



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 June 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:00 P.M., 15 June 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

■ Artificial Intelligence: Intellectual Property

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[13183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he is taking steps to review intellectual property legislation as it relates to the protection of (a) artificial intelligence technology and (b) inventions made by artificial intelligence.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government conducted a call for views on artificial intelligence (AI) and intellectual property (IP) in 2020, inviting stakeholders to share their thoughts on how AI impacts on the IP framework and help our understanding of any impact IP might have for AI, in the near to medium term.

In March this year, the Government published its response and proposed eleven actions to explore issues raised in the call for views process, with the aim of providing a system better equipped to meet the Government's wider ambition for the UK to be a leader in AI technology. These include consulting on a range of possible policy options, including legislative change, for protecting AI generated inventions which would otherwise not meet inventorship criteria and commissioning an economic study to enhance our understanding of the role the IP framework plays in incentivising investment in AI.

■ Consumer Goods: Safety

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[12177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what (a) proactive and (b) reactive measures the Office for Product Safety and Standards' voluntary commitment will require online marketplaces to take in order to reduce the risks from unsafe products sold online.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe products can be sold in the UK.

The new voluntary commitment that the Office for Product Safety and Standards is developing will build on international best practice to reduce the risks from unsafe products being sold online. This will strengthen the commitment of online marketplaces to work with UK regulators, including by taking proactive and reactive action to protect consumers.

Discussions with the online marketplaces are ongoing and more details will be announced in due course.

Carolyn Harris: [\[12221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Office for Product Safety and Standards is taking to tackle (a) sellers of unsafe products on online marketplaces and (b) online marketplaces in respect of the sale of unsafe products.

Carolyn Harris: [\[12222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps Trading Standards has taken in the last five years against (a) sellers of unsafe products on online marketplaces and (b) online marketplaces that have sold unsafe products on their sites.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe consumer products can be sold in the UK. Product safety legislation places obligations on manufacturers, importers and distributors and this includes online retailers selling goods via marketplaces.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) works with colleagues in local Trading Standards to take effective action where products are identified online that do not meet the UK's product safety requirements and expects online platforms to act quickly to remove them from sale. This has recently included action taken to ensure that a number of non-compliant products, including toys, electrical equipment and high-risk products such as pool heaters and balcony barbecues being sold by third-party sellers have been removed from sale, delisted, recalled or destroyed.

Where criminal offences are identified, both Trading Standards and OPSS can conduct criminal investigations into the actions of economic operators.

OPSS is taking forward a programme of work to ensure that major online marketplaces are playing their part to protect UK consumers from unsafe goods.

This includes developing a new voluntary commitment for online marketplaces to agree further actions they will take to reduce the risks from unsafe products being sold online.

OPSS is also encouraging online marketplaces to establish Primary Authority arrangements with local Trading Standards authorities. These agreements enable one authority to work with each business providing expert and tailored advice as to how they should meet their legal obligations.

OPSS is reviewing the UK's product safety framework to ensure that we have a framework that continues to deliver safety for consumers while supporting businesses to safely innovate and grow and will consider non-traditional business models, including online sales.

■ Cosmetics: Hydrogen Peroxide**Carolyn Harris:**[\[12219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to prevent the selling by online marketplaces of teeth whiteners which exceed the legal amount of hydrogen peroxide permitted for home use.

Paul Scully:

Cosmetic products such as teeth whitening kits sold in the UK must meet some of the strictest safety requirements in the world and may only be placed on the market if they meet strict safety requirements, including specific restrictions on the use of potentially harmful chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) works with colleagues in local Trading Standards to take effective enforcement action where products are identified online that do not meet the UK's product safety requirements and expects online platforms to act quickly to remove them from sale.

Through its Call for Evidence, OPSS is reviewing the UK's product safety framework to ensure it is fit for purpose, protects consumers, and enables businesses to safely innovate and grow. The implications of non-traditional models of supply, including e-commerce, and how it has changed the way products are distributed, forms of part of the review.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[12262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure home teeth-whitening kits sold online do not contain dangerous levels of hydrogen peroxide.

Paul Scully:

Cosmetic products such as teeth whitening kits sold in the UK must meet some of the strictest safety requirements in the world and may only be placed on the market if they meet strict safety requirements, including specific restrictions on the use of potentially harmful chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) works with colleagues in local Trading Standards to take effective enforcement action where products are identified online that do not meet the UK's product safety requirements and expects online platforms to act quickly to remove them from sale.

Through its Call for Evidence, OPSS is reviewing the UK's product safety framework to ensure it is fit for purpose, protects consumers, and enables businesses to safely innovate and grow. The implications of non-traditional models of supply, including e-commerce, and how it has changed the way products are distributed, forms of part of the review.

■ Cosmetics: Safety**Carolyn Harris:** [\[12220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure online marketplaces are preventing unsafe cosmetic products from being listed and sold on their sites.

Paul Scully:

Cosmetic products available on the UK market must meet strict safety requirements and the Government is committed to ensuring that only safe cosmetic products can be sold in the UK. Furthermore, there must be a Responsible Person established in the UK who is responsible for ensuring the cosmetic product is safe.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is engaged with online marketplaces to ensure that they are playing their part in protecting UK consumers from unsafe products. OPSS works with colleagues in local Trading Standards to take effective enforcement action where products are identified online that do not meet the UK's product safety requirements and expects online platforms to act quickly to remove them from sale.

■ Director of Labour Market Enforcement**Gill Furniss:** [\[14021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made on the appointment of a new Director of Labour Market Enforcement.

Paul Scully:

Cracking down on non-compliance in the Labour Market is a priority for the Government and a new Director for Labour Market Enforcement will be appointed as soon as possible. Recruitment for the role is ongoing and a successful candidate will be announced in due course.

The temporary vacancy has no impact on workers' rights. The three enforcement bodies themselves are responsible for their overall work and enforcement responsibilities. They will continue to work hard to protect workers and bring enforcement action against employers who break the rules.

■ Electricity Interconnectors: Morocco**Ben Lake:** [\[14035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of proposals for a high voltage direct current transmission line from Morocco to the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK is supportive of electricity interconnection with other markets. We have not undertaken a specific assessment of the merits of a transmission line from Morocco to the UK. The regulation of specific interconnector projects within the existing regulatory framework is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [\[11577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to Answer of 25 May 2021 to Question 2333 on Employment: Coronavirus, how many fixed penalty notices have been issued.

Paul Scully:

It is an offence for an employer to knowingly allow a person who is required to self-isolate to work anywhere other than where they are self-isolating. If an employer is reasonably believed to be in breach of this requirement, they may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice, ranging from £1,000 to £10,000.

Local Authorities provide written and verbal advice to businesses to enable them to comply with their obligations. Enforcement action is taken against employers who do not follow this advice and who do not take reasonable steps to ensure that their workers who must be self-isolating are not working from outside their home.

We will publish information on the number of fixed penalty notices which have been issued in due course.

■ Heating: Housing

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[13931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the number of households that require a mains electricity and fuse upgrade to install a heat pump.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In the 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution', my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced our aim to install 600,000 heat pumps a year by 2028. We estimate that, in all future heat scenarios, we will need to hit this target to remain on track for net zero. We must therefore act now to scale up supply chains and build the UK heat pump market.

Our analysis of off gas grid homes suggests that around 70% to 80% of homes would have sufficient energy efficiency and internal fuse limit electrical connections to accommodate a low temperature heat pump system. This potentially rises to around 80% to 90% with fabric upgrades including draught-proofing, cavity wall insulation, floor and loft insulation, and/or more major upgrades such as external wall insulation.

■ Heating: Standards

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[13932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish his Department's review of Microgeneration Certification Scheme Planning Standard MCS-020 relating to heat pumps.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Microgeneration Certification Scheme Planning Standard MCS-020 is maintained by the quality assurance organisation MCS. Whilst BEIS has not carried out a review of the standard, the Department is in regular contact with stakeholders regarding heat pump deployment and uptake. Recently, this has included engaging with local authorities on noise, which is one of the issues covered in MCS-020.

■ Nuclear Power: Hydrogen

Peter Aldous: [\[12123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the UK's potential to produce green hydrogen from nuclear energy between (a) 2021 and 2025 and (b) 2025 and 2030.

Peter Aldous: [\[12124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the production of green hydrogen from nuclear energy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan confirmed our aim, working with industry, for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030 for use across the economy.

The Government welcomes the nuclear industry's ambition to support low-carbon hydrogen production. BEIS funded EDF's 'Hydrogen to Heysham' feasibility study^[1] showing that current nuclear technologies are technically capable of producing low-carbon hydrogen in the 2020s. Recognising planned decommissioning and the time required to build new nuclear, we assess that the amount of hydrogen produced from nuclear in this period will be determined by the availability of nuclear power for this purpose.

The forthcoming UK Hydrogen Strategy will set out further detail on the role of hydrogen production technologies in meeting our 5GW ambition. This ambition will be supported by a range of measures, including a £240 million Net Zero Hydrogen Fund, and our preferred long term, sustainable business model, which we will finalise in 2022. We intend to support a range of low carbon production methods but will be guided by timing, volumes and other considerations to meet our 5GW ambition. We will be consulting shortly on these measures, alongside the publication of the UK Hydrogen Strategy.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hydrogen-supply-competition>

■ Renewable Energy: Hydrogen

Peter Aldous: [\[12125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the UK's potential to produce hydrogen from offshore renewable energy between (a) 2021 and 2025 and (b) 2025 and 2030.

Peter Aldous: [\[12126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the UK's potential to produce hydrogen from onshore renewable energy between (a) 2021 and 2025 and (b) 2025 and 2030.

Peter Aldous: [\[12127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the production of green hydrogen from offshore renewable energy.

Peter Aldous: [\[12128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the production of green hydrogen from onshore renewable energy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan confirmed our aim, working with industry, for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030 for use across the economy.

The UK has abundant sources of renewable electricity, and the Prime Minister has made a further commitment to deploying 40 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2030, alongside further deployment of onshore wind.

Our ongoing work with stakeholders suggests there is a strong pipeline of electrolytic hydrogen projects ready to deploy in the 2020s, building on our existing investment in research and innovation to ensure we can achieve the scale up in low carbon hydrogen production necessary to meet our future energy needs.

The forthcoming UK Hydrogen Strategy will set out further detail on the role of hydrogen production technologies in meeting our 5GW ambition, including electrolytic projects using offshore and onshore wind as a primary electricity input. This ambition will be supported by a range of measures, including a £240 million Net Zero Hydrogen Fund, and our preferred long term, sustainable business model, which we will finalise in 2022. We will be consulting shortly on these measures, alongside the publication of the UK Hydrogen Strategy.

■ Renewable Energy: Subsidies

Fleur Anderson: [\[11679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to (a) phase out the subsidies for electricity companies that burn wood from cutting down forests and (b) increase subsidies for the production of electricity from solar and wind power.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

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

The Government announced in March 2020 that solar projects, onshore wind, floating wind and remote island wind will be able to bid for contracts in the next CfD allocation round, which is planned to open in December this year. The scheme has already awarded contracts to around 800MW of onshore wind and solar capacity combined, alongside 13GW of offshore wind.

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

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

Sustainable Biomass is a renewable organic material, such as food waste, wood residues or other plant material which has a wide array of applications including as a substitute for fossil-fuel based energy production, but with lower associated carbon emissions because the carbon that is released from the organic material was sequestered recently from the atmosphere, compared to fossil fuels where the carbon was sequestered millions of years ago.

The UK only supports biomass which complies with strict sustainability criteria which take into account a range of social, economic, and environmental issues including protecting biodiversity, land use rights, sustainable harvesting, and regeneration rates. They ensure that the carbon stock of the forest from which the pellets are derived is not decreased, by requiring that biomass fuels are from forest waste wood and residues and the forest owner adheres to the relevant legal requirements, to protect biodiversity and the environment.

■ Research: Career Development

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[14080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how the £20m within his Department's Research and Development Budget Allocation announced on 27 May 2021 is planned to be used to support early career researchers.

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[14081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how the £20 million of funding, announced on 27 May to support early career researchers, can be accessed.

Amanda Solloway:

Like many sections of the economy, medical research charities have been hit hard by COVID-19. This funding to support early career researchers will help to protect the

pipeline of research superstars who will have a fantastic impact, and improve patient lives, in the future. We will announce further details about the way in which this funding will be distributed by UKRI on behalf of BEIS and DHSC in due course.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Good Law Project: Legal Costs

Angela Rayner:

[\[13960\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to the public purse was of his Department's legal costs in the case of The Good Law Project versus Minister of State for the Cabinet Office, which concluded on 9 June 2021.

Julia Lopez:

Final costs are yet to be determined.

■ Public Duty Costs Allowance

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[14020\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what audit process his Department undertakes on claims made under the Public Duty Cost Allowance by former prime ministers; and what steps his Department takes to ensure that those claims meet the criteria for funding from that allowance.

Julia Lopez:

As with any other Cabinet Office financial transaction, PDCA payments are subject to inspection by the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) and the National Audit Office (NAO). The amount paid to each former Prime Minister is disclosed each year in the Department's Annual Report and Accounts following full audit.

The costs are a reimbursement of incurred expenses for necessary office and secretarial costs. These costs can include diary support, Met Police protection on public visits, correspondence, staffing at public visits, support to charitable work, social media platforms and managing and maintaining ex-PMs office (staff, payroll, admin).

DEFENCE

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[13866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many AJAX (a) hulls, (b) turrets (c) vehicles have been produced by General Dynamics to date.

Jeremy Quin:

As at the end of May 2021, General Dynamics has completed 263 hulls. 58 turrets have been manufactured under a sub-contract with Lockheed Martin. A total of 107 vehicles have been produced.

■ AWE Aldermaston

John Healey: [\[13846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he expects project PEGASUS to be completed.

John Healey: [\[13847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of projected total cost of project PEGASUS.

Jeremy Quin:

The existing approved cost of Project PEGASUS is £634 million. Following a pause to reassess the requirements for the project, it will now run in two phases. Firstly, the delivery of the store capability, which is due to complete by June 2025. The second stage will be the manufacturing capability, and an assessment phase is underway to determine the best value for money solution with a target for delivery of the first unit in 2030.

■ AWE Burghfield

John Healey: [\[13845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the projected total cost for MENSA.

Jeremy Quin:

The approved cost of Project MENSA, the new-build warhead assembly and disassembly facility at AWE Burghfield, is £1.8 billion.

■ Courts Martial

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[11704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many members of the armed forces have been tried by military courts in each year since 2016.

