrated compliance with the relevant minimum standards for their commercial provision of testing, this includes undergoing the three-staged United Kingdom Accreditation Service process if they are providing sample collection and/or test analysis services.

The Department is continuing to monitor each provider supplying testing for international arrivals, including assessment of their delivery, customer service and testing services.

■ Coronavirus: Sports**Munira Wilson:**[\[466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department used when determining the timing for when spectators will be permitted to watch grassroots sports under Step 3 of the Government's roadmap for the easing of covid-19 restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has made no such decision. This is a matter for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Cabinet Office.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Jim Shannon:**[\[1061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the level of protection given by each of the covid-19 vaccines available.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England publishes weekly COVID-19 vaccine surveillance reports which include the latest evidence on vaccine effectiveness against different outcomes, which is estimated by comparing rates of disease in vaccinated individuals to rates in unvaccinated individuals. The reports provide a summary of evidence on vaccine effectiveness against different outcomes for Pfizer/BioNTech and

Oxford/AstraZeneca, including symptomatic disease, hospitalisation, mortality, infection and transmission. The latest report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report>

Darren Jones: [1166]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to (a) prepare for and (b) procure covid-19 booster vaccine doses for variants of concern.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are preparing for a Covid-19 booster vaccination programme and planning for several potential scenarios. Final decisions on the timing and scope of the programme will be taken later this year, in line with results from key clinical studies. Any decision will be informed by independent advice from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation.

■ Food Banks: Infant Foods

Sarah Olney: [1151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish clearer guidance on the (a) collection and (b) distribution of milk formulas at food banks.

Jo Churchill:

Food banks are independent, charitable organisations and the Government does not have any role in their operation. Decisions about which donations to accept and make available to food bank users are therefore a matter for food bank providers. There is strict legislation currently in place in the form of the overarching Food for Specific Groups legislation (Retained Regulation No 609/2013) and specifically Retained Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/127. They regulate, labelling and marketing of infant formulae and follow-on formulae.

■ Gender Recognition: Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding was allocated to gender dysphoria services in (a) England, (b) each NHS England area, (c) Yorkshire and (d) York in each year since 2010.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held in the format requested.

■ Health Services: Seasonal Workers

Apsana Begum: [913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the level of healthcare that would be available for migrants who come to the UK on the Seasonal Workers Pilot.

Edward Argar:

The Department has made no such assessment.

■ **HIV Infection: Disease Control**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the Government has made on meeting its target to have no new HIV transmissions by 2030.

Jo Churchill:

We are developing a Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and HIV Action Plan on reaching the 2030 target, which we plan to publish in 2021. We are making a good progress towards this target and between 2014 and 2019, there was a 34% reduction in new HIV diagnoses in England.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[2220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with (a) the Terrence Higgins Trust, (b) the National AIDS Trust and (c) the Elton John AIDS Foundation to inform the HIV Action Plan.

Jo Churchill:

The Department regularly engages with the Terrence Higgins Trust, the National AIDS Trust and the Elton John AIDS Foundation as part of our work on HIV. An oversight group has been established to support the development of the HIV Action Plan and representatives from these groups are members. The first meeting of the HIV oversight group was held in May 2021. These stakeholders are also members of the External Advisory Group for Sexual Health, Reproductive Health and HIV which provides the government with external independent advice and expertise.

■ **Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review**

Christian Wakeford:

[\[1228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety (IMMDS) Review and the publication of its report in July 2020, how many (a) groups and (b) sub groups have been established in respect of (i) sodium valproate, (ii) medications in pregnancy, (iii) the IMMDS Review and (iv) the recommendations of that review since the publication of the valproate toolkit in 2015.

Christian Wakeford:

[\[1229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review's patient reference group was established with the aim of discussing the (a) three interventions in that review, valproate, mesh and primodos, and (b) future of patients and their welfare within the health system.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department has not established any groups or sub-groups on sodium valproate or medications in pregnancy.

The Department has established a Patient Reference Group (PRG) consisting of patients and patients' representatives, including those involved in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety (IMMDS) Review and those with a wider interest in patient safety. The purpose of the PRG is to discuss all recommendations set out in the Review and to provide challenge, advice and scrutiny to the work to develop the Government's response. The scope of the PRG does not extend beyond the recommendations in the Review.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has established groups on sodium valproate and medications in pregnancy. The Sodium Valproate Expert Working Group of the Commission on Human Medicines was convened in February 2014 to advise the Commission on Human Medicines on the risks of valproate in pregnancy and on measures to minimise risk. The MHRA convened the Valproate Stakeholder Network in January 2016 to support communications around the valproate toolkit to raise awareness among women of the risks. It is now focused on consistent UK-wide implementation of the valproate Pregnancy Prevention Programme and monitoring compliance.

In July 2019 the Commission on Human Medicines established a new Expert Working Group on Optimising Data on Medicines used in Pregnancy. The Expert Group was to advise on better ways to collect and monitor data on the safety of medicines during pregnancy. The report and recommendations of the Expert Group were published in January 2021.

NHS England and Improvement has established groups on sodium valproate and the IMMDS Review. The National Director of Patient Safety set up a clinically-led Valproate Safety Implementation Group in June 2020, with 3 further subgroups.

The Pelvic Floor Health Oversight Group continues the work of previously established stakeholder groups responsible for setting and communicating the conditions of the national pause on vaginal mesh insertion procedures in July 2018 and has also been considering the pelvic mesh related recommendations from the IMMDS Review. A subgroup has also been established to support delivery against data and registry related conditions of the national pause and is considering data related actions from the Review on pelvic mesh. An expert reference group steering the establishment of perinatal pelvic health services is also considering actions related to postnatal pelvic physiotherapy from the Review.

■ Mental Health Services

Robert Halfon:

[1042]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to work with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy to improve mental health provision.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise the vital role played by the British Association for Counselling and Psychology (BACP) in improving mental health support. The BACP has responded to

our consultation on reforms to the Mental Health Act 1983 and we are now considering these responses.

■ **Peripheral Arterial Disease**

Emma Hardy:

[2425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to help people with peripheral arterial disease and chronic limb-threatening ischaemia to gain prompt access to limb-saving NHS services; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are preparing guidance on the full restoration of peripheral arterial disease and chronic limb-threatening ischaemia along with other vascular services, which will be issued to the National Health Service shortly.

■ **Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[2407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 22 March 2021 to Question 167938, on Coronavirus: Screening, how many covid-19 cases there have been in early years and nursery settings since March 2020.

Jo Churchill:

Information is not available prior to January 2021 as test results were not recorded by education profession or setting. Since January to 9 May there were over 1,074,215 test results from the early years asymptomatic testing programme and of these 1,155 tests were positive.

■ **Prescription Drugs**

Liz Twist:

[1365]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 179363, what steps his Department is taking to expedite guidance on medicines that have taken longer than the 90 days to receive final guidance from NICE; and whether his Department has plans to prioritise appraisals of medicines for clinically extremely vulnerable groups.

Jo Churchill:

The 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access commits the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to publishing recommendations on all newly licensed treatments within 90 days of marketing authorisation wherever possible.

NICE may not always be able to meet this timescale for individual topics for a range of reasons, including where companies request a longer appraisal timescale. In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, NICE adapted its priorities to support the health and care system at a time of unprecedented pressure. This involved pausing

the publication of topics that were not COVID-19 related or regarded as therapeutically critical during the period of March to June 2020.

■ Shingles: Vaccination

Richard Fuller:

[\[2250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to reassess the age groups targeted in the shingles vaccination programme to include people over the age of 60.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom's vaccination programmes are based on expert review of the evidence and advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). The JCVI made an initial recommendation in June 2019 that the vaccine for shingles was offered to those aged 60 years old and over, which had triggered further analysis. The Department is currently conducting further analysis and exploring the implications of delivering this recommendation with health system partners.

■ Test and Trace Support Payment

Justin Madders:

[\[291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications have been made to the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme (a) in total and (b) that were successful; and what the (i) range of payments, (ii) mean payment and (iii) total amount paid out is since that scheme began.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Lower tier and unitary local authorities provide information to the Department on numbers of applications made to and payments made under the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme. This data is being collated and validated. All payments made under the scheme are at a flat rate of £500.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Dawn Butler:

[\[1017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) publish the criteria used to determine whether to place countries on the red list of travel ban countries; and (b) provide financial support to low-income families returning from newly added red list countries to cover costs incurred whilst self-isolating in Government-approved hotel quarantine facilities.

Jo Churchill:

Decisions to place countries on the 'red list' are taken by Ministers informed by evidence including the Joint Biosecurity Centre's analysis as well as other relevant information about the risk of the spread of variants. The methodology for risk assessments that inform ministerial decisions is available at the following link:

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

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.

Ian Mearns: [682]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to reduce the cost of PCR testing for people travelling for the purposes of visiting loved ones and family.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Since requirements were introduced for international travel testing, the costs have fallen significantly. We are committed to working with the travel industry and private testing providers to reduce the cost of this testing.

HOME OFFICE

■ Action Fraud: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [724]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Action Fraud funding; and what plans she has to change funding provisions prior to the start of the procurement process for the new version of Action Fraud.

Kevin Foster:

As part of the 2020 Spending Review, the Government committed a further £63m to the Home Office to tackle economic crime.

This is in addition to the £10.5m funding the Home Office commits each year to the City of London Police to run the existing Action Fraud and National Fraud Intelligence Bureau services. However, we will continue to explore all options to source funding for tackling fraud including the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Asylum: Housing

Chi Onwurah: [725]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whose responsibility it is to arrange and provide cleaning materials, tools and services in accommodation provided to asylum seekers.

Kevin Foster:

For those asylum seekers who are accommodated in Initial Accommodation or other contingency accommodation the relevant providers are responsible for the cleaning of all communal areas, along with the service and maintenance of the accommodation.

In more permanent dispersal accommodation providers are responsible for the maintenance of the accommodation, and any problems with the accommodation should be reported to the provider using the AIRE service. Asylum seekers in this type of accommodation receive a weekly support payment to buy essential items, which includes cleaning products.

■ Forced Marriage

Munira Wilson:

[1202]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the consultation on Preventing and tackling forced marriage, published 15 November 2018, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of a placing a mandatory reporting duty of forced marriages upon safeguarding professionals.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK is a world-leader in the fight to end forced marriage, with our dedicated Forced Marriage Unit leading efforts to combat it at home and abroad.

We made forced marriage a criminal offence in 2014 to better protect victims and send a clear message that this practice is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the UK. And in 2017 we introduced lifelong anonymity for victims of forced marriage to encourage more victims of this hidden crime to come forward.

We are considering our response to the public consultation. The consultation also sought views on how guidance on forced marriage could be improved and strengthened and we are updating our guidance products to reflect the findings.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Apsana Begum:

[895]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of (a) EEA Family Permit Applications and (b) EU Settlement Scheme family permits have not met her Department's service standards in the most recent period for which data is available.

Kevin Foster:

The published service standards for EEA and EUSS family permits states:

If you are applying for an EEA family permit or an EUSS family permit you will get a decision as soon as possible after proving your identity and provided your documents.

This can be found at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk#if-you-want-to-join-family-in-the-uk

Therefore, there is no time-bound service standard attached to these routes.

The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance visas in the ' [Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#) '. Data on EEA Family Permit and EU Settlement

Scheme family permit applications and outcomes are published in table Vis_D01 and Vis_D02 of the entry clearance visa detailed data sets which can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/managed-migration-datasets

Information on how to use the datasets can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook.

■ Lisa Smith

Jim Shannon: [2991]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will reconsider an appeal to the decision in respect of Lisa Smith who won an appeal against a ban on entering Northern Ireland.

Kevin Foster:

The Government is disappointed with the outcome of the preliminary hearing in this case and is considering its options for appealing the decision.

It would be inappropriate to comment further in light of the ongoing legal proceedings.

■ Visas: Married People

Catherine West: [1146]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of spouse visa applications were processed within her Department's service standard of 8 weeks in Quarter 1 of 2021.

Kevin Foster:

This information requested is routinely published as part of UKVI Transparency data.

The current data is available for Quarter 4 of 2020 and can be found in the attached link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visas-and-citizenship-data-february-2021>

Data for Q1 2021 will be published in the next transparency data release.

■ Visas: Turkey

Sarah Olney: [1153]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to negotiate a replacement scheme for the Turkish Businessperson Visa.

Kevin Foster:

Our new points-based system prioritises what a person has to offer the UK, rather than their nationality. It provides Turkish nationals the same opportunities to live and work in the UK as nationals of any other country, including those seeking to establish themselves in business in the UK.

The Government is not seeking to introduce any country-specific elements to these arrangements at this stage.

The entry of Turkish nationals for the purposes of trade and investment may be considered in the context of any future trade negotiations between the UK and Turkey, but no such negotiations have yet commenced.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[676]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of covid-19 restrictions on life and work in the UK for people on a two-year Tier 5 Youth Mobility scheme visa; if she will make it her policy to accept applications to extend the period of validity for those affected and consider them on a case-by-case basis; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Government's position on visa extensions in the early stages of this pandemic was to prevent people who were legally in the UK from being subject to enforcement action at a point when international travel was largely unavailable.

Since 1 September 2020 any individual who intends to leave the UK, is not able to do so as a result of Covid-19, and who holds an immigration status which expires before 30 June 2021 may request additional time to stay, known as 'exceptional assurance'. More information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents> ”

Those who were unable to travel to the UK on their Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) visa because of travel restrictions are able to apply for another full 2 year YMS visa. Those currently in the UK on a YMS visa can switch to another visa from within the UK where they meet the conditions of the route.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Apsana Begum:

[911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make a further extension to the Building Safety Fund so that remediation works can follow a contract, rather than design and procurement route.

Christopher Pincher:

It is the responsibility of the applicant to the Building Safety Fund to choose an appropriate procurement model to ensure that the remediation works are carried out in a timely manner. The Department is working closely with applicants to ensure that works take place as quickly as possible and we are also providing expert construction

consultation support to actively engage and advise applicants on procurement and project management.

■ **Building Safety Fund: Enfield**

Feryal Clark:

[929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what average time it has taken for his Department to complete its assessments and decision-making on Building Safety Fund applications relating to Enfield.

Christopher Pincher:

The rate at which applications to the Building Safety Fund are progressed will be dependent on the readiness of building owners to provide the required information. Following registration, MHCLG contacts building owners or the responsible person to ask for supporting evidence for their technical eligibility for the fund. This will include evidence of the height of the building and materials that are in place. It is disappointing that over 800 of the total of 2820 registrations to the Building Safety Fund have been unable to provide any of this basic information. We have engaged with registrants and industry bodies to understand the challenges they have in meeting our deadlines and criteria requirements. To address their concerns we have extended the deadlines for the fund to the end of June 2021, giving building owners more time to submit full applications but still reflecting the importance of these critical safety works. We are also providing expert construction consultation support to actively engage with those planning and undertaking remediation work under the Building Safety Fund to increase the pace of remediation. We expect all buildings with an existing application to be started on site by September 2021.

■ **Buildings: Insulation**

Apsana Begum:

[903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether buildings that were not registered with the Building Safety Fund between 1 June to 31 July 2020 will be eligible for the additional £3.5 billion of funding for cladding remediation.

Christopher Pincher:

The announcement on 10 February of an additional £3.5 billion of funding provides assurance for residents that all eligible applications to the Building Safety Fund will be able to proceed. We will publish more details on how the additional funding will work alongside the existing funds soon.

■ **Clarion Housing Group**

Apsana Begum:

[904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, If he will ask the Regulator of Social Housing to provide the number of tenants or leaseholders of Clarion Housing Group it had communications with as part of its recent investigation into

that organisation's repairs services before it concluded there had been no breach of the Homes Standard.

Apsana Begum: [905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the recent investigation into Clarion Housing Group, for what reason it is his Department's policy that social landlords have 20 working days to respond to any repair that is not deemed an immediate risk to the health and safety of the tenant.

Apsana Begum: [906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his department has had discussions with Clarion Housing Group Board member, Lord Barwell, in the last 12 months about the Regulator of Social Housing's investigation into that organisation's repairs services and housing management.

Apsana Begum: [907]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to improve the regulation of under-performing housing associations to provide greater protection for tenants and leaseholders and increased involvement in the governance structures of those organisations.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to ensuring a better deal for tenants. In November 2020 we published "The Charter for Social Housing Residents", which sets out clearly what every social housing resident in England should expect of their landlord. The Charter will deliver a transformation of the social housing regulatory regime, creating proactive consumer regulation and rebalancing the relationship between landlord and tenant. It will ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly and fairly, improve the quality of social homes and empower tenants.

In the Charter we are also committed to deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme to support resident's effective engagement with landlords. We are also improving the complaints process for tenants; we have strengthened the Housing Ombudsman's powers and increased their resources to help improve performance and delivery of services, along with other reforms such as speeding up access to the Housing Ombudsman by removing the Democratic Filter.