Leo Docherty:

The military courts fulfil an important function in administering justice when Service personnel are alleged to have committed any of the service offences in the Armed Forces Act 2006, wherever in the world those offences are said to have occurred. They are a major contributor to the maintenance of discipline which underpins the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces. Anyone convicted of an offence will be punished appropriately and that may include imprisonment, and dismissal from service.

The requested information on the number of Service personnel who have been tried by a military court is provided in the following table:

YEAR	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of individuals	436	400	414	500	372

Notes:

Figures for each year encompass all cases that concluded in that year i.e. if a case was opened in 2019 but concluded in 2020, the individual is recorded within the 2020 data.

Figure may include individuals who have been Court Martialled on more than one occasion. If an individual had more than one case but was either acquitted or sentenced on the same date, they are captured only once within the year of the result. However, if an individual had multiple cases that came to court in different years or after a previous case was closed, they will be recorded twice.

Figures also include ex-Service personnel who were serving at the time of the alleged or proven offence.

Court Martial results from the military court centres over the period January 2010 to December 2019 can be found at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-martial-results-from-the-military-court-centres>.

■ **Imphal Barracks**

Rachael Maskell: **[12203]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for the future of Imphal Barracks in York.

Jeremy Quin:

As previously announced, Defence remains committed to the disposal of Imphal Barracks, which is scheduled to take place in 2031. We continue to work with the local authority on plans to release the site.

■ **Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft**

Mr Kevan Jones: **[12076]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Fleet Air Arm pilots are qualified to fly F-35b aircraft; and how many of those pilots are in training.

James Heapey:

There are 14 Fleet Air Arm pilots qualified as Combat Ready on the F-35B Lightning with a further three currently undergoing F-35B Lightning training.

■ Mali: Peacekeeping Operations**Jim Shannon:**[\[12135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to award commendations to the members of the armed forces involved in seizing a cache of weapons hidden by a suspected Islamic State cell in Mali in May 2021.

James Heapey:

I am immensely proud of the contribution of all UK Armed Forces personnel to defence operations in Mali. The UK contributes to Operation BARKHANE providing vital Chinook heavy lift logistical support, and MINUSMA (the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali), where the UK reconnaissance group operates at significant range, enhancing the mission's intelligence picture and providing reassurance to hitherto unreached communities faced with significant terrorist threats.

Recently, UK troops, in a first for MINUSMA, seized a cache of weapons from a suspected terrorist cell, demonstrating the high capability of the UK force and the positive impact they have in improving the safety of the Malian population. I commend the individuals involved and the wider task force, who have all been instrumental in establishing the UK as a key partner of the MINUSMA force.

Noting the good work of all UK Service personnel who support MINUSMA, Armed Forces personnel are awarded the UN Medal on having completed 90 days accumulated service.

As is standard process, all Service personnel are considered for commendations and awards under the UK honours and awards systems.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[12969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many covid-19 vaccinations have been administered to personnel involved in the UK Task Force in Mali.

James Heapey:

As of the 11 June 2021, 98.6% of personnel deployed to the UK Task Force in Mali had received a first dose of their COVID-19 vaccine and, of these, 56% have also received a second dose. Defence will ensure that no member of the Armed Forces serving or deploying overseas is disadvantaged in their access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[12970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel involved in the UK Task Force in Mali have tested positive for covid-19 to date.

James Heapey:

Since March 2020, there have been 24 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 amongst Service personnel deployed to the UK Task Force in Mali.

■ Oman: Official Hospitality**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[12313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Chief of the Defence Staff attended a New Year's Eve party hosted by the Government of Oman on 31 December 2018.

James Heapey:

The Chief of the Defence Staff did not attend the New Year's Eve party hosted by the Government of Oman on 31 December 2018.

■ Oman: Visits Abroad**Caroline Lucas:** [\[13012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 186190, whether the Chief of the Defence Staff will continue to attend the Sultan's Privy Council in Oman.

James Heapey:

The Chief of the Defence Staff would welcome the opportunity to participate in any strategic dialogue as part of our wider engagement with this important partner.

■ Trident Submarines: Procurement**John Healey:** [\[13848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of delays to the Dreadnought programme on defence capability; and if he will make a statement.

John Healey: [\[13849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has begun a review into the Dreadnought programme.

Jeremy Quin:

Similar to all Defence programmes, the Dreadnought submarine programme is continuously assessed. Despite the effects of Covid-19, the Dreadnought programme remains on track for the First of Class, HMS Dreadnought, to enter service in the early 2030s.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Artificial Intelligence: Standards****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[13184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government is seeking international regulatory standards and safeguards on the development of artificial intelligence.

Matt Warman:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform our lives, unlock high-skilled jobs, and increase productivity.

The UK has a history of innovation-friendly approaches to regulation, in areas such as FinTech, HealthTech and online harms, and is committed to ensuring the necessary regulations exist to provide assurance and confidence around the development and use of new and emerging technologies.

The UK is playing a leading role in international discussions on AI ethics and potential regulations, including work at the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the OECD and the Global Partnership on AI, and we will continue to work with international partners including the European Union and the US to support the development of the rules around the use of AI for the benefit of our economies and societies.

Furthermore, the UK recently published Guidelines on AI Procurement in collaboration with the World Economic Forum Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These guidelines will inform and empower public sector buyers across nations, helping them to evaluate suppliers, then confidently and responsibly procure AI technologies, which meet high ethical standards, for the benefit of their citizens.

Bingo**Peter Aldous:**[\[12120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has plans to introduce additional financial support for bingo clubs in England.

Peter Aldous:[\[12121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a bespoke financial support package for bingo clubs.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises that the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be very 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 now that they are open.

■ Broadband: Ceredigion

Ben Lake: [\[12251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many premises in Ceredigion registered for the Broadband Upgrade Fund.

Matt Warman:

1,840 eligible premises in Ceredigion were registered through the Broadband Upgrade Fund website.

Ben Lake: [\[12252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many proposals were received from alternative network providers to improve broadband connectivity in Ceredigion through the Broadband Upgrade Fund.

Matt Warman:

A total of 50 approved areas of interest in Ceredigion were created by suppliers through the broadband Upgrade Fund website.

Ben Lake: [\[14036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many pre-registered packet applications his Department has received under the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme for projects located in Ceredigion.

Matt Warman:

We currently have been able to find 5 registered projects submitted in Ceredigion.

The transition from community interest through to final project approval can take a number of months so we are expecting more projects to come through as a result of the Broadband Upgrade Fund pilot scheme.

■ Broadband: Voucher Schemes

Ben Lake: [\[12250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to review the effectiveness of the Broadband Upgrade Fund.

Matt Warman:

The Broadband Upgrade Fund Pilot provided an opportunity to test an innovative approach to demand stimulation in the broadband market. The final stage of the Broadband Upgrade Fund completed in January 2021, and many suppliers are still in the process of engaging with communities to put together project proposals to submit to BDUK for approval. A full assessment of the effectiveness of the Broadband Upgrade Fund Pilot will be undertaken once there has been sufficient opportunity for proposals to turn into gigabit-capable connections.

This evaluation will look at the effectiveness of campaign elements, and the number of projects and gigabit-capable connections delivered that can be attributed to the Broadband Upgrade Fund.

Ben Lake:

[\[12253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what length of time his Department constitutes in the near future for the purposes of determining premises eligible for support under the Gigabit Voucher Scheme.

Matt Warman:

Ofcom, the market regulator, has identified areas where network providers are likely to build gigabit-capable connectivity via the Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review (WFTMR) they conducted in 2020. The decisions were a result of an extensive consultation programme with the market, and we have taken their view as a starting point for the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. By using Ofcom's classifications for assessing the likelihood of commercial investment in an area, it ensures the voucher scheme is consistent across the UK.

The data that is used to assess the eligibility criteria for the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS) changes according to the dynamic nature of commercial activity so postcodes or premises can come in and out of scope for a variety of reasons. We will continue to build on that view as we gather more data from Open Market Reviews and Public Reviews that are taking place over the coming months. As our understanding of network providers' build plans develops, voucher eligibility will be reviewed. We will complete regular performance reviews of the voucher scheme and make adjustments where necessary.

As set out in the 'Project Gigabit: Phase One Delivery Plan', the GBVS is one part of the wider Project Gigabit, and it works alongside gigabit procurements as we work towards the target of gigabit-capable connectivity. Ineligibility for a voucher doesn't mean that government support won't be available in the future via other interventions; if it becomes clear that premises are unlikely to benefit from a commercially delivered gigabit programme within a reasonable timeframe, then DCMS will take action to address this market failure.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[13083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to support the recovery of the events and exhibition sector in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England from the impact of the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Huddleston:

Business events and exhibitions make a valuable contribution to the UK economy and the Government is committed to supporting the sector's recovery.

Since 17 May, business events and exhibitions have been able to reopen subject to capacity caps which vary depending on whether the event is indoors or outdoors. The Government has also launched the Events Research Programme which is looking at how best to mitigate transmission risks across cultural, business and sporting event settings.

The Government has continued to support businesses and individuals working in the sector - including through the extension of various government-backed loans, grants and the extended furlough and self-employed support schemes.

■ Football Index

Alex Sobel: [\[12281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how evidence can be submitted to the review into the collapse of Football Index; and when evidence sessions will be held.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Secretary of State has appointed Malcolm Sheehan QC to lead the independent review of the Football Index gambling product and we have published its scope and terms of reference on gov.uk. As I said in my Written Ministerial Statement of 7 June, many former customers of Football Index have already contacted the Department to provide information and they can continue to do so via gamblingactreview@dcms.gov.uk. We will pass on any relevant evidence to the inquiry. The statement can be found at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-06-07/hcws63>

■ Football: Coronavirus

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[13867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the risk of sensitive vaccine data being shared and the risk of discrimination against fans without smartphones, whether a Data Protection Impact Assessment and a Equality Impact Assessment have been completed in relation to the trial of Covid-status certification at the Euro 2020 matches taking place at Wembley Stadium.

Nigel Huddleston:

As part of the government's world leading Events Research Programme, we are trialling the use of negative Lateral Flow Tests as part of test-on-entry protocols and how technology could be used to demonstrate vaccine status via the NHS app through Phase 3 of the Government's Events Research Programme.

Event organisers only hold the standard data required for ticket purchasing and processing.

Attendees do not need a smartphone to demonstrate their Covid-status. They can have their vaccination status, or negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test emailed to their email address. This can be printed out from a PDF, and the printed copy brought with attendees to an event.

Any positive tests are reported through NHS Test and Trace, with contact tracing undertaken to ascertain details of activity during the day of the event, including travel, seating, and activity at the venue. All testing data is held by NHS Test and Trace, details on their privacy notice can be found here: <https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk/help/privacy-notice>.

A Data Protection Impact Assessment and Public Sector Equality Duty Assessment have been completed for the EURO matches being played at Wembley as part of the Events Research Programme. As DCMS will not be collecting any personal data at these events, GDPR does not apply in this instance.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[7089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2021 to Question 2177, what physical evidence those attending the FA Cup Final in Wembley on 15 May 2021 were required to show to the NHS evidencing a negative covid-19 test result before they received their text or email granting them admission to that event; how the event organisers validated those results before attendees were admitted to the stadium; what records are held to confirm that all those who were granted entry had tested negative for covid-19; and how many people were not granted entry because they were not able to prove that they were covid-19 negative.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[7090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2021 to Question 2176 on events industry: coronavirus, what physical evidence was required of attendees at those events that they had conducted a Lateral Flow Test and were covid-19 negative before they were granted entry to those events.

Nigel Huddleston:

Admission of participants to Event Research Programme events—including the FA Cup final—is, and has been, subject to evidence of a negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test result for Covid-19, generally carried out in person at an Asymptomatic Test Site (ATS) either on the day, or on the day before, an event.

Following taking a test, participants receive a text or email from NHS Test and Trace which they need to present to staff at each event in order to gain entry. A negative LFD test result, taken within the timeframe specified, is required for entry, and results are validated by the event organisers before ticket-holders are admitted to the venue. Entry is denied to those that cannot provide evidence of a negative test result.

Pre-event communications inform attendees that ID checks can take place upon entry, and spot photo ID checks have taken place to check that names on negative tests match ID.

Event organisers only hold the standard data required for ticket purchasing and processing. The personal data that Government collects includes first name, last name, address, date of birth, postcode, and email address.

Event organisers send a list of all individuals who attend an event to Public Health England (PHE), using secure transfer methods. Attendee information—including an attendee's self-reported name, date of birth, sex, and full address—is linked to NHS number, and the NHS number is then used to link to a testing dataset; this allows testing data to be obtained for the purposes of the research study conducted by PHE, more details of which can be found on GOV.UK. The aim of this study is to provide

evidence on the feasibility of pre-event rapid antigen testing with LFDs in mitigating the risk of Covid-19 transmission amongst spectators, participants, or audiences.

Any positive tests are reported through NHS Test and Trace, with contact tracing undertaken to ascertain details of activity during the day of the event, including travel, seating, and activity at the venue.

Records are not kept of attendees who are denied entry to an event for not providing evidence of a negative test result. The research findings from the first phase of pilots of the Event Research Programme will be published on GOV.UK shortly.

■ Free Zones

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[12948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment with the Secretary of State for International Trade of the potential merits of working with his counterparts in the (a) EU and (b) US Administration to create a digital free trading zone.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Digital trade is one of the government's top trade priorities. The ongoing World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on electronic commerce present an excellent opportunity to agree plurilateral rules on digital trade. The UK is an active participant and the government is fully committed to a successful outcome that liberalises digital trade across all those WTO members taking part, which includes the European Union and the United States.

The UK's digital ambition will also be driven through bilateral trade agreements. The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement includes some of the world's most liberalising provisions for digital trade. The government is also negotiating a modern, ambitious digital trade chapter with the US as a part of the UK-US FTA.

■ Gambling: Impact Assessments

Carolyn Harris:

[\[12212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what regulatory impact assessments have been made of measures taken to deliver the Gambling Act 2005's fair and open licensing objective since the changes adopted via the Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Act 2014, excluding those changes in respect of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals stake reduction.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[12213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what regulatory impact assessments have been made of measures taken to deliver the Gambling Act 2005's no association with crime licensing objective since the changes adopted via the Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Act 2014, excluding those changes in respect of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals stake reduction.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[12214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what regulatory impact assessments have been made of measures taken to deliver the Gambling Act 2005's prevention of harm licensing objective since the changes adopted via the Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Act 2014, excluding those changes in respect of the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals stake reduction.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The licensing objectives in the Gambling Act 2005 are principles to be applied by the Gambling Commission and other licensing authorities in exercising their functions under the Act. The Commission is required to permit gambling, in so far as it thinks it reasonably consistent with pursuit of the licensing objectives: a) preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime, b) ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, and c) protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Regulatory Impact Assessments are produced by the government as a tool to assess the impact of government intervention and inform policy decision-making. The Gambling Commission is required under the Enterprise Act 2016 to produce Business Impact Target (BIT) assessments for regulatory measures that it introduces but these relate to the impact on business rather than the licensing objectives. However, as part of its consultation process, the Commission seeks information from stakeholders on the impact and value of its proposals. It also works with a wide range of partners to evaluate the impact of safer gambling measures, in connection with the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harm.