With regards to the Regulator of Social Housing's investigation into Clarion Housing Group, the regulator is operationally independent, and Government does not interfere with how it regulates. Its general approach and how it ensures its standards are being met are set out in its guidance 'Regulating the Standards'. I understand that as part of its recent investigation into Clarion Housing Group's repairs service, the Regulator met with councillors who were raising concerns on behalf of residents. The Regulator kept the councillors updated on progress throughout the process. The Regulator did not meet directly with tenants or leaseholders as part of the investigation. The Department has not discussed the Regulator's investigation into Clarion Housing Group with Lord Barwell.

Housing associations are independent organisations and are in charge of setting their own procedures for tenants to report repairs and complaints. By law, landlords need to respond within a reasonable timeframe, which will depend on the severity of the repair. The 20 working days referred to is a local, i.e. landlord, policy not a departmental policy.

■ Council Tax Benefits: Private Roads

Nick Fletcher:

[\[1219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will work with local authorities to introduce a council tax discount for residents whose properties are on private roads.

Luke Hall:

The Government does not have plans to introduce a new council tax discount for residents whose properties are on private roads. Council tax contributes to the cost of delivering a wide range of local services, including adult social care, children's services and police and fire services. The council tax system contains a wide range of discounts and exemptions to reflect personal circumstances and local authorities also have discretion to offer discounts where they consider it appropriate.

■ Freehold: Service Charges

Dr Andrew Murrison:

[\[1015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to include in the legislative proposals on housing announced in the Queen's Speech reforms to provide freeholders on private and mixed tenure estates with (a) equivalent rights to leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of estate rent charges and (b) rights to apply to the First-tier Tribunal to appoint a new manager to manage the provision of services covered by estate rent charges.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. Where people pay estate rent charges it is not appropriate that these homeowners have limited rights to challenge these costs.

That is why the Government intends to legislate to give freehold homeowners who pay estate rent charges the right to challenge their reasonableness and to go to the tribunal to appoint a new management company if necessary.

We will also consider the option of introducing a Right to Manage for residential freeholders once we have considered the Law Commission's report and recommendations on changes to the Right to Manage for leaseholders.

The Government has brought forward legislation in the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill to set ground rents on newly created leases to a genuine 'peppercorn' rate of only one peppercorn per year or effectively zero financial value. This will be the first part of seminal two-part legislation to implement reforms in this Parliament.

■ Hate Crime: Asians

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[1180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Ministry, Housing and Local Government, what steps he is taking to tackle the level of focussed hate crime targeted at Asian people.

Luke Hall:

We are clear that all forms of hatred, including that based on race, are unacceptable and will be tackled. We have a strong legal framework in place to deal with the perpetrators of hate crime, and we have asked the Law Commission to undertake a full review of the coverage and approach of current hate crime legislative provisions, which will further strengthen this.

The Government is now considering a range of options to tackle hate crime beyond the current hate crime action plan. We are working with other departments and civil society partners to explore possible approaches, and ensuring a range of views from communities are taken into consideration.

■ High Rise Flats: Balconies

Apsana Begum: [\[909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the projected cost of remediation works to balconies on blocks.

Christopher Pincher:

An Economic Impact Assessment was published alongside the draft Building Safety Bill on 20 July 2020 which includes estimates of the average costs per building for addressing safety remediation in high rise buildings, including balconies.

Apsana Begum: [\[910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make additional funding available to leaseholders who are being asked to pay for the costs of remediating their balconies to make them compliant with fire safety regulations.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Fund will cover all works directly related to the removal and replacement of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems, this will include costs to remediate balconies where they are integral to the cladding system. This is because unsafe cladding acts as an accelerant to fire spread, and funding will remove the biggest obstacle to remediation proceeding. Works which are not directly related to the remediation of unsafe cladding systems will not be covered by public funding. Government guidance is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners and the consolidated advice note published in January 2020 provides information to building owners on the actions they should take to address the risk of fire spread from external wall systems including balconies.

■ Housing Associations: Service Charges

Apsana Begum:

[897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is his Department's policy that housing associations should provide full annual independent audit of service charges with the report published and available to the public and fully itemised bills accompanied with validated receipts.

Eddie Hughes:

The Social Housing White Paper sets out clear transparency requirements for housing associations, with a clear expectation that all social housing residents should be able to know how their landlord is performing. As part of this, the Government has committed to introduce a new access to information scheme for social housing tenants of housing associations, as well as setting expectations for landlords to provide a clear breakdown of how their income is being spent.

The Government further believes that the service charge requests of all freeholders, regardless of who they might be, should be transparent and communicated effectively, and that there should be a clear route to challenge or redress if things go wrong. A summary of leaseholders' rights and responsibilities must currently be provided with the demand for charges.

The Government established an independent working group chaired by Lord Best, to consider transparency of fees and charges alongside the regulation of property agents. The working group published its final report to Government (see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-property-agents-working-group-report>) and we are considering the report's recommendations.

■ Leasehold: Fire Prevention

Apsana Begum:

[902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what meetings he has had in the last year with (a) leaseholder-run groups, (b) groups that directly represent leaseholders and (c) leaseholders living in blocks which are not fire-safe.

Christopher Pincher:

Ministers regularly meet with leaseholders and their representative groups.

Details of Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on the Gov.uk website:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956236/Ministerial_meetings_July_to_Sept_2020.csv/preview

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[1029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. member for West Lancashire of 17 March

2021 on West Lancashire Borough Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for 2010, reference ZA52459.

Christopher Pincher:

A response will be issued shortly.

■ **Planning: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

Luke Pollard:

[\[847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the ability of the proposals in the Planning for the Future White paper to curb development on greenfield land within (a) AONB boundaries and (b) the setting of AONBs.

Luke Pollard:

[\[848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to require local authorities to publish annual information on the number of housing planning applications (a) submitted and (b) granted for sites (i) within the boundaries of and (ii) in the setting of AONBs.

Luke Pollard:

[\[849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to allow local authorities to prioritise small scale affordable and social homes for local people on sustainable AONB sites.

Christopher Pincher:

There are no immediate plans to require local planning authorities to publish data on the number of planning applications and permissions within AONBs. However, a key aim of our planning reforms is to digitalise planning services so more data like this can become available.

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, and the White Paper does not propose to change this.

The Government is committed to delivering affordable homes for local people. In our recent response to the consultation on Changes to the Current Planning System, we committed to review and update existing Planning Practice Guidance to assist local authorities in delivering rural exception sites. These are small sites which can come forward and provide local people with affordable housing in areas such as AONBs.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Housing Benefit**

Feryal Clark:

[\[1216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to tackle discrimination against people claiming housing benefit in the private rented sector; and what recourse is open to people affected by that discrimination.

Eddie Hughes:

Blanket bans against tenants in receipt of benefits have no place in a fair and modern housing market. The Government has worked with the lettings industry to agree an approach to end this practice. Major lettings portals Zoopla and Rightmove agreed to stop the use of 'No DSS' adverts on their websites, and several major lenders agreed to remove restrictions on mortgages which prevented landlords from letting to tenants on benefits. We will continue to encourage landlords to look at all tenants on an individual basis. Current legislation prohibits acts of discrimination against individuals on the basis of a number of protected characteristics. Where a prospective tenant believes that they have been discriminated against, they should seek independent legal advice or contact Citizens' Advice for free, impartial advice.

Additionally, it is a legal requirement for letting and managing agents in England to belong to one of the two Government approved redress schemes. If a prospective tenant feels that a letting agent is acting unfairly or continues to offer a poor service, they can raise a formal complaint.

The Government is committed to delivering a fairer and more effective rental market for all tenants, including our intention to abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions and introduce a lifetime deposit to ease the burden when moving house. More details will follow in a White Paper published later this year, which will be informed by engagement with stakeholders.

■ Refuges**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[1181]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the level of demand is for refuge spaces in England; and how many refuge spaces there are.

Eddie Hughes:

MHCLG does not centrally hold this data

The Government have introduced a new statutory duty on local authorities within the Domestic Abuse Act to ensure that all victims, including children, have access to safety and support within safe accommodation when they need it.

Since 2014 we have invested £205 million in support within domestic abuse safe accommodation services – including £125 million for the new local authority duty in 2021/22.

We continue to work closely with local authorities and the sector to ensure appropriate provision is in place.

■ Social Rented Housing: Service Charges**Apsana Begum:****[898]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of a cap on service charge rises at the rate of CPI inflation for social housing tenants.

Christopher Pincher:

All service charges must be set in line with the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 with service charges payable only to the extent that the costs have been reasonably incurred. The reasonableness of the service charge a social housing landlord is seeking will depend on the nature of the works required and other contributing factors.

The Government's policy statement on rents for social housing (published in February 2019) encourages registered providers of social housing to keep increases for services charges within CPI+1%, to help keep charges affordable.

For tenants in Affordable Rent properties the calculation of their gross rent includes service charges. Gross rent for these properties is capped at 80% of market rent.

Social housing tenants have the ability to apply to the Property Chamber of the First Tier Tribunal for a determination where they do not believe the charges are reasonable, and must be consulted when major works are being proposed.

■ Thurrock Council: Finance**John Spellar:**[\[979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to his Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 178793 on the Prudential Framework, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the prudential framework for dealing with investments made by Thurrock Council.

Luke Hall:

Local authorities are responsible for their own commercial investment strategies and are accountable to their electorate. Nevertheless, in making investments, authorities must ensure they comply with the Prudential Framework, including the four statutory codes.

Recent changes to the operation of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) are designed to stop local authorities from accessing PWLB borrowing if they are planning on undertaking investments primarily for yield. Government is also working closely with CIPFA on its revised statutory Prudential Code. Further, Government is currently reviewing all elements of the Prudential Framework to ensure they are fit for purpose.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Northern Ireland**Claire Hanna:**[\[959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that allocations of funding to Northern Ireland under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund take into account the level of other funding streams to that nation.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need, such as ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and rural and coastal communities, and for people who face labour market barriers.

We will ramp up funding so that total domestic UK-wide funding will at least match EU receipts reaching around £1.5 billion a year.

The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework later this year and confirm the funding profile at the next Spending Review.

JUSTICE**■ Bedford Prison: Standards****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Report on a scrutiny visit to HMP Bedford by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 2 February and 16-17 March 2021, published in March 2021, what steps he is taking to (a) improve prison safety, (b) improve staff-prisoner relationships, (c) restore key work support, (d) restore effective offender management support with progression, (e) restore direct support aimed at promoting positive family relationships, (f) increase the speed of the implementation of in-cell telephones and (g) increase the uptake of education in HMP Bedford.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice welcomes the findings of HMIP's report and takes the concerns raised seriously. The Inspectorate found positive practices during their visit, but we recognise that the establishment still has a long way to go.

We are committed to making all our prisons decent and safe for all those who live and work there. Further easing of the restrictions will enable us to work on embedding additional improvements. We will continue to ensure that action is taken to improve conditions for those in our prisons and their outcomes on release.

■ Deed Poll: LGBT People**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[1211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to exempt non-binary and transgender people from plans to only allow enrolled deed polls to be accepted as proof of name change.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[1212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to exempt transgender and non-binary individuals from publication of their former and current first names in The Gazette.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[1213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what consultation there has been with groups representing transgender and non-binary people on plans to only allow enrolled deed polls to be accepted as proof of name change.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[1214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Ministry of Justice, what consultation there has been with groups representing transgender and non-binary people on plans to include their former and current first names in The Gazette.

Chris Philp:

The Master of the Rolls has established a Judicial Working Group to review and revise the current regulations for the enrolled deed process.

The Group is looking at a number of aspects of the existing regulations, and one of the issues is the current requirement for name changes to be publicly advertised, as part of the process, in the London Gazette.

A proposal under consideration by the Group is that the regulations are reformed so that the court would have a discretion on the need for, or terms of, an advertisement where there are sensitivities about a name change being made public. Examples would be name changes to reflect changes in gender and binary identification, as well as to protect people who wish to change their name following an abusive relationship. Guidance to applicants is also being reviewed as part of the reform process.

The Group is also considering public interest issues where an advertisement would be desirable, for example to place on record a change of name by a registered offender.

Home Office Ministers have written to the Master of Rolls and the Lord Chief Justice requesting that the Group considers criminality in regard to the enrolled deed poll process. Once the Group has completed its work, we will consider whether it is necessary to amend existing Home Office guidance to better protect the public.

Should a change be made to the guidance, we will take careful consideration of the potential impacts of that amendment including for European Convention on Human Rights Article 8 rights and the protection of the people who have changed their name to avoid danger.

Current Home Office Use and Change of Name guidance sets out that where there is a need to protect persons from risk of harm, separate arrangements should be implemented which protect the identity of the person who is seeking to change their name.

In addition, the policy sets out that transgender foreign nationals whose national authorities do not recognise changes to names and/or gender in their passports or national identity cards will be able to obtain a Biometric Residence Permit in their acquired name and gender, providing the person can demonstrate they are using the acquired name and gender for all purposes.

■ Employment Tribunals Service

Marsha De Cordova:

[1199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) single Employment Tribunal claims and (b) multiple claimant Employment Tribunal cases are outstanding; and in each case how many include a claim for (i) equal pay and (ii) pregnancy-related detriment or dismissal.

Chris Philp:

The latest quarterly Tribunals Statistics can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2020.

Data on the volume of outstanding claims for single and multiple claims can be found in tab s.4 of the main tables. A further breakdown of outstanding claims to show the number of (i) equal pay and (ii) pregnancy related detriment or dismissal claims is not available.

Additional published information on outstanding caseload for single claims and multiple lead cases is detailed in weekly management information and can be found at the following link: www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-weekly-management-information-during-coronavirus-march-2020-to-april-2021.

■ Exeter Prison: Standards

Ms Lyn Brown:

[652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Report on HMP Exeter by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published in March 2021, what steps he is taking to (a) reduce staff turnover, (b) create better relationships between prisoners and staff, (c) address ethnic disparities in the perceptions of staff, and (d) address long-standing deficiencies in the care of prisoners at risk of self-harm or suicide.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice welcomes the findings of HMIP's scrutiny visit report published 27 April and takes the concerns raised seriously. The Inspectorate found improvements during the pandemic and since their last report, but we recognise that improvement is required.

We are committed to making all our prisons decent and safe for all those who live and work there. Further easing of the restrictions will enable us to work on embedding additional improvements. We will continue to ensure that action is taken to improve conditions for those in our prisons and their outcomes on release.

■ High Down Prison: Standards

Ms Lyn Brown:

[1037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Report on a scrutiny visit to HMP High Down by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (23 March and 7 – 8 April 2021), what steps he is taking to (a) improve the regularity and quality of prisoner welfare

checks, (b) improve the quality of support for those at risk of suicide and self-harm, (c) enable prisoners to receive a daily shower, (d) help ensure that equality and diversity work is completed, (e) improve the quality of healthcare in prisons, (f) help ensure that there is consistent leadership of those healthcare services, (g) tackle staff shortages in those healthcare services, (h) help ensure that prisoners have access to work as covid-19 risks reduce, (i) increase contact between prison offender managers and prisoners, (j) reduce the backlog of assessments of prisoners' risk and needs and (k) help ensure that calls of prisoners who require public protection monitoring are effectively managed.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice welcomes the findings of HMIP's report and takes the concerns raised seriously. The Inspectorate found positive practices during their visit, but we recognise that the establishment still has a long way to go. Some of the issues raised have been exacerbated by the impact of Covid 19 and are expected to improve as regime restrictions are lifted.

Measures to address some of the issues have already been initiated, such as a review of welfare checks and the implementation of a healthcare action plan agreed between HMP High Down, NHS England Commissioners and Healthcare Providers. Funding is also now in place for a new workshop that will provide additional activity places and will assist men in developing transferable skills for employment on release. Recruitment and training are being undertaken to fill vacancies and improve offender management processes such as public protection monitoring, risk assessment, and increased contact between prisoners and their Prison Offender Managers. Findings from HMIP Scrutiny Visits are followed up with each establishment 6 weeks following the HMIP visit and Prison Group Directors monitor progress locally in their areas.

We are committed to making all our prisons decent and safe for all those who live and work there. Further easing of the restrictions will enable us to work on embedding additional improvements. We will continue to ensure that action is taken to improve conditions for those in our prisons and their outcomes on release.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Interpreters**

Apsana Begum:

[\[899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, who provides the specific training course for interpreters to join his Department's register; whether that course is endorsed by a professional body; and whether the course content is standardised regardless of previous qualifications.

Apsana Begum:

[\[900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hours of experience is demanded as a minimum by his Department's Register for those who are (a) Level 1 public service interpreting (PSI) qualified, (b) Level 2 PSI qualified, (c) Level 3 PSI qualified, (d) Level 4 PSI qualified, (e) those without any form of public service qualification but who have

degree level qualifications in other disciplines such as philology and linguistics and (f) Level 6 PSI qualified.