The Commission is currently working to assess the initial impact of the ban on credit cards, including with the Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) on an evaluation of consumer behaviour following the ban. In April 2021, it published a new Corporate Strategy which includes a commitment to developing a framework to evaluate the impact of its work.

■ Gaming Machines

Carolyn Harris:

[\[12215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has made an assessment of (a) whether the stake reduction on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals contributed towards achieving the Gambling Act 2005's licensing objectives and (b) the effect of the time taken between the 2016 review and implementation in 2019 of the stake reduction on the achievement of those licensing objectives.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[12216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the most significant evidence received by his Department was in support of reducing the maximum stake on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals after an assessment of the 2016 review and prior to the 2018 stake reduction announcement.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The licensing objectives in the Gambling Act 2005 are principles to be applied by the Gambling Commission and other licensing authorities in exercising their functions under the Act. The Commission is required to permit gambling in so far as it thinks it reasonably consistent with pursuit of the licensing objectives: a) preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime, b) ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, and c) protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

The government's Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures began with the publication of a call for evidence in autumn 2016, including on whether changes were needed to stake and prize limits on gaming machines. The objective of the Review was to determine what, if any, changes were needed to strike the right balance between socially responsible growth and the protection of consumers and wider communities. The call for evidence was followed by a consultation paper published in October 2017, with the government's decision to cut stakes on B2 machines in betting shops to £2 announced in the government response to the consultation in May 2018. The stake cut was in due course implemented via statutory instrument in April 2019.

The government gave careful consideration to a wide range of evidence in the course of the Gaming Machines Review and this evidence and government's analysis and conclusions were set out in the consultation, government response and the accompanying impact assessment, published at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-gaming-machines-and-social-responsibility-measures>. Evidence submitted to the call for evidence was also published at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-review-of-gaming-machines-and-social-responsibility-measures>.

■ Hate Crime: Females**Jim Shannon:**[\[13064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle online misogyny.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:[\[13177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to tackle online (a) homophobia, (b) biphobia and (c) transphobia.

Caroline Dinéage:

The government is committed to tackling misogyny, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, including the spread of such 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 misogynistic, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic content and activity that is illegal, if it is on their services.

In addition, companies with the largest audiences and with high-risk features will need to assess the risk to adults of legal but harmful content on their services. They must also 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 misogynistic, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate speech, which do 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.

EDUCATION

■ Arts and Music: Higher Education

Mr William Wragg:

[\[13990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what level of funding he plans to allocate for higher education courses in music and arts.

Michelle Donelan:

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

The government has asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the Strategic Priorities Grant for 2021-22. These reforms include the reallocation of high-cost subject funding towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, high-cost science, technology and engineering subjects, and subjects meeting specific labour market needs, as well as the removal of the London Weighting element of the grant.

One of our proposals is for a 50% reduction in the rate of high-cost subject funding, which is one element of the wider Strategic Priorities Grant, for some subjects in order to enable this reprioritisation.

Under current proposals, outlined in the OfS' consultation on recurrent funding for 2021-22, the high-cost subject funding rate for arts and music courses will be set at £121.50 in 2021-22, down from £243 in 2020-21. This fall is equivalent to a reduction of around 1% in combined funding (on a per-student basis) from a £9,250 tuition fee and OfS grant funding. The OfS' methodology for calculating funding allocations, which are done at subject price group-level rather than on an individual subject basis, means that the total amount of high-cost subject funding cannot be calculated for individual subjects such as music.

It is important to note that the Strategic Priorities Grant accounts for a relatively small proportion of the total income of higher education providers today. For the providers losing funding due to this reallocation, the income lost would account for approximately 0.05% of their estimated total income, based on the latest data available.

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

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

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

■ Children: Disability

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[11664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment he has made of the funding gap between how much in funding (a) local authorities have spent on disabled children's health and care services and (b) the Government has so allocated to local authorities for those services (i) before and (ii) after the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government has not made an assessment of local government expenditure on disabled children's health and care services in comparison to funding allocated over the period referenced. The government is clear that the responsibility for, and management of local government funding lies with local authorities, who are best placed to determine their priority needs. However, supporting local government to meet the health and care needs of all children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, remains a priority.

Since 2019-20, the government has provided additional funding for adults' and children's social care via the social care grant, giving £1.7 billion this year. In addition to the social care grant, the government made available an increase in Core Spending Power in England from £49 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.2 billion in 2021-22, a 4.5% increase in cash terms. This recognised the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain current service levels, including for disabled health and social care services.

The department is providing an additional £730 million of ongoing high needs funding for educating children and young people up to the age of 25 with complex special educational needs and disabilities, during the financial year 2021-22. This means that

the total high needs funding allocation will have risen by nearly a quarter in two years to over £8 billion this year.

Total support committed to councils in England to tackle the impacts of COVID-19 is over £12 billion. Over £6 billion of this is unringfenced, in recognition that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major COVID-19 pressures in their local area.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney: [\[14024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the catch-up and recovery plan being developed by Sir Kevan Collins is planned to be published.

Nick Gibb:

Sir Kevan Collins, the Education Recovery Commissioner, was not asked to publish a plan but rather to advise the Government on developing its plan. This has been published, through announcements of significant investments in education recovery in June 2021.

The Department will continue to focus on education recovery to make sure that no child is left behind with their education, with over £3 billion committed for catch-up so far. As part of this, the Department recently announced an additional £1 billion for tutoring and £400 million for training to support great teaching, which were both key areas Sir Kevan recommended we pursue.

This comes on top of a £650 million universal catch-up premium for schools, £200 million for face-to-face summer schools this summer, a £302 million recovery premium which will go to schools in the coming year, £18 million to support language development in the early years from next year, and £550 million to fund small group tuition. The recovery premium alone will mean that the average primary school will receive around £6,000 extra funding, and the average secondary school around £22,000 extra funding to further support pupils to catch up.

Education recovery requires a long-term approach. The next step will be a review of the evidence on extending the school day to make sure that any investment here delivers the best education for children.

■ Learning Disability: Contraception

Marsha De Cordova: [\[11656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to contraception for people with learning disabilities as part of relationships and sex education.

Nick Gibb:

As part of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), pupils are taught that everyone has the right to free confidential sexual health advice and services,

including information on how to access these services, how to get advice on and access to contraception.

To support teachers to deliver effective RSHE to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the Department has developed a SEND teacher training module which can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health#pupils-with-send>.

In July 2020, the Department hosted a national RSHE SEND webinar with a presentation from the Sex Education Forum. We have also funded eight regional webinars to support teachers of pupils with SEND to teach the new curriculum effectively. These were delivered by the National Association for Special Educational Needs and the PSHE Association.

Contraception and sexual health content also form part of the 'Intimate Sexual Relationships and Sexual Health' teacher training module. More information on this teacher training module can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-training-intimate-and-sexual-relationships-including-sexual-health>.

■ **Newton Rigg College: Skills Funding Agency**

Barry Gardiner:

[12935]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason the Skills Funding Agency agreed to a confidential deed of release during the 2011 sale of Newton Rigg.

Gillian Keegan:

In line with the policy on further education assets adopted by its sponsor department at the time (the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills), the Skills Funding Agency and its predecessor (the Learning and Skills Council) only sought asset deeds when further education assets were being transferred to other types of organisations, such as higher education institutions. This was to ensure that the assets were used and retained for the benefit of further education. As the assets were transferred to Askham Bryan College, an asset deed was not required as it was an incorporated further education college whose core mission was, and remains, the delivery of further education.

■ **Primary Education: Literacy**

Stuart Anderson:

[11671]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve literacy rates among primary school-aged children.

Nick Gibb:

The Government continues to drive improvements in literacy levels by ensuring high quality systematic synthetic phonics teaching in all our schools to give all children the firm foundation on which to progress through school, and to help them develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information.

England achieved its highest ever score in reading in 2016, moving from joint 10th to joint 8th in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) rankings. This improvement is largely attributable to increases in the average performance of lower performing pupils and boys. These are the first international assessment results from the cohort of pupils who benefited from the changes in primary curriculum and assessment introduced since the 2010 election.

In 2019, 82% of pupils in Year 1 met the expected standard in the phonics screening check, compared to just 58% when the check was introduced in 2012. For disadvantaged pupils, this has gone from 45% in 2012 to 71% in 2019. Furthermore, 2019 results showed that by the end of Year 2, 91% of pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check.

In 2018, the Department launched a £26.3 million English Hubs Programme to improve the teaching of reading. This focuses on supporting children making the slowest progress in reading, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and is providing intensive support to over 875 partner schools. We have since provided a further £17 million in this school-to-school improvement programme, which focusses on systematic synthetic phonics, early language, and reading for pleasure.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the English Hubs programme has continued to offer support and training to schools across the country by bringing much of their offer online. This has involved opening virtual training and professional development events to a wider pool of schools and distributing materials targeted specifically at remote education and recovery. The English Hubs have adapted to providing intensive support remotely and have delivered more than 1,400 days of specialist phonics training to over 875 partner schools this academic year.

■ Pupils: Down's Syndrome

Mike Amesbury:

[\[11653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to enable pupils with Down's syndrome who turned 18 during the covid-19 outbreak and were required to shield while schools were open to (a) catch up on and (b) extend their studies for another year if required.

Gillian Keegan:

On 2 June 2021, we announced the next step in the government's plans to support children and young people to make up for the impact of lost time in education as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The 16-19 tuition fund will continue to support students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and 19-24 year olds with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) through the provision of one to one and small group tuition. Providers may choose to use this funding to support eligible learners with SEND to catch up on vocational and academic skills, and skills and learning that are important for their preparation for adulthood, subject to them meeting the eligibility for the fund.

Further details on arrangements for the tuition fund in the 2021/22 academic year will be announced in due course.

In addition, we announced the government will give providers of 16-19 education the option to offer students in year 13 or equivalent the opportunity to repeat up to one more year if they have been particularly severely affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

For learners with an EHCP, where arrangements can already continue up to age 25 for those young people who need to take longer to complete their education or training, the option to repeat a year should be considered as part of the local authority's annual review of the EHCP. However, there is no guarantee or expectation that all young people with special educational needs should stay in education until they are 25. This would not be in the best interests of many young people, who will want to complete their education and progress into adult life and work. Further details on the option for year 13 students to repeat learning will be announced in due course.

■ Respite Care

Rushanara Ali:

[\[13951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of funding additional respite care for the families of disabled children to mitigate exhaustion and social isolation among carers.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow to the answer I gave on 2 June 2021 to Question [7328](#).

■ Students: Greater London

Janet Daby:

[\[11724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to plans to suspend free travel in London for people aged under 18, what plans he has to financially support students attending (a) school and (b) college from low-income backgrounds in London.

Nick Gibb:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible pupils. A pupil is eligible if they are aged between 5 to 16, attend their nearest suitable school, live more than the statutory walking distance from it, or could not reasonably be expected to walk there because of their special educational needs, a disability or mobility problem, or because the route is unsafe.

There are additional entitlements to free home to school transport for those children who are from low income families. National taxpayers will continue to fund free travel for eligible pupils. The Mayor of London has announced plans to fund travel for other under 18s through an increase in council tax and the continuation of temporary changes made to the congestion charge.

In addition, the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is allocated directly to schools and colleges to support young people who may need additional support with costs such as transport.

As part of the latest Extraordinary Funding and Financing Agreement, agreed on 1 June, Transport for London is pushing forward an ambitious active travel plan to promote cycling and walking. These measures will enable short journeys to be made safely via active travel.

■ Universities: Remote Education

Caroline Lucas:

[8571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with (a) university leaders and (b) other relevant stakeholders following the announcement by some universities that they plan to continue with lectures online in the Autumn term 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

As autonomous institutions, it is for universities to determine their own provision, including their learning approach, taking account of any government guidance. We understand that a number of universities have announced plans on teaching in the next academic year: some will retain an element of blended learning. We know that the COVID-19 outbreak has enabled many providers to identify new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, and students will continue to benefit from these alongside in person provision. We expect all universities to act in the interest of students and provide them with a full experience and in accordance with Office for Students guidance, which can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/guidance-for-providers-about-student-and-consumer-protection-during-the-pandemic/>. Higher Education (HE)

providers should communicate clearly to their students what they can expect from planned teaching and learning so that they are able to make informed choices.

We are working with universities to identify a number of scenarios we should consider in planning for the autumn term, taking account of the latest public health advice. We intend to update the HE guidance in due course to support the return of students for the new academic year.

As outlined in guidance, we expect providers to continue to organise provision in a way that minimises the risk of outbreaks at the start of the new term.

The government's clear and stated expectation is that universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students regardless of their background have the resources to study remotely. The Office for Students (OfS), as regulator for English HE providers, has made it clear that HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and academic standards, which set out requirements to ensure that courses are high-quality, that students are supported and achieve good outcomes and that standards are protected.

I am confident that universities will continue to deliver high-quality provision, as they have done throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and continue to ensure risks are managed appropriately. Students will still be able to expect a rich, rounded experience from their HE provider.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Farms

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[10412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of UK farms were below five hectares in each of the last five years.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra only produces statistics on farms with significant levels of farming activity (a). Farms with less than five hectares (and small levels of other farming activities) fall below these thresholds so we are unable to estimate how many farms have less than five hectares. The farms defined with significant levels of farming activity account for at least 98% of agricultural activity in the country and enable us to produce national estimates without burdening the smallest farms who do not generally produce for the market.

(a) Significant levels of farming are defined as more than five hectares of agricultural land, one hectare of orchards, 0.5 hectares of vegetables or 0.1 hectares of protected crops, or more than 10 cows, 50 pigs, 20 sheep, 20 goats or 1,000 poultry.

■ Farms: Finance

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[13877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 June 2021 to Question 10213 on Farms: Finance, when he plans to publish the membership of the co-design steering group.

Victoria Prentis:

We will check with the members of the co-design steering group that they are content to be named publicly and we will publish the names in due course.

■ Niramax: Landfill Tax

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[11490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Environment Agency concluded its investigation into Niramax on the potential systematic abuse of the landfill tax system by that company prior to the inauguration of the Joint Unit for Waste Crime; and whether the Environment Agency passed over its investigation of that company to the Joint Unit for Waste Crime.