Apsana Begum:

[901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Answer of 19 April 2021 to Question 176073, of the 59 who failed spot checks conducted since 1st January 2019 by The Language Shop; what level of qualification did those 59 people have which enabled them to appear on the MoJ register prior to those spot checks.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) is committed to ensuring the justice system is supported by a suite of high- quality language service contracts, that meet the needs of all those who require interpreters.

The MOJ does not directly employ interpreters. The MOJ commissions the services of suitably qualified interpreters through its contracted service providers, thebigword and Clarion Interpreting.

All interpreters regardless of qualifications are required to complete an induction programme. This is not an accredited piece of learning. It was created by the MOJ and The International School of Linguists (ISL) and is hosted by ISL for thebigword to meet the requirements of the MOJ.

The hours of experience required varies according to the complexity and type of language. This information is set out and can be found in the contract via the following link

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/975cb99e-fec6-430f-8f31-fd532a907137?p=@=UFQxbIRRPT0=NjJNT08>

A table showing the hours of experience required by qualification can be found below:

QUALIFICATIONS	EXPERIENCE REQUIRED	COMPLEXITY LEVEL
Enrolled on a Level 1, two-to-four week, course	100 hours of Interpretation Services in the relevant language	Standard
Level 1 public service interpreting (PSI) qualified	No minimum hours required	Standard
Level 2 PSI qualified	No minimum hours required	Standard
Level 3 PSI qualified	No minimum hours required	Standard
Level 4 PSI qualified	No minimum hours required	Standard
Those without any form of public service qualification but have degree level qualifications in other	100 hours of Interpretation Services in the relevant language	Complex

QUALIFICATIONS	EXPERIENCE REQUIRED	COMPLEXITY LEVEL
disciplines such as philology and linguistics		
Level 6 PSI qualified	No minimum hours required	Complex / Complex Written (DPSI Health & Lov Govt although Level 6, are only authorised for Complex; DPSI Law, DPI (Diploma in Police Interpreting) & DCI (Diploma in Community Interpreting ISL) are Complex Written)

Of the 59 language professionals who failed spot checks, three of the language professionals had two checks for different languages, so we have provided 62 results. Below is a table which breaks down the level of qualification the language professionals had to enable them to appear on the register prior to the spot checks.

QUALIFICATION LEVEL	NUMBER OF LANGUAGE PROFESSIONALS
Level 3	2
Level 6	39
Level 7	5
Basic interpreting, rare language or Partial qualification	16

■ National Association of Probation Officers: Public Expenditure

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with the trade union Napo on (a) his Department's submissions to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021 and (b) the overall size of his Department's spending allocation within the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.

Chris Philp:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has not yet confirmed the scope and nature of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021. In anticipation, the department has recently begun preparations for the Spending Review and will be considering the approach to engaging with external stakeholders over the coming months.

The department continues to engage regularly with key stakeholders, in which other relevant matters and funding more generally are discussed.

■ POA: Public Expenditure

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with representatives from the Prison Officers Association on (a) his Department's submissions to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021 and (b) the overall size of his Department's spending allocation within the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.

Chris Philp:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has not yet confirmed the scope and nature of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021. In anticipation, the department has recently begun preparations for the Spending Review and will be considering the approach to engaging with external stakeholders over the coming months.

The department continues to engage regularly with key stakeholders, in which other relevant matters and funding more generally are discussed.

■ Prison Governors Association: Public Expenditure

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with representatives from the Prison Governors Association on (a) his Department's submissions to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021 and (b) the overall size of his Department's spending allocation within the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.

Chris Philp:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has not yet confirmed the scope and nature of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021. In anticipation, the department has recently begun preparations for the Spending Review and will be considering the approach to engaging with external stakeholders over the coming months.

The department continues to engage regularly with key stakeholders, in which other relevant matters and funding more generally are discussed.

■ Prison Officers

Ian Lavery:

[\[1065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the average number of years of experience of serving prison officers.

Alex Chalk:

As at 31st March 2021 the average length of service, in years, held by all prison officers is given in the following table.

Table 1 – Band 3-5 Prison Officers ¹ in England and Wales average length of service ², as at 31st March 2021

NUMBER OF PRISON OFFICERS IN POST (Full Time Equivalent)	AVERAGE LENGTH CUMULATIVE OF LENGTH OF SERVICE SERVICE OF ALL ALL PRISON PRISON OFFICERS OFFICERS	
21,926	244,275	11.1

Notes to tables:

1. Band 3-5 Officers includes Band 3-4 / Prison Officers (incl. specialists), Band 4 / Supervising Officers, and Band 5 / Custodial Managers.
2. The length of service in HMPPS is calculated from most recent hire date. Where staff have transferred in from another Government Department or have transferred in through HMPPS taking over a function, length of service is calculated from entry to HMPPS.

Having experienced staff is vital to ensuring prisons remain safe, secure and decent. That's why we are investing £100m to improve safety and security in prisons, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence. This includes tough measures such as X-ray body scanners and phone blocking technology. Body-worn cameras and PAVA spray are being rolled out across the estate, alongside SPEAR personal safety training, to make officers' work safer. A retention working group including representation from HR and Psychology has been established to tackle both the national and local drivers of attrition, and each prison is being provided with a comprehensive report highlighting the reasons for high turnover, and additional support is then provided.

■ Prison Officers: Pay

Nadia Whittome:

[949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to review pay rates for prison officers who joined the Prison Service (a) before and (b) after 2010.

Alex Chalk:

Prison Officer pay rates are reviewed annually through the Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) process. This process reviews pay rates for those who joined the Prison Service before and after 2010. The PSPRB process for 2021/22 is currently underway.

PSPRB information be found on the Gov UK website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/prison-services-pay-review-body>.

■ Prisons and Probation: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[1034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what additional resources he is making available to (a) prisons and (b) probation services in England and Wales to support covid-19 recovery.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[1035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on resources available to help enable covid-19 recovery in (a) prisons and (b) probation services in England and Wales.

Alex Chalk:

Covid-19 continues to present a unique set of challenges that we must address to maintain services in custody and the community. We are targeting and pacing out interventions that will allow us to respond as the pandemic evolves, supporting areas most in need.

The 2020 Spending Review provided £246 million for the justice system's continued recovery from Covid-19, including funding of £43 million to ensure the continued safety of prisons and to support the probation service during the recovery process. For quarter one of financial year 2021/22 £11m has been allocated to HMPPS for safety measures, with a further £22m assigned to probation as well as another £10m to HMPPS. The funding supports additional staffing to facilitate ongoing COVID mitigations, the extension of prisoner related services (PINphones, foodpacks, retail) and central co-ordination, assurance and surveillance. More widely we invested an extra £155 million into the probation service last year and are maintaining it this financial year.

Discussions regarding funding for quarter two are ongoing.

■ Prisons: Education

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure timely publication of data on prison education services and outcomes, including for (a) April 2018 to March 2019 Offender Learning and Skills Service contracts, (b) April 2019 to March 2020 Prisoner Education Framework contracts, and (c) April 2020 to March 2021 Prisoner Education Framework contracts.

Alex Chalk:

We plan to publish data from both the first year of the Prisoner Education Framework contracts (April 2019 to March 2020) and the final year of the Offender Learning and Skills Service contracts (April 2018 to March 2019) during the summer of 2021.

■ Prisons: Recruitment**Ms Lyn Brown:** [664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the effect of the number of new entrants to the prison service who have little or no experience of prison regimes prior to the outbreak of covid-19 on (a) the recovery from covid-19, (b) prison safety, (c) rehabilitation and (d) resettlement.

Ms Lyn Brown: [665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the proportion of current prison staff that (a) began work after covid-19 regime restrictions were introduced in March 2020 and (b) have no experience of prison regimes prior to the outbreak of covid-19.

Alex Chalk:

From 23 March 2020 (when the national lockdown was introduced) to 31 March 2021 there were 4,293 new entrants to either HM Prison Service or the Youth Custody Service, and of these 3,797 were still in post as at 31 March 2021. As at 31 March 2021 the headcount in HM Prison Service and the Youth Custody Service was 37,671, and therefore the new entrants still in post as at 31 March 2021 made up 10% of all HMPS and YCS staff. Of the 3,797 new entrants since 23 March 2020 that are still in post on 31 March 2021, 186 had worked for HMPPS previously, prior to 23 March 2020.

Throughout the 12 months to 31 March 2021 there have been significant restrictions to prison regimes due to Covid-19. These restrictions have been necessary in order to prevent the spread of Covid across the prison estate. Our plan for easing restrictions in prisons and probation, and re-introducing them where necessary, will be guided by public health advice alongside an operational assessment of what can be safely implemented, whilst ensuring we can keep staff and prisoners safe. We are focused on ensuring that we recover, expand regimes and begin to address the backlog of activity created by Covid-19 restrictions as soon as it is safe to do so, and in a way that supports our staff and prisoners. Staff training and professional development is also being prioritised as we emerge from the pandemic.