Rebecca Pow:

The investigation into Niramax and abuse of the landfill tax system was conducted by HM Revenue & Customs. The Environment Agency and the Joint Unit for Waste Crime only provided support to their investigation.

■ **Pesticides: Exports****Thangam Debbonaire:****[R] [10466]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of banning the export licensing of Paraquat.

Victoria Prentis:

We take our trade and international obligations for human health and the environment seriously and continue to monitor action in other countries and learn from their experiences.

The export of paraquat from Great Britain (GB) is regulated under the GB Prior Informed Consent (PIC) regulatory regime for the export and import of certain hazardous chemicals. Companies intending to export any of these chemicals from the GB must notify the importing country via the exporter's Designated National Authority. For GB, the Designated National Authority is The Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Paraquat additionally requires the explicit consent of the importing country before export can take place. The exchange of information that PIC provides allows the importing countries to make informed decisions on the import of those chemicals and on how to handle and use them safely. This process is kept under review.

We believe it is essential that the use of actives that are known to be hazardous to human health or the environment should be subject to scientific risk assessment, mitigation and regulatory protections. That is why we support notification of the export of Paraquat under GB PIC and support its listing under the Rotterdam convention.

We also believe in evidence based international policy making through the use of scientific committees, such as the Chemical Review Committee, and support the strengthening of the international science:policy interface for chemicals and pesticides to support global decision making.

■ **Recycling****Steve Reed:****[12146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of household recycling and waste centres in each local authority area in (a) 2010, (b) 2015 and (c) 2020.

Rebecca Pow:

We collect information on the number of Civic Amenity Sites (household waste recycling centres) operated by a local authority or its contractors. This information is

only collected in quarter four (January to March) via WasteDataFlow. Two questions are completed in WasteDataFlow, one by waste disposal authorities for each district and the other is completed by unitary authorities and waste collection authorities.

The datasets can be found at the following link: [WasteDataFlow - Local Authority waste management - data.gov.uk](#), with the datasets for 2020, 2015 and 2010 attached.

The data can be filtered by setting the 'question column' to 'Q013' (Waste Disposal Authorities) or 'Q015' (Unitary Authorities and Waste Collection Authorities). Then the number of Civic Amenity Sites for each local authority will be presented in the 'data column'.

■ Recycling: Labelling

Ruth Jones:

[11667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Environment Bill's mandatory recycling labelling provisions will be aligned with best in class existing clear and well-recognised consumers recycling labels.

Ruth Jones:

[11668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of consumer research on existing recycling labels, including (a) the effect of a multiplicity of labels on recycling rates and (b) recognition rates of existing labels; and how he plans to take account of that research in the (i) development and (ii) implementation of mandatory recycling labelling as part of extended producer responsibility.

Rebecca Pow:

As set out in our recent consultation on extended producer responsibility for packaging (which closed on 4 June 2021), our preferred approach to implement mandatory recyclability labelling for packaging includes that labels must meet criteria set in regulations and will have to be approved by the Government or the regulator prior to use. This will ensure a clear and consistent approach to mandatory recyclability labelling for packaging. Our preferred approach provides flexibility for existing recycling labels to continue to be used subject to meeting the criteria set in regulations and approved by the Government or the regulator.

The Government recognises that a variety of labels can cause consumer confusion. However, alongside mandatory recyclability labelling there will be producer-led communication campaigns which will help to raise consumer awareness regarding what packaging can and cannot be recycled.

Last year, Defra commissioned the Waste and Resources Action Programme to review the available evidence regarding the social impact of labelling in the context of extended producer responsibility schemes and to provide an analysis of the current available evidence of on-pack labelling on consumer disposal behaviour. Key findings

of the review include that consumer recycling behaviour can be influenced by a well-designed label along with recommendations regarding what the best performing label would look like. Findings in this review will be taken into consideration when developing and implementing mandatory recycling labelling as part of extended producer responsibility for packaging.

In addition, the Competition and Markets Authority is currently consulting on draft guidance on environmental claims on goods and services. This includes guidance on recyclability claims made on labels.

Ruth Jones: [\[11669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what engagement the Government (a) has had and (b) is planning with industry bodies to gain expert input into the process for determining recyclability as part of the implementation of the extended producer responsibility regime and mandatory recycling labelling.

Ruth Jones: [\[11670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support he is offering (a) producers and (b) retailers that are obligated under the extended producer responsibility regime to understand how recyclability will be determined; and what steps he is taking to (i) advise businesses to make decisions on packaging design and (ii) help businesses to adopt new definitions of recyclability ahead of launch in 2023.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government, the Devolved Administrations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and three industry trade bodies are jointly running a project to look at how producer fees for the packaging extended producer responsibility scheme could be modulated (varied) depending on the recyclability of packaging. At the core of this project is stakeholder engagement and stakeholders have expressed their views on, and discussed, the role of recyclability assessments in informing modulated fees and labelling. This project is due to complete by the end of 2021.

There has also been direct engagement with bodies who have developed or are developing recyclability assessment methodologies.

In the recent consultation on the introduction of packaging extended producer responsibility, the Government set out its proposal that the Scheme Administrator should develop or procure the recyclability assessment methodology on behalf of its members. This to provide producers with a common methodology to determine whether for individual items of packaging the combination of components, materials, and design, meets the recyclability criteria. This approach would also underpin labelling for recyclability.

I understand the need for businesses to gain clarity about the new packaging extended producer responsibility scheme as early as possible. We want to be transparent and to provide clarity as soon as we can for each element of the scheme as this will help producers with the design decisions they need to make. However, it will not be for Government to advise businesses on specific packaging design

decisions. In the recent consultation the Government set out proposed timelines, including for labelling and invited feedback. We will consider these responses as we finalise our proposals.

■ Rivers: Sewage

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[11658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that private water companies are held accountable for illegal dumping of untreated sewage into rivers across the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

All discharges to the water environment require a permit issued by the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting Regulations. The Environment Agency will include the necessary conditions in water company discharge permits to ensure discharges occur only under strict permitted conditions. Where discharges occur outside of these conditions, the Environment Agency investigates and takes appropriate action, which includes enforcement action if necessary.

Environment Agency action has resulted in 48 prosecutions against water companies in the last six years, securing fines of £35 million. £10.4 million has also been donated to environmental and wildlife trusts organisations in the same period through enforcement undertakings, a voluntary agreement which will include a donation to environmental charities to restore any harm done. The Environment Agency will continue to take enforcement action against water companies which fail to uphold the law or cause serious environmental harm.

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 introducing 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 help to reduce pollution in rivers – protecting wildlife and public health.

■ Sheep: Imports

Virginia Crosbie:

[14086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for the future long-term sustainability of the British sheep industry of amending the sanitary conditions relating to the importation of live sheep and ram semen from Australia and New Zealand to enable imports from animals bearing the scrapie genotype group 2, specifically scrapie genotypes ARR/ARQ, ARR/ARH or ARR/AHQ.

Victoria Prentis:

There have been no changes in our import conditions for scrapie, Annex IX chapter H of regulation (EC) No. 999.2001 details the requirements for import of ovine and caprine semen, oocytes and embryos, which was adopted into UK law. These germinal products of non-ARR/ARR prion protein genotypes may be imported provided they meet the other scrapie requirements set out in the legislation and corresponding import health certificate.

[Ovine and caprine germinal products: health certificates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

The UK maintains its own sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) imports regime to protect public, animal and plant life and health and the environment. We have repatriated the functions of audit and inspections to ensure that trading partners, including those we secure trade deals with, continue to meet our import conditions. This provides a standing, robust system that works alongside border controls to maintain our high standards going forward.

■ Supermarkets: Delivery Services

Mark Menzies:

[10339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with supermarket retailers to help ensure that elderly or disabled residents remain able to access (a) home delivery slots and (b) good quality produce with a suitable shelf life.

Victoria Prentis:

Central and local government have worked in partnership with supermarkets to enable vulnerable individuals to access prioritised supermarket delivery slots until 21 June, which has facilitated millions of deliveries. Defra continues to hold regular conversations with major supermarkets to raise awareness of issues related to food access for elderly and disabled people, including the availability of supermarket deliveries.

There are a number of options open to elderly or disabled individuals who want support to access food. Vulnerable individuals can contact their local authority, or request support from an NHS volunteer responder in gaining access to food, prescriptions and other essential items by calling the phone line or visiting the Royal Voluntary Service website.

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, with a food industry that is well versed in dealing with scenarios that can impact food supply. We remain in regular contact with the food industry and suppliers, who hold the expertise, capability and levers to ensure that all consumers continue to have access to a wide range of food products when they shop.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Emily Thornberry: [\[13883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date officials in his Department provided Acuity Translations with the completed English technical documents for translation into Japanese necessary to apply for the UK's new geographical indications, as part of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Emily Thornberry: [\[13884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date Acuity Translations provided his officials with the completed technical documents translated into Japanese necessary to apply for the UK's new geographical indications, as part of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Emily Thornberry: [\[13885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what date officials in his Department provided the Department for International Trade with the completed technical documents translated into Japanese necessary to apply for the UK's new geographical indications, as part of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

Victoria Prentis:

Following the contract award on 2 December 2020, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) provided the geographical indications technical documents to Acuity translations with a view to work commencing on 23 December 2020. Defra received all the completed translations of the geographical indication technical documents on 1 February 2021 and provided the Department for International Trade with these documents on 13 April 2021 as requested following discussion with Japanese counterparts.

■ Unemployment: Rural Areas

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[11543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on trends in unemployment in rural areas.

Rebecca Pow:

Over the period of the Covid-19 pandemic the unemployment rate in rural areas increased from 2.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2020 to a peak of 3.6 per cent in the

third quarter of 2020 but has since fallen to 3.0 per cent in the first quarter of 2021. In urban areas the unemployment rate increased from 4.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2020 to a peak of 5.7 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020 but has fallen to 5.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2021.

In April 2020 the eligibility criteria for claiming Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance were changed following the Covid-19 pandemic. In predominantly rural areas the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance while seeking work had increased by May 2020 to 5.0 per cent from 2.2 per cent in February 2020. In comparison, the proportion in predominantly urban areas increased to 7.2 per cent from 3.4 per cent over the same period. By April 2021 in predominantly rural areas the proportion of the working age population claiming Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance while seeking work had decreased to 4.6 per cent while in predominantly urban areas it was 7.3 per cent.

Unemployment rate (as a proportion of people aged 16 and over who are economically active (in or seeking work)), England

	QUARTER 1 2020	QUARTER 2 2020	QUARTER 3 2020	QUARTER 4 2020	QUARTER 1 2021
Rural areas	2.7	3.3	3.6	3.0	3.0
Urban areas	4.3	4.1	5.4	5.7	5.2

Proportion of the working age population (aged 16 to 64 years) claiming Universal Credit or Job Seeker's Allowance whilst seeking work, England

	FEBRUARY 2020	MAY 2020	APRIL 2021
Predominantly rural areas	2.2	5.0	4.6
Predominantly urban areas	3.4	7.2	7.3

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Caroline Ansell:

[901235]

What progress the Government has made through international co-operation on tackling climate change.

James Duddridge:

The G7 Leaders Summit was a critical point as we work towards COP26 in Glasgow later this year. The G7 collectively committed to achieve net zero no later than 2050, and to halve our collective emissions and protect 30% of land and oceans by 2030.

Jack Brereton:[\[901237\]](#)

What diplomatic steps he is taking to support the operation of political opposition in Belarus.

Wendy Morton:

We support the opposition's struggle to seek a democratic future for all Belarusians through peaceful means. We strongly condemn the ongoing repression and human rights violations committed by the Lukashenko regime. The Government has increased financial support to civil society organisations and independent media. We have provided over £1m in 2020, and an additional £1.8m this financial year to support civil society and media freedom in Belarus. We have imposed over 90 sanctions designations in response to the fraudulent elections and human rights violations in Belarus and we are actively considering further designations. Following the FR4978 flight, the UK took clear decisive action:

- We suspended the operating permit of Belavia airlines.
- We banned Belarusian airlines from UK airspace without prior authorisation
- We have advised all UK airlines to avoid flying over Belarus.

The Foreign Secretary discussed the political situation in Belarus and further measures the UK might take with the opposition leader in exile, Svetlana Tikhonovskaya 2 June. The UK pressed for a fact finding investigation by ICAO, the international organisation responsible for civil aviation, which was established on 27 May.

Duncan Baker:[\[901239\]](#)

What steps he has taken to secure international co-operation on the Leaders Pledge for Nature to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 for sustainable development.

James Duddridge:

We are working to build support for the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, and 88 countries so far have signed up. I am pleased that in the last two weeks, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Guyana, and Suriname have also signed up. Just last weekend, the Prime Minister secured commitments from G7 Leaders to work together to tackle biodiversity loss, including to protect at least 30% of global land and ocean by 2030.

Alison McGovern:[\[901243\]](#)

What recent steps the Government has taken to support refugees and internally displaced people overseas.

James Cleverly:

The UK remains at the forefront of refugee responses around the world. In March, the Foreign Secretary announced 'at least £205 million' to the Syria Crisis, bringing our total support to over £3.7 billion since 2012.

We continue to be one of the lead donors to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), supporting its efforts to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees in some of the most challenging environments around the world.

The UK is also one of the largest bilateral donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, supporting access to vaccines in up to 92 low and middle-income countries, aiming to supply 1.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines before the end of 2021.

Judith Cummins:[\[901246\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Gaza, exacerbated by recent escalation of violence between Hamas and Israel, including significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure including homes, schools, hospitals, and clinics.

We are in close contact with UN agencies and key partners on the ground to assess the situation and will monitor closely.

I announced funding of £3.2 million to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal on 20 May. This will address the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians living in Gaza.

Humanitarian access remains critical. We continue to urge Israel to ensure access into and out of Gaza, including for essential health services.

Mr John Baron:[\[901247\]](#)

If he will take steps to help prevent the closure of British Council offices overseas.

Nigel Adams:

As my honourable friend knows, we agreed a 2021/22 Spending Review for the British Council settlement totalling £189m, a 27% increase on funding for 2020/21. Not only have we increased funding, we provided a rescue package during the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes immediate assistance of £26m at the start of the pandemic, a loan facility of up to £145m, and a further £100m loan to support restructuring. We also provided a Letter of Comfort to ensure the Council could meet its financial obligations. Alongside the British Council, we are reviewing physical Council presence in country as part of a wider modernisation process. These changes will be minimal. The impact of the Council in a digital age should be judged by its operational rather than physical presence. But I would remind him that despite the challenging economic climate, the Government is providing over £600 million since the pandemic hit to secure the Council's future, demonstrating our commitment to the organisation.

Andy Slaughter: [\[901260\]](#)

What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of advising UK businesses against trading with illegal settlements as a disincentive to Israeli settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territories.

James Cleverly:

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.

The UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship and we are firmly opposed to boycotts or sanctions. But we do not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the settlements, as part of Israel.

We urge Israel to halt settlement expansion immediately.

Ultimately it will be the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but the British Government would neither encourage nor offer support to such activity.

■ Africa: Bilateral Aid**Stephen Doughty:** [\[13954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to (a) Mauritania, (b) Sierra Leone, (c) Togo, (d) Guinea and (e) Guinea-Bissau in 2021-22.

Stephen Doughty: [\[13955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral overseas development assistance has been allocated to (a) Chad, (b) Niger, (c) Nigeria, (d) Sao Tome and Principe and (e) Cabo Verde in 2021-22.

Stephen Doughty: [\[13956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to (a) Ethiopia, (b) Djibouti, (c) Eritrea, (d) Rwanda and (e) Uganda in the 2021-22 financial year.

James Duddridge:

Full budgets per country and a final audited spend for 2021/22 will be published in due course, including in our regular Statistics on International Development and in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Bahrain: Politics and Government**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[14085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Bahrain pro-Democracy leaders Dr. Saeed Alshehabi, Mr. Ali Mushaima, and Mr. Moosa Mohammad; and whether he has plans to meet those people.

James Cleverly:

Ministers have not had discussions with Dr. Saeed Alshehabi, Mr Moosa Mohammad or Mr Ali Mushaima.

■ **Bahrain: Prisons****Martyn Day:**[\[14015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the findings of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on Jau Prison, what the evidential basis was for the UK Ambassador to Bahrain's statement that Jau Prison is a well-run facility with good medical provision and measures against covid-19 on 6 May 2021.

James Cleverly:

As stated in my answer of 9 June, the Ambassador and other international representatives visited Jau Prison on 3 May. The visit enabled our Ambassador to raise human rights matters, to see and assess the facilities and current conditions at Jau Prison first hand and to understand the measures implemented to counter Covid-19.

■ **Belarus: Aviation****Jim Shannon:**[\[12140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking against the President of Belarus in response to the forced landing of the Ryanair flight in May 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is taking concrete and swift action in response to the forced landing of flight FR4978. Specific actions include the banning of all Belarusian aircraft from UK airspace without prior authorisation; suspension of the Belarusian national carrier's operating permit and advice to all UK airlines against overflying Belarus airspace. The UK also led in initiating a robust G7 statement in response to the forced landing of flight FR4978, and led calls for the investigation now launched by the International Civil Aviation Organization. As the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement of 24 May, we are also consulting with allies on further measures against the regime in Belarus, including sanctions.

■ **Belarus: Politics and Government****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[11672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will invite Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya to the G7 summit talks to discuss the political situation in Belarus.

Wendy Morton:

It was not possible to invite further national participants to the G7 summit. However G7 Leaders discussed current global issues including the Lukashenko regime's

reckless and dangerous behaviour and this was reflected in the official communique. The Foreign Secretary discussed the political situation in Belarus with the opposition leader, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya on 2 June and made it clear that Mrs Tikhanovskaya should visit the UK as soon as conditions allow. Until that becomes possible, officials are in regular contact with civil society and opposition groups and most recently spoke to members of the Belarus National Anti-Crisis Management on 7 June.

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[12351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support political opposition in Belarus.

Wendy Morton:

The Government has increased financial support to civil society organisations and independent media to support the environment for inclusive political dialogue in Belarus.

The UK's support for opposition groups in Belarus is focused on supporting the democratic rights of the people of Belarus, including through an inclusive national dialogue to end the current crisis. The Foreign Secretary discussed the political situation in Belarus with the opposition leader in exile, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, on 2 June. Mrs Tikhanovskaya has praised the UK's actions on Belarus to date and discussed what further measures the UK might take. The Foreign Secretary looked forward to meeting Mrs Tikhanovskaya in the UK as soon as it was possible for her to visit.

■ **Central African Republic: Chad**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[11733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives from the Governments of (a) Chad and (b) the Central African Republic on the recent reported violence at the border between those two countries.

James Duddridge:

The UK's statement at the UN Security Council on 7 June condemned the recent violence on the Chad / Central African Republic (CAR) border, and expressed our condolences for the lives lost. As our Ambassador to Chad stated on 5 June, the UK supports the stability of the region, and takes seriously infringements of the territorial integrity of any country. Tensions must be de-escalated through diplomatic means. Ministers have not held discussions recently with the Governments of Chad or CAR regarding the border clashes.

■ **China: Uighurs**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that patents were filed in July 2018 for technology that could identify people by their ethnicity by (a) Huawei

and the (b) Chinese Academy of Sciences which specifically seeks to identify members of China's Uyghur population; and what recent discussions he has had with (i) Cabinet colleagues, (ii) representatives of Huawei and (iii) other relevant stakeholders on the potential role of that technology in the persecution of the Uyghur population in China.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to promoting the ethical development and deployment of technology in the UK and overseas. We are aware of a number of Chinese technology companies linked to violations taking place in Xinjiang, and are monitoring the situation closely.

On 12 January, the Foreign Secretary announced a series of measures to help ensure UK businesses and the public sector are not complicit in human rights violations or abuses in Xinjiang. These measures include a review of export controls; the introduction of financial penalties under the Modern Slavery Act; increasing support for UK government bodies to exclude suppliers complicit in violations or abuses; and strengthening the Overseas Business Risk guidance to highlight that businesses engaged in the fields of surveillance, biometrics, or tracking technology are at heightened risk of complicity in human rights violations in Xinjiang.

The UK Government has embarked on a comprehensive programme of engagement with businesses and UK trade bodies to discuss these issues. This has included a number of high level, Minister led sessions with businesses and trade bodies on the issue of Xinjiang since February 2021. The Government has also published guidance to help cutting-edge UK firms negotiate the ethical, legal and commercial questions they may encounter when working with Chinese businesses, supporting safe and appropriate UK-China collaboration in digital and tech. The guidance provides firms with clear, up-to-date information and specialist support which reflect the UK's values and take account of national security concerns.

There are regular discussions across Government on these issues, including through a cross-Government working group established in August 2020 to coordinate action related to the human rights situation in Xinjiang.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[12207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to help tackle human rights abuses against the Uyghur Muslim population in China.

Nigel Adams:

We have serious concerns about the gross violation of human rights occurring in Xinjiang, including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in 'political re-education camps'; systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam; and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities.

The UK Government has led international efforts to hold China to account. We led the first two statements on Xinjiang at the UN and have utilised our diplomatic network to

raise the issue up the international agenda. In January, we announced a package of measures to help ensure no UK organisation is complicit in human rights violations in China, and in March we imposed asset freezes and travel bans against four senior Chinese government officials and one entity, alongside the EU, US and Canada. The Foreign Secretary has raised the UK's serious concerns directly with Chinese Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi on a number of occasions, most recently on 27 May, and has repeatedly called for UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or another UN expert to be allowed unfettered access to Xinjiang.

■ Defence Equipment: Israel

Layla Moran:

[\[900776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether British arms exported to Israel were used in recent air strikes on Gaza.

James Cleverly:

HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

■ G7: Cornwall

Paul Bristow:

[\[12321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to include (a) corporate governance, (b) investor protection and (c) rule of law as discrete items for discussion at the G7 Summit in Cornwall in June 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The G7 Leaders' Summit (11-13 June in Cornwall) demonstrated our leadership in revitalising G7 cooperation between democratic open societies to tackle the most pressing global challenges.

As well as a series of commitments to support the ending of the pandemic in 2022, and major new commitments on climate, the Leaders' Communiqué also set out high governance standards as a priority within our new G7 initiative for clean and green growth, and committed the G7 to enhancing cooperation on investment security within our G7 Investment Screening Expert Group.

The rule of law was reaffirmed as central to our shared values, both in the Communiqué and the Open Societies Statement (which was agreed by both the G7 and our guests of Australia, India, the Republic of Korea and South Africa).

■ Gaza: Israel**Andy Slaughter:** [\[11711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the recent reported Israeli military offensive on healthcare (a) workers and (b) infrastructure in Gaza.

James Cleverly:

The UK welcomed 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 priority now is ensuring timely humanitarian access into and out of Gaza, including for essential health services. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure including homes, schools, hospitals, and clinics.

The United Kingdom is also providing an initial £3.2 million of UK aid to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, which launched on 19 May 2021. This appeal will address the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians living in Gaza.

■ Greece: Refugees**Jim Shannon:** [\[12138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of increasing restrictions and registration requirements on NGOs operating in Greece on the level of support available to refugees in that country.

Jim Shannon: [\[12139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to his Greek counterpart on the registration requirements being placed on NGOs supporting refugees in Greece.

Wendy Morton:

We have not made specific representations in relation to the regulations to which you refer, however we regularly engage with Greek authorities, UNHCR and NGO's on migration issues, and support Greece's efforts to effectively manage migration. UK and Greek Ministers discussed migration priorities and opportunities for further collaboration in March and May 2021. The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas also discussed migration challenges with representatives from the Migration Ministry and International Organisation for Migration during her visit to Athens in April. We will continue to work with our partners to identify opportunities to further support Greece's efforts in this regard.

■ India: Radioactive Materials**Naz Shah:** [\[13978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received recent representations on nuclear theft in India; and if he will make a statement on the implications for his policies of nuclear theft.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary has not received recent representations on nuclear theft in India. The UK discusses nuclear issues, including nuclear security, with India at an annual senior official dialogue. Working level engagement on nuclear security takes place through a UK-India Joint Working Group.

The UK remains committed to the highest standards of nuclear security at home and around the world. We strongly support the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) role in coordinating global efforts and assisting Member States implement effective nuclear security. We are a leading contributor to the IAEA's Nuclear Security Fund (NSF), which helps Member States to enhance their security.

■ Indonesia: Death**Alex Sobel:** [\[13213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Indonesian counterpart on the deaths of three civilians on 4 June 2021 in Ilaga, Puncak Regency of West Papua.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of increased tensions in the Papua region and we continue to monitor developments closely. We are aware of this incident involving civilians and my thoughts are with the families of those involved. We urge all parties to refrain from escalating tensions and welcome recent dialogue between security forces, the Indonesian Human Rights Commission and Papuan civil society leaders to ensure the protection of civilians during law enforcement operations in the region. The UK fully respects the territorial integrity of Indonesia and regard the provinces of Papua and West Papua as an integral part of Indonesia.

■ Israel: Palestinians**Andy Slaughter:** [\[11712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterparts on the reported use of force by that country's security forces against Palestinian demonstrators.

James Cleverly:

The UK continues to urge the Israeli Government to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of peaceful, legal protestors.

In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we continue to urge Israel to ensure that its investigations are transparent, swift and

comprehensive. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

■ **Nepal: Coronavirus**

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[12099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the covid-19 (a) case rate, (b) hospitalisation rate and (c) mortality rate in Nepal.

Nigel Adams:

There is a second wave of COVID-19 in Nepal, which is reflected across all three of these indicators. The UK Government continues to support the people of Nepal during this pandemic, and the British Embassy in Kathmandu has reprioritised over £40 million of its development budget to support the COVID-19 response since 2020. In addition, on 28 May the UK Government donated 260 ventilators and various pieces of personal protective equipment, as well as funding two health experts to assess the situation and support Nepal's COVID-19 response.

■ **Occupied Territories: Bilateral Aid**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[14027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance he has allocated to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2021-22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[14029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance he has allocated to Iraq in 2021-22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[14030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance he has allocated to Iran in 2021-22.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[14031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance he has allocated to Lebanon in 2021-22.

James Cleverly:

As the Foreign Secretary set out at the International Development Committee, budgets would not normally be set out this early in the year. We will publish full budgets per country in due course, including on the Statistics on International Development website and in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Overseas Aid

Chris Law: [\[12167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 April 2021, FCDO update, HCWS935, if he will provide a breakdown of Official Development Assistance spending in 2019-20 in line with the thematic areas the Government has announced for 2021-22.

Nigel Adams:

The thematic areas announced for 2021-22 reflect the Foreign Secretary's strategic framework outlined to parliament on 26 November 2020. The Statistics on International Development (SID) National Statistics, published on GOV.UK, provide an overview of all UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA) by calendar year (2019 is the latest available year). Sector groupings reported in the SID are collected and reported in line with the OECD reporting directives, using the international OECD sector categories and will not directly correspond with the thematic areas announced for planned 2021-22 spend.

■ Overseas Aid: Education

Chris Law: [\[12168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 April 2021, FCDO update, HCWS935, what the total amount of Official Development Assistance spending was in 2019-20 on the thematic area girls' education as referenced in that Written Statement for 2021-22.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary laid a statement before the House of Commons on 21 April 2021, which sets out how he is directing the FCDO's aid portfolio this year. He announced that the FCDO will spend £400 million of bilateral ODA on girls' education in the financial year 2021/22

Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020 will be published in the autumn 2021, and will contain a detailed breakdowns of the UK's ODA spend for 2020. Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2019 is already available.

■ Overseas Aid: Poliomyelitis

Cat Smith: [\[11580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding from the public purse the UK Government has contributed to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in each of the last ten years.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a strong supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, having given £585 million in funding over the last 10 years and a total of £1.37 billion since 1995. Specifically, funding for each of the last 10 years has been:

2011/12 - £65 million
2012/13 - £40 million
2013/14 - £110 million
2014/15 - £50 million
2015/16 - £65 million
2016/17 - £39 million
2017/18 - £63 million
2018/19 - £50 million
2019/20 - £33 million
2020/21 - £70 million

Cat Smith:

[\[11581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how funding from the public purse the UK Government plans to contribute to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in each of the next five years.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a strong supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) having provided £1.37 billion in total since 1995. Future commitments to GPEI will be determined as part of the next Spending Review.

■ **Sri Lanka: Human Rights**

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[13116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the UK global human rights sanctions regime in preventing of human rights abuses in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

Sanctions are one response among a number of diplomatic tools we can deploy around the world as part of a broader political strategy in order to change or send a political signal regarding particular behaviours. The Global Human Rights Sanctions regime gives the UK a powerful tool to hold to account those involved in serious human rights violations or abuses. We will continue to consider targets globally, guided by the objectives of the human rights sanctions regime and the evidence. However, it is not appropriate to speculate on who may be designated in the future, as to do so could reduce their impact.