We do not underestimate the challenges faced by everyone working in prisons throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. We are committed to making prisons a safe place to work and providing prison staff with the right support, training and tools to empower them to do their jobs, including the roll-out of Trauma Risk Management (TRiM), a peer to peer support programme for staff designed to assist people to deal effectively with the effects of a traumatic event.

To support staff who have joined in the past 12 months, we are focusing on supporting new recruits in their early days. Following training, all new starters receive an in-house support programme designed to meet the specific needs of their establishment, and in line with Prison Safety Policy. Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT) has also continued to be as robust and thorough as prior to the

pandemic to prepare new entrants for the role of a Prison Officer in a non-pandemic situation. Support for new joiners will continue to be provided for them as regime restrictions change.

Whilst staff who have joined in the 12 months to 31 March 2021 will have had less experience delivering some key elements of the regime than those who joined prior to Covid-19, we have prioritised restarting activities focused on offender management / 1-1 activity, rehabilitation, education, progression and resettlement. POELT training and ongoing support at establishments will continue to aid new joiners to deliver these important aspects of the regime successfully.

As part of a body of work looking at learning and recovery from Covid-19, we are feeding learning into prison safety and wellbeing initiatives, regime redesign, planning and ongoing mitigations for prisoners. Prisons are also using lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic to prioritise resources to focus on safety and wellbeing, adapt provision, reinforce fair and decent behaviours and to show visible leadership. We are building on learning with a programme of events happening this month which will be an opportunity for operational staff to further share and reflect on learning from Covid to inform practice and both recovery and future reforms. Experienced staff as well as staff who joined in the 12 months to 31 March 2021 will be involved in these in order to best inform discussions.

■ Remand in Custody

Philip Davies:

[1031]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) male and (b) female defendants were remanded in custody for their own (i) protection and (ii) welfare as an exception to bail under the Bail Act 1976 in each of the last three years.

Alex Chalk:

Information about the reasons for remand decisions is not centrally held within the Court Proceedings database. It is therefore not possible to identify whether defendants were remanded in custody for their own protection or welfare as an exception to bail under the Bail Act 1976 from the established remands data. This information may be obtained through a manual search of court records, but to do so would incur disproportionate costs.

The Ministry of Justice has published more general information on remand status at both magistrates' and Crown Courts, up to December 2019, available in the following data tools:

Magistrates' Court:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888658/remands-magistrates-court-tool-2019.xlsx

Crown Court:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888657/remands-crown-court-tool-2019.xlsx

■ Sexual Offences: Disclosure of Information

Ruth Jones: [853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps he has taken in response to people naming victims of sexual assault.

Kit Malthouse:

Complainants in rape and sexual offence cases are protected by Automatic Reporting Restrictions.

There is a lifetime ban on reporting any matter likely to identify a victim, from the moment the offence is reported.

Anyone committing such an offence is liable to a fine. Interfering with the administration of justice and publicly commenting on a court case on social media or other channels may lead to a charge for the more serious offence of contempt of court where the maximum penalty is 2 years' imprisonment.

■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Rachael Maskell: [793]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time taken was for an appeal against a benefits decision to be heard from when the case was lodged with the Tribunal in each year since 2010.

Chris Philp:

Waiting times for the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS) are published at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics

The latest period for which data about SSCS are available is October to December 2020. The most recent tribunal statistics do not include some SSCS data due to issues identified as the Tribunal was being migrated to a new operational system.

The data will be made available as soon as this is resolved and the data quality assured.

■ Third Sector: Public Expenditure

Ms Lyn Brown: [1033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with third sector organisations in the criminal justice sector on (a) his Department's submissions to the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021 and (b) the overall size of his Department's spending allocation within the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021.

Chris Philp:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has not yet confirmed the scope and nature of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021. In anticipation, the department has recently begun preparations for the Spending Review and will be considering the approach to engaging with external stakeholders over the coming months.

The department continues to engage regularly with key stakeholders, in which other relevant matters and funding more generally are discussed.

TRANSPORT

■ Roads: Horse Riding

Elliot Colburn:

[\[873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the level of police involvement is in the event where a ridden horse is hit by a motor vehicle on a public highway and killed and the rider is uninjured.

Elliot Colburn:

[\[874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to ensure that collisions involving a motor vehicle with a horse and a rider on a public highway are treated the same as a collision with any other vulnerable road user even if the rider is unhurt.

Rachel Maclean:

Provisions within the Road Traffic Act 1988 set out the duties which exist in the event of a collision between a motor vehicle and animal, including a horse. A driver who causes injury to a horse must provide their name and address to anyone reasonably requiring it, failing which they must report the incident to the police. If the driver fails to do any of this, they are guilty of an offence, for which they could be arrested and prosecuted. There is no requirement for the police to attend the incident.

The Department is taking steps to improve safety for horse riders using the highway through updates to The Highway Code which will introduce safe passing speeds and distances. The Highway Code in its current form already mentions horse riders and the need for drivers to exercise special care in relation to them.

■ Transport: Infrastructure

Sarah Olney:

[\[1152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that transport infrastructure contracts are awarded to British companies.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department for Transport buys goods and services in line with government procurement policy and the current legislative framework. My Department aims to take full benefit of the flexibilities afforded by our departure from the EU to reform procurement legislation. We are working with wider government to review and reshape our procurement regulations, to ensure they drive social, environmental and economic benefits across the country.

With regards to transport infrastructure, steel is one strategic area in which the DfT is working across government and with industry to ensure that UK producers have the best possible chance of competing for and winning contracts, through the newly formed Steel Procurement Taskforce.

TREASURY**■ Duty Free Allowances: Airports****Sarah Olney:****[1159]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential economic merits of introducing arrivals duty free shops at airports.

Kemi Badenoch:

Following a consultation, the Government announced on 11 September 2020 that duty-free sales would be extended to EU-bound passengers for the first time in over 20 years from 1 January 2021.

This is a significant boost to all airports and international rail terminals in England, Scotland and Wales, including Manchester, and smaller regional airports and rail hubs, which have not been able to offer duty-free to the EU before.

Duty-free on arrival did not form part of the Government's consultation on the potential approach to duty- and tax-free goods arising from the UK's new relationship with the EU, which took place in the Spring of 2020. The Government nonetheless acknowledged in the summary of responses to the consultation that some stakeholders had requested the introduction of duty-free on arrival. This also set out that duty-free on arrival was not a scheme that the Government previously offered and was therefore not considering implementing the scheme at that time.

Duty-free on arrival could undermine the UK high street and run counter to public health objectives. The Government would also need to consider the cost and any revenue and legal risks of introducing such a scheme. Any new tax relief will impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which excise duty makes a significant contribution. Duty on alcohol and tobacco raises over £22 billion and plays a key role in funding vital public services like the NHS and addressing harms caused by these products. Any loss in tax revenue would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: VAT**Daisy Cooper:****[871]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons bowling alleys are excluded from the five per cent VAT reduction for the tourism and hospitality sector.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary reduced rate of VAT for hospitality and tourism was introduced on 15 July 2020 to support the cash flow and viability of businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors which have been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Hospitality for the purposes of this relief includes the supply of food and non-alcoholic beverages from restaurants, cafes, pubs and similar establishments for consumption on the premises. It also includes the supply of hot food and non-alcoholic hot beverages to take away.

If a ten-pin bowling business provides hospitality in this way, then it can benefit from the reduced rate. In general, admission charges that entitle a person to participate in events where the primary focus is a sporting activity will not be eligible for the reduced rate. This relief comes at a significant cost to the Exchequer, and there are no plans to extend the scope of the reduced rate. This policy will cost over £7 billion, and while some businesses in some sectors are disappointed, a boundary for eligibility had to be drawn.

■ Housing: Fire Prevention

Apsana Begum:

[912]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making payments for waking watches in buildings deemed not fire safe VAT exempt in the context of the financial effects of that matter on leaseholders.

Jesse Norman:

The Government already maintains a zero rate for fire safety equipment when provided alongside the construction and renovation of residential or charitable buildings. There is also a relief for the cost of replacing fire cladding on buildings if it is tied to the initial construction of the building and is shown to be defective.

Waking watch should only be in place for a short period of time and the relevant responsible person should move quickly to install a common fire alarm system as they are a more cost effective and reliable option. That is why the Government has set aside £30m to install common alarm systems in eligible buildings to replace expensive waking watch measures. No interim measures should be considered as a substitute for completing remediation as quickly as possible.