The UK Government, alongside our partners in the Core Group, has led international efforts over many years to promote accountability, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka, including at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). On 23 March the UNHRC adopted a new UK-led resolution, 46/1. This resolution provides a continued framework for international engagement on human rights in Sri Lanka, and highlights serious concerns about the situation, including those detailed in the report of the

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It calls on the government of Sri Lanka to make progress on accountability and human rights, and stresses the importance of a comprehensive accountability process for all violations and abuses committed in Sri Lanka. We continue to engage with the government of Sri Lanka on these important issues.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[13042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 27 May 2021 to Question 6268 on Tigray: Armed Conflict, what the timescale is for deployment of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts to Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The UK is appalled by reports of atrocities including widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by different armed groups in Tigray. As stated in response to question 6268, we are currently identifying personnel from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts who can deploy to the region to strengthen justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We do not have a fixed date for deployment yet. COVID-19 restrictions and the conflict environment are practicalities that have to be factored in, but we are working to deploy as soon as possible.

The UK is supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross, UN agencies, specialised NGOs and 9 civil society partners to provide adequate essential services to survivors. We currently contribute to the UNICEF, International Red Crescent and national Ethiopian Red Cross response supporting a total of 545 survivors (542 females and 3 males) with case management services.

■ Tigray: Chemical Weapons

Paul Blomfield:

[\[10358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of reports on the use of chemical weapons in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

We are aware of reports alleging that civilians in Tigray have suffered burns that may be consistent with the weaponised use of white phosphorus. The Government of Ethiopia has strongly refuted allegations that such weapons are being used against civilians. The UK strongly condemns direct or indiscriminate attacks against civilians no matter what weapon is used.

The UK Government is working to establish the facts. Access to the affected areas, and to verified information, remains difficult. We have called for communications to be restored and for unfettered humanitarian access. We have also consistently called for access for independent human rights investigators. We will continue to do so and

support the efforts of the joint investigation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[12205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help UK residents return to the UK from countries on the covid-19 red travel list.

Nigel Adams:

British nationals should not travel to red list countries or territories. Those already overseas should follow the public health advice of the country which they are in, including current COVID-19 restrictions. Those wishing to return to the UK can use commercial travel options to do so. The Government has announced that, as part of a limited trial, from 8 June direct flights are permitted to England from red list countries that were previously subject to flight bans, so long as they arrive at dedicated terminals at Heathrow and Birmingham. Those returning should check current COVID-19 related restrictions on gov.uk (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>), noting that individuals returning from red listed countries must enter managed quarantine in a hotel. British nationals requiring assistance should contact their nearest embassy, consulate or high commission. Our consular staff endeavour to give appropriate and tailored support to British nationals overseas and their families in the UK, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. This support includes providing assistance to return to the UK where it is appropriate. The assistance the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) can provide to British nationals abroad is set out in the publication: Support for British nationals abroad: A Guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>).

■ Vietnam: Coronavirus

Mr William Wragg:

[13991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support he is providing to UK citizens living in Vietnam to secure covid-19 vaccinations.

Nigel Adams:

We are in close contact with the Government of Vietnam on the provision of Covid-19 vaccinations to British nationals. The Vietnamese Ministry of Health has indicated that foreign nationals resident in Vietnam will be included within their national vaccination programme, in line with their prioritisation strategy. Vietnam is currently prioritising vaccination of frontline medical staff, essential workers, and older or medically vulnerable groups. We will provide information on Vietnam's plans through the FCDO's Vietnam Travel Advice page.

■ Visas: Europe

Fleur Anderson:

[\[11681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason people are required to have full medical insurance when applying for a 180 day tourist visa to France and other Schengen countries.

Wendy Morton:

The EU has legislated such that British Citizens can travel visa-free in the Schengen area for short stays, such as for tourism, for up to 90 days in any rolling 180-day period. British Citizens who are planning to stay longer will need permission from the relevant Member State, which may require applying for a visa and/or permit. British Citizens who apply for visas for longer stays in an EU Member State will also need to meet the healthcare requirements of that country. They may be able to join local healthcare schemes, or they may have to take out private insurance. They should check all entry requirements with Member State authorities before they travel.

The provisions in the Protocol on Social Security Coordination in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) mean that reciprocal healthcare arrangements are in place, allowing people to continue to have access to urgent or necessary healthcare cover when travelling in the EU. However, the Government still recommends that individuals take out comprehensive travel insurance which covers healthcare costs when travelling abroad. Reciprocal healthcare arrangements only cover emergency and necessary healthcare costs and so may not cover all healthcare costs that might arise when travelling.

■ Yemen: Bilateral Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[14028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much bilateral Official Development Assistance he has allocated to Yemen in 2021-22.

James Cleverly:

As I [Minister Cleverly] announced at the Yemen Pledging Conference on 1 March, the UK has committed to spend at least £87 million of Official Development Assistance in Yemen in the Financial Year 2021/22.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Drugs

Scott Benton:

[\[10682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's consultation, Home use of both pills for early medical abortion, which closed on 26 February 2021, whether his Department has met with (a) relevant stakeholders, (b) hon. Members and (c) Peers to discuss that policy; and when he plans to publish a response to that consultation.

Helen Whately:

We have met with a number of Parliamentarians and a range of stakeholders to discuss the consultation and implementation of the temporary measure. The consultation has now closed and we are carefully considering all of the responses received and plan to publish our response later this year.

■ Asthma: Prescriptions**Richard Fuller:**[\[12096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to add asthma to the list of long-term medical conditions that are exempt from prescription charges.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has no plans to review or extend the prescription charge medical exemptions list. Around 89% of prescriptions are dispensed free of charge and extensive arrangements are already in place to help people, including those with asthma. To support those with the greatest need who do not qualify for an exemption, the cost of prescriptions can be spread by purchasing prescription pre-payment certificates. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ Autism and Learning Disability: Patients**James Wild:**[\[10681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people with (a) learning disabilities and (b) autism who are in inpatient units; and what steps he is taking to reduce this number.

Helen Whately:

According to the latest NHS Digital Assuring Transformation data, at the end of April 2021, there were 2,040 people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist-in patient settings in England. Of those, 875 people had a learning disability and were not autistic; 635 were autistic without a learning disability; 515 had a learning disability and were autistic; and 20 people were recorded as 'none of the above'. Numbers by diagnosis are rounded to the nearest five and therefore may differ from the overall total.

Overall, this is a net reduction of 30% on the inpatient number in March 2015. The NHS Long Term Plan commits to investing in community alternatives to hospital to achieve at least a 50% reduction in the number of people with a learning disability or autism who are inpatients in mental health hospitals by 2023/24. The Building the right support Delivery Board has been established to drive further progress and can commission any work considered necessary to ensure the target is met.

■ Brain: Tumours

Seema Malhotra:

[\[11559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many brain tumour research applications are under consideration by the National Institute for Health Research at the most recent date for which that information is available.

Jo Churchill:

In May 2018 the Government announced £40 million over five years for brain tumour research as part of the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

Since the announcement of £40 million in May 2018, the NIHR have received 69 brain tumour applications for research funding; 10 of the brain tumour applications have been funded and seven of the brain tumour applications are still under consideration. All applications that are fundable have been funded.

We are relying on researchers to submit high-quality funding proposals and we are working with the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission towards funding workshops for previously unsuccessful researchers to support them in submitting higher quality research applications.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[11483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to relax restrictions on care home residents who are fully vaccinated, in order that they can leave their care home for outside visits without having to self-isolate upon their return.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 June 2021]: We have updated our guidance on care home visiting, which came into effect on 17 May. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/arrangements-for-visiting-out-of-the-care-home/visits-out-of-care-homes>

We will continue to keep the guidance under review, in line with clinical advice, including on the effect of vaccination.

Stephen Timms:

[\[590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will amend the current guidance on Visits out of care homes so that the position of people with learning disability in residential care is the same as that of people in supported living with comparable capacity and living situations.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: From 17 May we have updated guidance to advise care homes and their residents that visits out of the home should be allowed, subject to appropriate mitigation of the risk of bringing COVID-19 into the care home. We

have also published guidance on supported living which reflects the differences between supported living and care homes.

Care homes are one household with numerous residents while individuals in supported living environments have their own accommodation. The size of the household involved and the vulnerability of residents in care homes mean that we cannot regard the two groups as equivalent. Spending time with others outside the care home will increase the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for the resident and other vulnerable residents on their return. It is therefore important that our guidance provides advice on how to mitigate this risk.

In supported living settings, managers and carers should suggest safe ways to enable visiting, risk assessing individual settings and vulnerabilities, and considering the risks to others in shared accommodation. Families wishing to visit their loved ones in supported living or residential care settings should also follow the national guidance on meeting others safely, including guidance on support bubbles.

■ **Chronic Illnesses: Discrimination**

John Howell:

[\[10314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 May 2021 to Question 181, when that assessment is planned to be made.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 June 2021]: We have no plans to make a specific assessment. Public bodies must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This already requires them to consider how their policies affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010, including those with a disability.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[11498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the legal basis is for the use of Covid Status Certification for attendance at domestic events as set out in the wording on the NHS App Covid-19 Status privacy policy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 June 2021]: Under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021 the Secretary of State may by direction disapply any relevant restriction or requirement in relation to specified premises, a specified event or a specified gathering, for the purposes of a research programme to evidence the potential transmission of coronavirus in controlled environments. The Government is running the Events Research Programme, as announced in February, and will use this research to trial a number of potential mitigations, including certification.

■ Dementia: Research

Matt Vickers: [\[10706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's timetable is for the implementation of the dementia moonshot.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to supporting research into dementia and to delivering a moonshot. Later in 2021, we will bring forward a new dementia strategy to set out our plans for dementia research, care, support and awareness in England for future years.

Dr James Davies: [\[12211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to set out a timeline for the implementation of the dementia moonshot.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to supporting research into dementia and to delivering a moonshot. Later in 2021, we will bring forward a new dementia strategy to set out our plans for dementia research, care, support and awareness in England for future years.

■ Dental Services: Fees and Charges

Rachael Maskell: [\[7220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to review dental charges; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of free dental check-ups and treatments for all patients.

Jo Churchill:

No decision has been made on changes to dental patient charges for the 2021/22 financial year. There are already a range of exemptions to patient charges and approximately 17.7 million patients were treated free of charge in the 2019/20 financial year.

Dental patient charges remain an important contribution to the overall National Health Service budget and providing dental care for free to all patients would carry significant resource implications for the NHS.

■ Health Professions: Training

Justin Madders: [\[10444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase clinical knowledge and skills training for (a) trainee doctors, (b) student nurses and (c) other health professionals.

Helen Whately:

The standard of training for medical and health care professionals is the responsibility of the medical and health care independent statutory regulatory bodies who set the

outcome standards expected at undergraduate level and approve courses. Higher education institutions write and teach the curricula content that enables their students to meet the regulators' outcome standards. For postgraduate medical training, the curricula for foundation training is set by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and by individual Royal Colleges and faculties for specialty training. The General Medical Council approves curricula and assessment systems for each medical training programme.

■ Health Services: Learning Disability

James Wild: [\[10680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made in reforming services following the Winterbourne View review.

Helen Whately:

Following the Winterbourne View review, our objective has been to put a stop to abusive or poor quality care in inpatient settings and reduce reliance on specialist mental health inpatient services for people with a learning disability and autistic people. The NHS Long Term Plan commits to implementing 'Building the right support', to achieve at least a net 50% reduction in the number of people with a learning disability or autism who are inpatients by 2023/24. The Long Term Plan will increase investment in intensive, crisis and forensic community support to enable more people to receive personalised care in the community, closer to home, and prevent admissions. As of April 2021, there has been a 30% reduction since 2015 in the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist inpatient settings.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[3880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to reduce the number of emergency hospital admissions for inflammatory bowel disease.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with front-line clinical experts, patient representative groups and leading charities, including Crohn's and Colitis UK, to develop evidence-based improvement tools to improve inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) care and reduce the need for emergency hospital admissions. This includes a new IBD RightCare scenario, which will set out high-quality joined-up care at every point of the patient journey, as well as data packs for local commissioners.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[3883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to increase the numbers of people with inflammatory bowel disease who have a personalised care and support plan.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and NHS Improvement's RightCare team are working on a scenario for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) which will set out high-quality joined-up care at every point of the patient journey, and how the IBD service should be organised to deliver this, including the use of personalised care plans.

■ Medical Records: Data Protection**Mary Glindon:**[\[10379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the collection of general practice data by NHS Digital and the opt-out date of 23 June 2021, which patient details are planned to be shared with third parties.

Mary Glindon:[\[10380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the collection of general practice data by NHS Digital and the opt-out date of 23 June 2021, what patients' data is planned to be used for; and who plans to use that data.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 9 June 2021]: Only the information that is required to meet a legally permitted use will be accessed. The data will only be used for health and care planning and research purposes by organisations that have a legal basis and legitimate need to use the data. NHS Digital publishes the details of the data shared on their data release register. All requests to access general practitioner (GP) data are scrutinised by NHS Digital against stringent criteria, then two independent panels which include GP representatives.

Any National Health Service organisation, such as a clinical commissioning group, or a national arm's length body or research organisation can request access to the data. The data collected from GPs does not include the names and addresses of individuals or their contact numbers and is pseudonymised at source to further protect the identity of patients. The implementation date of this data collection will now be 1 September 2021.

Mary Glindon:[\[10381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the collection of general practice data by NHS Digital and the opt-out date of 23 June 2021, what steps his Department has taken to communicate the collection of that data to the public.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS Digital proactively promoted the new collection approach with all media outlets, using social media channels to promote information. Patient facing materials have been developed by NHS Digital for general practitioners to use. Following the announcement that the data collection will be delayed until 1 September 2021, NHS Digital intends to use the next two months to continue to enhance communications and further raise awareness with the public about the new collection and its benefits.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[11497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that NHS users are aware of the upcoming 23 June 2021 deadline to opt-out of patient data sharing plans.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 June 2021]: NHS Digital proactively promoted the new collection approach with all media outlets, using social media channels to promote information including an animation which describes what is a complex area in easy to understand terms. Patient facing materials have been developed by NHS Digital for general practitioners to use.

Following the announcement that the data collection will be delayed until 1 September 2021, NHS Digital intends to use the next two months to continue to enhance communications and further raise awareness with the public about the new collection and its benefits.

HOME OFFICE

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[14063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications were received for the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme for the 2021 season.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on Seasonal Worker visas in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on the number of Seasonal Worker visa applications are published in table Vis_D01 of the [entry clearance visas applications and outcomes](#) dataset while numbers of decisions can be found in table Vis_D02. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook.

The latest data relates to the year ending March 2021.