■ Patients: Transport

Taiwo Owatemi:

[2463]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of whether the suppliers of Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services recovering VAT will potentially inflate prices to the NHS.

Jesse Norman:

Transport services for sick or injured persons in vehicles specially designed for that purpose, such as ambulances, are exempt from VAT. The law also allows the supply of transport services in any vehicle with seating to carry 10 or more passengers (including the driver) to be a zero-rated supply. Other supplies of patient transport services are subject to VAT.

NHS spending settlements cover all relevant costs, including any VAT that is not otherwise recoverable.

■ Pollution: Taxation**Sarah Olney:** [\[1162\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if the Government will consider the potential merits of a tax on pollution to support environmental objectives.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has, and continues to develop, a suite of environmental tax measures which support environmental objectives, including targeting pollution. These taxes include the Plastic Packaging Tax (to be introduced from 2022), the Landfill Tax and the Climate Change Levy.

The Government also established the UK Emissions Trading Scheme in January 2021, and has committed to exploring expanding the Scheme to the two thirds of emissions not currently covered.

There are no current plans to introduce a general tax on pollution, but the Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Sailing Boats: VAT**Mrs Flick Drummond:** [\[2345\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Royal Yachting Association on the VAT status of UK-owned yachts currently outside British waters.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has not had any discussions with the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) on this topic. In November 2020, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury responded to a letter from the RYA explaining the Government's position on the availability of relief from customs duty and import VAT under the Returned Goods Relief for goods and possessions (including yachts) located in the EU on 31 December 2020. HMRC officials met the RYA in September 2020 and February 2021 to discuss this issue.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Sarah Olney:** [\[1359\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support his Department is providing to businesses in the travel industry during the period of covid-19 travel restrictions.

Kemi Badenoch:

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

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK. To

do this, the Government has put in place an unprecedented economic package of support which will provide businesses and individuals with certainty over the coming months.

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

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

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

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland

Carla Lockhart:

[1225]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many companies have signed up to the Trader Support Service in each of the last twelve months.

Jesse Norman:

The Trader Support Service has been open to registrations since November 2020. Since then over 38,400 businesses have registered in total.

The registrations by month are as follows:

November 2020 – 16,809

December 2020 – 8,180

January 2021 – 7,011

February 2021 – 2,789

March 2021 – 2,094

April 2021 – 1,063

May 2021 – 503 (to date)

VAT: Coronavirus**Paul Blomfield:** [\[1049\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 15 April 2021 to Question 178712, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the grace period for Returned Goods Relief to 2023 to mitigate the effect of current covid-19 restrictions.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has recently extended the grace period for the Returned Goods Relief (RGR) from one year to 18 months in light of the continuing travel restrictions in both the UK and the EU due to COVID-19. This extension to the grace period allows goods located in the EU at the end of the Transition Period to return to Great Britain by 30th June 2022, regardless of the date they left the UK.

Wholesale Trade: Non-domestic Rates**Bob Blackman:** [\[1291\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic effect on the wholesale sector of the length of time taken to start the new business rates relief fund.

Bob Blackman: [\[1292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to enable the provision of business rates support to businesses affected by covid-19 outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Bob Blackman: [\[1293\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will meet representatives of the Federation of Wholesale Distributors to discuss the practicalities involved in developing a business rates support system for businesses affected by covid-19 outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Bob Blackman: [\[1294\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including wholesalers in the guidance for local authorities for the administration of the new business rates relief fund.

Bob Blackman: [\[1295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to include wholesalers in the guidance for local authorities for the administration of the new business rates relief fund.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has announced a £1.5 billion pot of additional business rates relief for businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that have not otherwise been eligible for existing reliefs. The statement by the Minister of State for Regional Growth

and Local Government of 25 March 2021 explained the relief will be allocated to local authorities based on the stock of properties in the area and the sector-specific economic impacts of COVID-19.

Formal guidance will follow in due course, setting out the specific considerations that Local Authorities (LAs) should have regard for when providing relief. Relief will be for LAs to award on a discretionary basis. Funding will be available once the legislation relating to material change in circumstance provisions has passed and LAs have established their own local relief schemes. The Government will support LAs to do this as quickly as possible, including through new burdens funding.

Steve Double: [\[1324\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the economic effect on the wholesale sector of the time taken to start the new business rates relief fund.

Steve Double: [\[1325\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department plans to bring forward legislative proposals for business rates support to be granted to businesses affected by covid-19 outside the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

Steve Double: [\[1326\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he we will meet with the Federation of Wholesale Distributors to discuss practicalities involved with developing a business rates support system for businesses affected by the covid-19 outside the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.

Steve Double: [\[1328\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including wholesalers in the guidance for local authorities on the administration of the new business rates relief fund.

Steve Double: [\[1329\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to include wholesalers in the guidance for local authorities for the administration of the new business rates relief fund.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has announced a £1.5 billion pot of additional business rates relief for businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that have not otherwise been eligible for existing reliefs. The statement by the Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government of 25 March 2021 explained the relief will be allocated to local authorities based on the stock of properties in the area and the sector-specific economic impacts of COVID-19.

Formal guidance will follow in due course, setting out the specific considerations that Local Authorities (LAs) should have regard for when providing relief. Relief will be for LAs to award on a discretionary basis. Funding will be available once the legislation

relating to material change in circumstance provisions has passed and LAs have established their own local relief schemes. The Government will support LAs to do this as quickly as possible, including through new burdens funding.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carer's Allowance

James Wild:

[3187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to increase the take up of carers' allowance by eligible people.

Justin Tomlinson:

1 million carers were entitled to Carer's Allowance in 2010/11. By 2025/26 we forecast that this will have increased to just over 1.5 million.

Information on Carer's Allowance is widely available, including online through Gov.uk. Organisations supporting carers, and other stakeholders and partners, also make information available on carers benefits, including Carer's Allowance.

Carer's Allowance can be applied for online and since this option was made available in October 2013 over 1.5 million people have applied that way. Since April 2020, over 90% of Carer's Allowance applications have been made online and over 90% of those customers have said they are happy with the online service.

■ Children: Maintenance

Rachael Maskell:

[1114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on how many occasions where a parent does not make payments in full and on time has the Child Maintenance Service sought to (a) make a deduction order to take either a lump sum or regular deductions from the paying parent's bank or building society account, (b) make a liability order, (c) instruct an enforcement agency to recover and auction goods, (d) place a charge on the property and (e) instigate court action, in each of the years since it was established and given those powers.

Guy Opperman:

The Department publishes quarterly Child Maintenance Service statistics, with the latest statistics available to the end of December 2020, here:

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

The number of Deduction Orders, by quarter, can be found in "Table 7.1: Enforcement Actions" of the National Tables. This table also gives the number of Liability Orders and Enforcement Agency referrals for England and Wales.

The number of Applications to court to apply a sanction, by quarter, can be found in "Table 7.2: Enforcement Actions - Detail on Sanctions" of the National Tables.

Table 1 below gives the number of charging orders (placing a charge on a property) in England and Wales, and Inhibitions (preventing the Paying Parent from selling, transferring or disposing of 'heritable assets' including land and property) in Scotland, made between September 2017 and December 2020.

Table 1: The number of Charging Orders in England and Wales and Inhibitions in Scotland, applications made by the Child Maintenance Service, by quarter between September 2017 and December 2020.

YEAR	QUARTER ENDING	CHARGING FOR PROPERTY (ENGLAND AND WALES)	INHIBITION (SCOTLAND)
2017	Dec	70	10
2018	Mar	90	20
	Jun	110	30
	Sep	120	10
	Dec	140	10
2019	Mar	200	30
	Jun	150	40
	Sep	140	10
	Dec	160	10
2020	Mar	140	10
	Jun	20	-
	Sep	110	-
	Dec	80	-
	Total	1530	170

Source: Child Maintenance Service Administrative Data

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest 10. ' - ' denotes nil or numbers that round to zero. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
2. The figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Independent Case Examiner: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much funding has been allocated to the Independent Case Examiner in each year since 2010.

Rachael Maskell: [795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full-time equivalent staff were employed by the Independent Case Examiner in each year since 2010.

Guy Opperman:

The Unit received additional funding in the 2020/21 financial year to help reduce the time complaints wait to be brought into investigation.

The information requested is detailed in the table below. Please note that information in respect of Independent Case Examiner (ICE) Funding is only available from 2015/16. The ICE Headcount allocation figures are provided as well as the actual staff in post and full time equivalent figures.

YEAR	ICE FUNDING ALLOCATION	ICE FUNDED HEADCOUNT (FULL TIME EQUIVALENT - FTE)	FTE STAFF IN POST AT THE END OF THE REPORTING YEAR
2015/16	£2,471,424	74	71.06 FTE
2016/17	£2,746,178	71	70.76 FTE
2017/18	£2,532,226	75	72.3 FTE
2018/19	£3,008,056	76	77.07 FTE
2019/20	£3,525,303	89	80.94 FTE (83 people)
2020/21	£5,216,500	112	89.2 FTE (95 people)
2021/22 (end of April 2021)	£4,591,725	112	89.2 FTE (95 people)

■ Kickstart Scheme

Mr Toby Perkins: [1040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people aged (a) 16 to 18, (b) 19 to 24 and (c) over 25 started a new position under the Kickstart scheme in each month since July 2020.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 May 2021]: Since the Department for Work and Pensions launched the Kickstart Scheme in September 2020, over 20,000 young people on

Universal Credit between the ages of 16 and 24 have started a Kickstart job. These funded, meaningful six-month jobs also provide support to improve the longer-term employability of the young people. We are not currently able to provide the age of participants on the Kickstart Scheme.

The table below lists the total number of starts to the scheme from October 2020 until January 2021 and by month since then. Almost 1,000 non-grant funded Kickstart jobs are included in the totals and statistics have been rounded to the nearest 10 job starts as per standard DWP statistical practice, except for October 2020 where there were only 5 starts recorded.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

TIME PERIOD	TOTAL NUMBER OF STARTS
October 20	5
November 20	280
December 20	1,390
January 21	440*
February 21	1,660
March 21	5,990
April 21	9,480
May 21 up to and including 06/05/21	1,570
Total	20,700

*Figures shown are rounded to nearest 10. The UK entered a national lockdown on January 21 which is reflected in the figures.

Alison McGovern:

[1052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much and what proportion of the £2 billion of funding for the Kickstart scheme announced by the Government in A Plan for Jobs in July 2020 has been (a) allocated and (b) spent.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 May 2021]:

£2bn has been allocated to Kickstart to create hundreds of thousands of 6-month job placements for young people aged 16-24, to improve their long term employability. Kickstart placements commenced in October 2020 and eligible young people will be able to start new Kickstart jobs until December 2021, with the final cohort of six-month jobs coming to an end in Summer 2022. Kickstart funding is not capped and we expect to use all funding to provide jobs for young people by the end of the scheme. Details of spend is unavailable at this time but will become available following the completion of the audited accounts.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Bedfordshire

Sarah Owen:

[2457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart scheme placements have been (a) approved and (b) started in (i) Luton North constituency, (ii) Luton and (iii) Bedfordshire.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 20 May 2021]: Delivering the Kickstart Scheme at pace has led to a limited data set which makes it harder to accurately present a snapshot of a smaller geographical area.

We are continuing to develop our data, which may help in sharing local authority level information in due course.

We are able to provide, however, that in the ONS defined region of East of England (which includes Bedfordshire), as of 6 May 2021 around 8,240 jobs had been made available for young people to apply for and around 1,320 jobs started by young people on the Kickstart Scheme.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Employment

David Linden:

[1186]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart scheme jobs have been (a) approved and (b) started in each region from April 8th to the most recent date for which information is available.

Mims Davies:

We are unable at present to provide data on the number of approved jobs by region, as at that stage in the process we do not hold information about the exact location of a job, only the head office of the employer. The table below lists by region the increase in the number of jobs started on the Kickstart Scheme between the 8th of

April and the 6th May. Over this period, the total number of Kickstart job placements started increased by almost 9,000, to a total of over 20,000.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

LOCATION	INCREASE IN STARTS BETWEEN 08/04/21-06/05/21
East Midlands	460
East of England	540
London	1,900
North East	470
North West	1,140
Scotland	670
South East	1,150
South West	660
Wales	460
West Midlands	650
Yorkshire and The Humber	690

Data provided has been rounded. 1,000 non-grant funded jobs are included under Jobs Started. Total jobs started includes those which have been completed or ended early.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Sole Traders

Sir Mike Penning: [\[136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Kickstart scheme allows applications from sole traders.

Sir Mike Penning: [\[137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of whether (a) the new KickStart Scheme gateway-plus companies are

receiving a disproportionate allocation of the grant and (b) some sole traders have received no extra funding.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Sole traders are able to apply to offer jobs to young people through the Kickstart Scheme through a Gateway Plus. There are 4 organisations approved as a Gateway Plus –

- Adecco Working Ventures in Partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses
- REED in partnership with the British Chambers of Commerce
- Manpower Group
- The Wirral Chamber of Commerce

The Gateway Plus is the employer of the young person participating in Kickstart and will ensure that the YP receives the additional support to improve their employability which is an essential part of the scheme. The young person will be placed with a host organisation linked to the Gateway plus for their six-month job – this is at no cost to the host organisation. Host organisations can include sole traders.

All Kickstart Jobs are subject to robust checking procedures. The checks we put in place when approving a Gateway Plus organisation ensure that any employer that the Gateway approves is subject to a level of checking and due diligence that DWP are satisfied with. These checks are part of the requirement of the Gateway Plus agreement.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Applications**

Stephen Farry:

[\[3207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the time limit for returning PIP2 application forms has reverted from 12 to four weeks.

Justin Tomlinson:

In line with the Covid recovery roadmap we are changing the time for customers to return their forms, back to the business as usual timescales to ensure that claims are processed as quickly as possible. Customers can request additional time to return their form if they need more time to gather information. Any Additional Support customers who do not return their form will still have their claim referred for assessment.

■ **Sign Language**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[2464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the merits of introducing a British Sign Language Act that would give BSL full recognition in law.

Justin Tomlinson:

On 18 March 2003 the UK government formally recognised that British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own right. Provision for accessing services by users of BSL are covered by the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Existing equality legislation already means employers, service providers and public bodies have to provide services in BSL and other formats when it is reasonable to do so. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the needs of all those with protected characteristics.

■ Social Security Benefits: Domestic Abuse**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[1171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the joint briefing from Shelter and Women's Aid on the benefit cap and domestic abuse published in May 2021.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[1174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has she made as to the number of people at risk of domestic violence and subject to the Benefit Cap.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made.

We provide a tailored service that recognises those with complex needs and ensures provision of appropriate support. This might include pausing job search requirements, initiating alternative payment arrangements or deferring repayments.

Claimants who are temporarily absent from home due to fear of violence can receive the housing element of Universal Credit, and/or Housing Benefit, for both the home that has been left and any new home for up to a year. Housing support for specified accommodation, including refuges, is excluded from the benefit cap calculation as is any Housing Benefit paid to a Universal Credit claimant.

Departmental training and awareness is now better than it ever has been, allowing Jobcentre staff to proactively identify, support and signpost victims of abuse.

Discretionary Housing Payments are available for households that need additional financial support to meet housing costs. While the allocation of this funding is at Local Authority discretion, we have strengthened the associated Guidance Manual to ensure that individuals or families fleeing domestic abuse are considered a priority group for DHP support.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus**Claire Hanna:**[\[932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make permanent the £20 uplift to universal credit uplift; and if she will extend that uplift to all legacy benefits.

Will Quince:

The £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was announced by the Chancellor as a temporary measure in March 2020 to support those facing the most financial disruption as a result of the public health emergency. This measure remains in place until September 2021.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the increase was first announced with a vaccine rollout now gathering pace. As a result, the six-month extension to the temporary £20 per week uplift to the Universal Credit standard allowance means that it will be in place well beyond the expected end of restrictions and reopening of the economy.

It is right that the government should now shift its focus to supporting people back into work and we have a comprehensive Plan for Jobs.

The government has focused support on Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit claimants because they are more likely to be affected by the sudden economic shock of COVID-19 than other legacy benefit claimants.

Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for UC if they believe that they will be better off. The Government encourages anybody to go on GOV.UK and use one of the independent benefit calculators to check carefully their eligibility, because on applying for UC their entitlement to legacy benefits will cease and they will not be able to return to them in the future. Neither DWP nor HMRC can advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to UC or remaining on legacy benefits. They can get help through the government funded Help to Claim scheme as well as the Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 May 2021. The correct answer should have been:

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.

ACE Opera Funding:

YEAR	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TOTAL
2019/20	£59,230,322	£26,335,477	£85,565,799
2020/21	£61,920,159	£37,675,988	£99,596,147

ACE Brass Bands Funding:

YEAR	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TOTAL
2019/20	£375,339	£765,573	£1,140,912
2020/21	£392,670	£5,132,587	£5,525,257