■ Asylum

Damien Moore:

[\[12291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of further submissions following the refusal of an asylum application are decided (a) within six months and (b) within one year of submission.

Chris Philp:

Home Office records indicate that a) 68% of Further Submissions lodged following refusal of an asylum application are decided within 6 months and b) 79% of Further Submissions lodged following refusal of an asylum application are decided within 12 months.

Where people who have previously been refused asylum in the UK wish to make representations in support of a fresh asylum application these are recorded as Further Submissions.

■ Asylum: Finance

Kim Johnson:

[\[11698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to compensate people who had no access to asylum support payments during the recent Aspen card transition; and what steps she is taking to ensure people do not temporarily lose access to asylum support payments in the future.

Kevin Foster:

A significant majority of service users have received their new Aspen card and they have successfully activated and started using the card.

Those who have experienced issues have been supported via the provision of emergency cash payments until their issue has been resolved. Due to this, there has always been some form of access to asylum support payments for the user population (even without an ASPEN card).

The provision of emergency cash payment has been in place for some time and will continue to be in place where emergency access to asylum support is required.

■ Child Sexual Abuse Independent Panel Inquiry

Matt Western:

[\[14033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recommendations made to date by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse; and whether she has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to implement those recommendations.

Matt Western:

[\[14034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the value for money of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in the context of the changes to Government policy that have resulted from that inquiry.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has carefully considered all recommendations made by the Inquiry to date. These recommendations informed the development of the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, which was published on 22 January, and will continue to inform its implementation.

In particular, the Government is implementing a number of IICSA's recommendations as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. This includes including further 'positions of trust' to which the existing offences contained within sections 16–19 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 will apply, when certain activities are knowingly carried out on a regular basis within a sport or a religion. We are also placing a

requirement for the courts and the police to have regard to a list of countries when they are considering the need for foreign travel prohibitions as part of the civil orders.

The Inquiry's recommendations also have a reach far beyond central Government, and continue to inform other agencies' approaches to addressing any institutional child protection gaps, and assisting with the culture change needed to improve the system-wide response to child sexual abuse.

Crucially, the Inquiry's Truth Project, which has offered nearly 6,000 victims and survivors of child sexual abuse the opportunity to share their experiences, has helped to ensure the voice of victims is at the heart of organisational and societal changes going forwards.

The Inquiry's final Report is due to be published next year which will include further findings and recommendations, which Government will carefully consider.

■ Door Supervisors and Security Guards: Licensing

Charlotte Nichols: [\[11726\]](#)

To ask the Home Department, with reference to the Security Industry Authority licence changes and additional training requirements for door supervisors and security guards that come into place on 1 October 2021, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had with (i) Cabinet colleagues and (ii) counterparts in other departments on the potential effect of those changes on licenced premises.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[11727\]](#)

To ask the Home Department, with reference to the Security Industry Authority licence changes and additional training requirements for door supervisors and security guards that come into place on 1 October 2021, what steps she is taking to minimise the potential effect of those changes on licenced premises.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[11728\]](#)

To ask the Home Department, with reference to the Security Industry Authority licence changes and additional training requirements for door supervisors and security guards that come into place on 1 October 2021, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of those changes on the temporary ability of licenced premises to stay open for business.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[11729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Security Industry Authority licence changes that come into force on 1 October 2021, what assessment she has made of the number of door supervisor and security guards that will have completed the required additional training by that date.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[11730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Security Industry Authority licence changes and additional training requirements for door

supervisors and security guards that come into force on 1 October 2021, what steps she is taking to help ensure that licence holders complete that training.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[11731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Security Industry Authority licence changes and additional training requirements for door supervisors and security guards that come into force on 1 October 2021, what estimate she has made of the number of licence holders that may leave the profession as a result of those additional training requirements.

Kit Malthouse:

The changes the Security Industry Authority (SIA) has implemented to the training applicants need to undertake before they can obtain a front-line SIA licence have been made to ensure that all operatives working in the private security sector can keep the public safe and maintain higher quality safety working practices, reflecting recent changes to the law and good practice. These changes were implemented on 01 April for new applicants and come into effect on 01 October 2021 for any existing licence holders seeking to renew their licence.

These changes were proportionate and measured. The SIA conducted robust research across the industry on the necessary skills and training standards, working with front line industry experts to frame the specifications, and carried out two rounds of public consultation on the qualification specifications. Home Office Ministers accepted the SIA's proposals and advice on standards and impact and are content the SIA has considered all necessary aspects regarding the operational impact on businesses/ employers and individual licence holders. In addition, the SIA are engaging in a continuous communications campaign to ensure that licence holders and private security businesses are aware of the requirements for additional safety-critical training, which will continue up until and after the 01 October.

Licensing is by application from individuals, therefore a final assessment of the full impacts on individual licensing and the sector will be considered by the SIA in due course. All other commercial considerations are for businesses/ employers and are not regulated by the SIA. However, as the regulator, the SIA continues to work closely with the private security industry and individuals on all aspects of licensing standards and will consider any further evidence raised by the private security sector.

■ G7: Cornwall

Conor McGinn:

[\[13994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the security costs associated with hosting the G7 summit in Cornwall; and which Government Department is responsible for meeting those costs.

Kit Malthouse:

The Cabinet Office G7 Presidency Taskforce hold a central budget for the UK presidency year. The Government will meet the additional costs incurred by Devon

and Cornwall police for the G7 Leaders' Summit which is subject to a Home Office assurance process.

The full policing costs for major events are not known until after the event, due to the responsive nature of the work.

■ Gender Based Violence

Feryal Clark: [\[11697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timeframe is for the publication of the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy 2021 to 2024.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government is determined to tackle crimes which disproportionately affect women and girls.

We will be publishing a new Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which will be followed by a complementary Domestic Abuse Strategy, this year.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

Jessica Morden: [\[13886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason Afghan interpreters who married after moving to the UK cannot bring their spouses to the UK via the Afghan relocations and assistance policy or ex-gratia schemes.

Kevin Foster:

The intention of the relocation schemes for Afghan locally employed staff is to enable eligible local staff to relocate with their existing family members. We will though consider exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis, taking into account the level of risk faced and family dependencies.

Where people choose to marry or start a relationship after relocating to the UK, their partner can apply for a visa to come to the UK under the usual family immigration rules.

■ Immigration: EEA Nationals

Tim Farron: [\[11525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether EEA nationals who apply late to the EU Settlement Scheme will be permitted right to work and rent while their applications are pending.

Kevin Foster:

From 1 July, right to work and right to rent checks will change and EEA citizens will be required to demonstrate eligibility through evidence of their immigration status, rather than their nationality.

Where an EEA citizen, who was resident here before the end of the transition period, has reasonable grounds for missing the EUSS application deadline, they will be given a further opportunity to apply.

We will be updating our guidance and communicating with employers and landlords shortly to set out the support available, and ensure they are clear on the steps they should take from 1 July.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Tim Farron:

[\[11527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government plans to take to encourage groups who are likely to miss the EU Settlement Scheme deadline to apply after the deadline has passed.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has received more than 5.6 million applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), as of 31 May 2021. We encourage anyone eligible for the EUSS to apply before the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications by those EU citizens and their family members resident in the UK by the end of the transition period, to secure their rights in UK law.

We launched a further wave of UK advertising in mid-May to ensure EU citizens and their family members are aware of the deadline and know they need to apply. This builds on the successful campaign already delivered – with £7.9 million having now been invested in such activity – with targeted adverts currently appearing on social media, website banners, catch up TV and radio.

Communications activity after 30 June will emphasise the Home Office will accept late applications from those with reasonable grounds for missing the deadline and point to the support available to those who need it.

Engagement with stakeholders, local authorities and employers will continue to raise awareness of the EUSS. In addition, the network of 72 organisations across the UK, funded by the Home Office through to 30 September 2021 with £22 million of funding, will continue to engage with vulnerable groups and help them to apply.

Feryal Clark:

[\[13245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that eligible citizens in Enfield North constituency apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by the 30 June 2021 deadline.

Kevin Foster:

Since the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) opened in March 2019, the Home Office has undertaken a broad range of communications and stakeholder engagement activity to encourage EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members to apply for and obtain status. This has included targeted stakeholder engagement to reach hard to reach and vulnerable communities across the UK.

Almost £8m has been spent on comprehensive, multi-channel EUSS advertising to increase awareness of the need to apply to EUSS for over two years. The current campaign is live across the UK, targeting EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their families.

The Home Office has also specifically engaged with stakeholders in vulnerable, harder to reach audiences including older people, children and those in care to ensure as many citizens as possible apply to EUSS by the deadline.

The Home Office has made available £22 million in funding for a network of now 72 organisations which includes charities, local authorities and community groups whose collective reach and influence extends broadly across the UK. They are helping vulnerable and harder to reach groups in applying to the EUSS

The Home Office is also working closely with other government departments, including the Department for Work & Pensions, Department for Health and Social Care, and the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government to ensure local authorities and other public sector bodies promote EUSS.

As of 31 May 2021, 5.61m EUSS applications had been received and 5.27m grants of status had been made. The Home Office urges anyone eligible for the EUSS to apply before the 30 June deadline to ensure their rights are protected following the end of the grace period.

Neil Coyle: [\[13961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department is making on completing the 300,000 pending applications to the EU Settlement Scheme prior to the deadline of 30 June 2021.

Neil Coyle: [\[13963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the backlog of applications to the EU Settlement Scheme before the deadline of 30 June 2021.

Kevin Foster:

We currently have 1,675 UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) European Casework staff in post. We are committed to ensuring our operational teams have the resources they need to run an efficient and effective system, and we actively monitor workflows to ensure sufficient resources are in place to meet demand.

The majority of applications are concluded within 5 working days, but cases may take longer dependent on the circumstances of the case, for example if the applicant is facing an impending prosecution or has a criminal record.

The following link lists the expected processing times for EU Settlement Scheme applications, based upon current performance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-application-processing-times/eu-settlement-scheme-pilot-current-expected-processing-times-for-applications>

Neil Coyle:

[13962]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the Government's original estimate of 3 million EU Settlement Scheme applications has been surpassed by a further 2 million of those applications.

Kevin Foster:

Each application to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is considered on its individual merits.

The Impact Assessment for the EUSS (March 2019) is available at:

[The Immigration and Nationality \(Fees\) \(Refund, Waiver and Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

This discussed the assumptions, risks, uncertainties and exclusions surrounding its estimate of eligible citizens and made clear it should be considered as indicative and not as minimum and maximum estimates.

The estimate of EEA citizens and their family members who were potentially eligible for the EUSS, made for the Impact Assessment, was primarily based on ONS Annual Population Survey (APS) data, which estimates the resident population, adjusted to estimate how the resident population would change in the future. It therefore cannot be directly compared to the number applications made to the EUSS.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Spellar:

[11469]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter dated 1 April 2021 from the hon. Member for Warley regarding Mr Moghadam.

Kevin Foster:

A response was sent to the Rt Hon Member on 10 June 2021.

■ **Police: Biometrics**

Janet Daby:

[11666]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what oversight mechanisms are in place for facial recognition technology used by the police; and what consent is required from members of the public to capture their features for analysis.

Kit Malthouse:

There is a comprehensive legal framework for the management of biometrics, including facial recognition. This includes the Data Protection Act 2018, regulated by the Information Commissioner's Office, Human Rights Act 1998, Equality Act 2010, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (POFA), and police forces' own published policies. The College of Policing is carrying out a public consultation on national police guidance for the use of live facial recognition. The guidance covers the oversight arrangements and the importance of

public notification and engagement. When there is no alert for a possible match, the biometrics of those captured by the system are deleted immediately.

■ Police: Death

Janet Daby:

[10644]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support the Government provides to families of people whose deaths are found to have been caused or partially caused by police actions; and where responsibility for funeral costs falls in such cases.

Kit Malthouse:

Every death that occurs following contact with the police is a tragedy for all concerned. That is why we commissioned Dame Elish Angiolini to consider what more could be done to reduce the number of such deaths and improve support.

Following the publication of the Angiolini Review into Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody in 2017 the Government has reflected on the process following the death involving contact with the police and are committed to ensure that all agencies involved are sympathetic to the needs of family and loved ones.

The Government has provided support and funding to charities and organisations who offer and signpost grieving friends and family members to tailored bereavement support. In Autumn 2021 the Ministry of Justice will publish a Means Test Review which will look at the thresholds and criteria for legal aid entitlement, including for families participating in inquests in relation to a death following police contact.

■ Retail Trade: Harassment

Dean Russell:

[11693]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to protect retail workers from verbal and physical abuse as covid-19 lockdown restrictions ease.

Kit Malthouse:

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

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

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Building Safety Fund****Chris Stephens:**[\[12190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans (a) to bring forward legislative proposals to regulate the conduct of insurers offering Professional Indemnity Insurance to those tasked with the remedial works on unsafe buildings or (b) for the Government to underwrite or indemnify the risk under an extension to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 14 June 2021]: We do not have plans to regulate the behaviour of insurers undertaking PII as this is activity already regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) in line with their statutory objectives under the Financial Services and Market Act (2000) legislation.

We understand that some construction professionals are struggling to obtain appropriate PII, particularly for fire safety work. This directly relates to the Government's remediation objectives. We have been engaging with industry to investigate these challenges. This includes developing an industry survey with the Construction Leadership Council to provide a robust evidence base of the challenges in construction PII.

We are also monitoring the effect of PII restrictions on applications to the Building Safety Fund and are engaging with suppliers to ensure they have appropriate PII cover. We continue to work across Government and with industry, to investigate solutions that may improve the availability of PII and continue the delivery of remediation at pace.

■ First Time Buyers: West Yorkshire**Imran Ahmad Khan:**[\[11701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to roll out the First Homes scheme in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

Christopher Pincher:

We recently launched the first batch of First Homes in Bolsover, Derbyshire. This is the first step in making this manifesto commitment a reality. We will be bringing more pilots out in other areas across England, and will shortly be launching a larger grant-funded programme aiming to deliver 1,500 First Homes from the end of the year. This will be open to bids to support First Homes in Wakefield and West Yorkshire from developers, local authorities and housing associations, and we hope to see strong bids from the area so that residents can benefit from First Homes as soon as possible.

Additionally, on 24 May we issued a written ministerial statement implementing new planning policy to ensure that First Homes will be delivered in all parts of England in the future.

■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention

Dr Luke Evans: [\[11675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to help ensure that professional standards of (a) competence and (b) quality management are enforced in the sectors of (i) fire door installation, (ii) fire door manufacturing and (iii) fire-stopping in high rise buildings needing repairs.

Christopher Pincher:

The Building Safety Bill will strengthen the regulatory framework for construction products, including fire doors, by creating powers to require construction products to be safe before they can be placed on the United Kingdom market, and creating a statutory list of 'safety critical' construction products. For products deemed to be 'safety critical', manufacturers will be required to declare the performance of these products to a specific standard and to put in place factory control processes to make sure they are consistently met. The Government is also establishing a national regulator in the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) to lead and coordinate enforcement, confront poor practice, remove unsafe products from the market, and deal with safety concerns early through improved market surveillance.

The industry-led Competence Steering Group has produced frameworks and recommendations to improve the competence of professionals working in safety-critical roles across the sector, including installers. The Government is supporting the Group's ongoing work by sponsoring the British Standards Institution to develop a suite of national competence standards, and intends through the Building Safety Bill to introduce regulations to ensure that those involved in design and construction are competent to do so.

■ Homelessness: Finance

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[11594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to make additional funding available to local authorities to support residents made homeless as a result of rent arrears accrued during the covid-19 pandemic.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to support tenants with living costs. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September helping renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the

significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180 million provided last year.

Data from the English Housing Survey (EHS) Household Resilience Study November-December 2020 suggested that approximately 9% of private renters had any arrears, and two thirds of those are in less than 2 months of arrears. However, we will continue to closely monitor the ongoing impact of the pandemic on renters.

Where a person is at risk of losing their home, local authorities have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness. In 2021/22 we are providing local authorities with £310 million to discharge their duties under the Act, a £47 million increase on previous years' funding. This can be used to offer financial support for people to find a new home, to work with landlords to prevent evictions, or to provide temporary accommodation to ensure families have a roof over their head.

■ Housing: Construction

Jane Hunt:

[\[12334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Future of the New Homes Bonus consultation.

Christopher Pincher:

We are considering the responses to the consultation and expect to publish the Government response shortly.

■ Housing: Standards

Navendu Mishra:

[\[11686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has allocated additional funding to local authorities to help ensure that the Decent Homes Standard is implemented.

Eddie Hughes:

Between 2011 and 2016, the Government provided a total of £1.76 billion between 2011 and 2016 to 45 councils across England with more than 10 percent non-decent stock to help them bring homes up to standard and tackle their backlog. It helped to make over 158,000 homes decent.

The Social Housing White Paper committed to review the Decent Homes Standard to consider if it should be updated. The Review is in two stages, with the first step considering the case for change. If the evidence demonstrates that we need to revise the Standard, we will consider the strategic, economic and management case for new criteria as a second stage of the review.

Navendu Mishra:[\[11687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 27 May 2021 to Question 6503 on Housing: Standards, which stakeholders are being consulted as part of the Decent Homes Standard review.

Eddie Hughes:

The Decent Homes Review began in February 2021 with the first meeting of the Decent Homes Review Sounding Board. The full list of Sounding Board members is listed below.

In addition, Government invited other interested stakeholders to register their interest in the review. To date, 122 organisations and 13 individuals have registered.

Association of Retained Council Housing

Building Research Establishment

Chartered Institute of Housing

Confederation of Cooperative Housing

Councils with ALMOs Group (CWAG)

G15

G320

The Housing Ombudsman

Local Government Association

London Councils

National Federation of ALMOS

National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations

National Housing Federation

Northern Housing Consortium

Regulator of Social Housing

Rural Services Network

Tenants and Resident Organisations of England (Taroe)

Tenant Participation Advisory Service

UNIFY (cross-housing BAME Network)

■ Levelling Up Fund**Chris Elmore:**[\[11614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to announce the deadlines for the subsequent bidding rounds of the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

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

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

Further detail on how the Fund will operate from 2022-23 onwards will be set out later this year.

Ben Bradley:[\[11652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether applications to the Levelling Up Fund are required to have planning permission in place and be ready to begin implementation immediately; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

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

Applications to the LUF must meet the pass/fail gateway criterion where bids will be assessed against whether they can deliver some LUF expenditure in 2021-22 and demonstrate how they fit with the criteria set out in the prospectus and technical guidance.

■ National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service**Sir John Hayes:**[\[12063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is Government policy that work will not begin on constructing the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre until the required £25 million of private funding has been raised in full.

Luke Hall:

Funding arrangements will be in place before main construction begins.

Sir John Hayes:[\[12064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the evidential basis was for the Government's assessment that Victoria Tower Gardens was a cost-effective site for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what value was attributed to (a) Victoria Tower Gardens and (b) its existing uses in that calculation.

Luke Hall:

Details of the Government's assessment of Victoria Tower Gardens were published with the planning application and remain available on Westminster City Council's website.

Sir John Hayes:[\[12065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) consultation about and (b) comparative assessment with alternative sites for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre was undertaken by the Government between the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation's recommendation on 13 January 2016 on the location and the Prime Minister's announcement on 27 January 2016 that the chosen location was Victoria Tower Gardens.

Luke Hall:

The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation conducted a very extensive comparison of possible sites before recommending Victoria Tower Gardens. The Government agreed with the Foundation that Victoria Tower Gardens is the most fitting site. Public consultations were held once designs for the proposed Memorial were available: initially on ten shortlisted designs, and then on the detailed proposals which were put forward for planning consent.

■ Parking: Urban Areas**Rachael Maskell:**[\[13995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the research, *Switching to sustainable transport: a rapid evidence assessment*, commissioned by his Department, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of preventing Government agencies and public bodies from planning or developing new city centre car parks in towns and cities.

Luke Hall:

In light of the report *Switching to sustainable transport: a rapid evidence assessment*, commissioned by the Department for Transport, there are currently no plans to prevent Government agencies and public bodies from planning or developing new city centre car parks in towns and cities. Government recognises the link between parking provision, local transport policy and the vitality of our high streets and towns centres. However, operationally, parking is the responsibility of local authorities and it is for them to determine what is appropriate in their own area.

■ Private Rented Housing: Housing Benefit**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[11595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to take steps to prevent practices in the private rented sector which lead to the exclusion of applicants (a) reliant on housing benefit and (b) with low incomes.

Eddie Hughes:

Blanket bans against tenants in receipt of benefits or on low incomes have no place in a fair and modern housing market. The Government has previously worked with the lettings industry to agree an approach to end the practice of excluding tenants in receipt of benefits.

We 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.

Rents: Arrears**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[11593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people in (a) Lewisham Deptford, (b) London and (c) the UK in rent arrears after the end of the ban on bailiff-forced evictions on 31 May 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

We do not hold data on the number of people in rent arrears in Lewisham Deptford, London and the UK following 31 May 2021. Data from the English Housing Survey (EHS) Household Resilience Study suggested that approximately 9 per cent of private renters were in arrears in November - December 2020. Most renters in arrears, had arrears of less than 2 months.

The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to support tenants with living costs. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September helping renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020. For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180 million provided last year.

Social Rented Housing**James Grundy:**[\[10705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to increase the availability of high quality social housing including (a) bungalows for pensioners and (b) homes for young families.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and is investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, which will leverage up to £38 billion of private finance and will provide up

to 180,000 new affordable homes across the country, should economic conditions allow.

Around half of the new programme will be for social and affordable rent, and it will deliver more than double for social rent than the current programme. 10% of delivery will be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist or supported housing, including housing for older people.

We will also be using the new Affordable Homes Programme to fund a First Homes pilot of 1500 homes. The First Homes scheme will help local first-time buyers onto the property ladder by offering homes at a discount of at least 30% compared to the market price. That same percentage will then be passed on with the sale of the property to future first-time buyers, meaning homes will always be sold below market value, benefiting future generations. On 4 June, we launched the first phase with further sites set to launch across the country in the coming weeks.

Whilst we do not set requirements for the types of affordable housing that are delivered, Registered Providers work closely with local authorities to ensure that delivery meets local housing need.

■ **Tenancy Agreements: Social Rented Housing**

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[12175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the new model tenancy agreement does not extend to people living in social housing and assisted living facilities.

Eddie Hughes:

The Model Tenancy Agreement is the Government's suggested contract for assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector, which landlords and tenants can choose to use to agree a tenancy. The 'New' Model Tenancy Agreement revised the previous agreement, with changes focussed on making it easier for responsible tenants to have well behaved pets in their home.

Many social landlords set out their pet policies in their tenancy agreements and will allow tenants to keep pets where it is appropriate to do so, and provided they are well looked after and do not adversely affect the lives of neighbours and those living nearby.

In our Social Housing White Paper we encourage all social landlords to adopt similar policies. The circumstances in which pets may be kept are, however, for social landlords to determine locally, taking account of the views of their tenants.

■ **Whitechapel Bell Foundry**

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[11471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he made of (a) the historical importance of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry and

(b) its potential viability as a commercial operation as part of his decision on the Whitechapel Bell Foundry site.

Eddie Hughes:

The decision to grant planning permission for the proposals at Whitechapel Bell Foundry was published on 13 May. The Secretary of State did not make this decision. In reaching his decision, the Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government took into account a wide range of issues, based on the detailed findings of the Planning Inspector who held a public local inquiry into the case. The published decision letter sets out in detail the full reasoning and conclusions and, like all decisions, is published on the gov.uk website.

As the decision is final, unless challenged through the courts, the Government has no further jurisdiction in this matter and I am unable to give any further comment on the merits of the proposals.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

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

Jim Shannon:

[\[13062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to secure a trade deal with India.

Greg Hands:

At a virtual summit between my Rt hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Prime Minister Modi in May, the United Kingdom announced its intent to negotiate a free trade agreement (FTA) with India. The Government wants a deal that slashes barriers to doing business and trading with India's £2 trillion economy and market of 1.4 billion consumers. On 25th May the Department for International Trade launched a consultation requesting input from consumers and businesses across all sectors that will help craft a deal that boosts economic growth, creating high-value jobs across the country. Formal FTA negotiations are expected to begin later this year.

■ **Trade Agreements: Australia**

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[14233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with the Leader of the House on parliamentary scrutiny of trade agreements including the Australia agreement.

Greg Hands:

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 11th June 2021 to Question UIN: 7771.

■ Trade and Agriculture Commission

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[14082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when the Trade and Agriculture Commission will be constituted and will be able to scrutinise forthcoming trade agreements.

Greg Hands:

On 7 June, the Department launched a call for expressions of interest for expert advisors to join the new Trade and Agriculture Commission. The Commission will be established in time to scrutinise the planned Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Australia, to inform parliamentary scrutiny following signature. It will also scrutinise other planned FTAs.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Abortion: Northern Ireland

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[13879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what timeframe he plans to agree with the Minister of Health in Northern Ireland on the introduction of a fully funded and commissioned abortion service; and what steps he is taking to ensure that service is made available.

Mr Robin Walker:

We made the Abortion Regulations in March 2020 - and remain disappointed with the continuing failure to commission abortion services that are consistent with the Regulations to ensure women and girls have safe local access to this healthcare service. While medical professionals have taken forward some service provision on the ground in Northern Ireland from last April and over 1,100 abortions have been provided to date, more needs to be done.

We have always said that we believe that the commissioning of services by the Department of Health would remain the most appropriate way to progress the matter. However, after a year of engaging to see positive progress made, with no success, the legal duties and moral obligations are such that we have taken further action.

The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021, which came into effect on 31 March 2021, give the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland a power to direct relevant Northern Ireland Ministers, departments and agencies to commission abortion services, consistent with the conditions set out in the 2020 Regulations.

We will not let progress be drawn out indefinitely. We are clear that we want to see concrete progress towards the commissioning of abortion services before summer recess, and if this is not achieved, we will not hesitate in issuing a direction immediately so direct action is taken so that the rights of women and girls can be properly upheld and they can have safe and lawful access to abortion services locally.

We will continue to engage with the Department of Health to try and find a way forward and will provide every opportunity to move forward with commissioning before we have to issue the direction.

TRANSPORT

■ Department for Transport: Artificial Intelligence

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[14045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, to what extent their Department makes use of artificial intelligence in the implementation of its policies; and how much was spent from their Department's budget on artificial intelligence in each of the last three years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning have many potential applications including in the transport sector. Innovation teams across the DfT family support research and development initiatives conducted both within and outside of DfT. The role of these initiatives is primarily to investigate the potential for AI in predictive modelling on transport use and their potential for using data across transport modes to support analysis on transport use. For the most part these are academic initiatives at the research stage and are not used in the implementation of policies.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Training

John Redwood:

[\[12054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to train more HGV drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

We are supporting the development of apprenticeships, including a standard to train lorry drivers. A revised standard will be available in August attracting £7,000 in apprenticeship levy funding.

The Department for Work and Pensions is developing a scheme to train jobseekers in HGV driving. The Flexible Support Fund is available to help the unemployed or those in receipt of Universal Credit renew their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

The Department has provided a grant for the non-profit initiative Road to Logistics to train military service leavers, ex-offenders and the long term unemployed to move into jobs in the logistics sector, including lorry driving.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Sarah Olney:

[\[14025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to (a) improve awareness among drivers of the harms of idling engines and (b) encourage drivers to turn their engines off where possible.

Rachel Maclean:

Unnecessary vehicle idling is already an offence under The Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002, with equivalent devolved powers. It is also the subject of rule 123 of the Highway Code, which drivers are required to learn and observe.

Local Authorities, which are responsible for enforcement, are free to take other measures to discourage engine idling, including additional signage at specific locations. The Department for Transport has authorised the use of such signs by some traffic authorities where required.

■ Railways: Consultants

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[11626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what consultants have been used to advise on Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail; and how much his Department has spent on consultancy fees on that matter to date.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The following external consultants have provided services in relation to The Williams Rail Review and the subsequent Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail: Ashurst; PWC; Rail Delivery Group; Eversheds Sutherland; Britain Thinks; Steer Davies Gleave; Jacobs; and Deloitte

The total associated external consultancy spend by financial year is as follows:

2018-19 - £647,791

2019-20 - £2,576,541

2020-21 - £878,014

2021-22 - £145,793 (year to date)

Consultancy is defined as the provision of objective advice relating to strategy, structure, management or operations of an organisation, in pursuit of its purposes and objectives. Such advice is provided outside the 'business-as-usual' environment when in-house skills are not available and is time-limited. The numbers provided here are from unaudited internal management information.

■ Railways: Season Tickets**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[12269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the cost of (a) his plans on flexible season tickets and (b) offering a three-day and four-day season ticket.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The revenue impacts of this innovative rail product that passengers and the rail industry have called for will depend on future travel patterns and the uptake of the new product by passengers, both of which are uncertain.

■ Roads: Air Pollution**Mr Barry Sheerman:** [\[12068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to minimise the level of road air pollution outside of UK fast food restaurants and drive-through points.

Rachel Maclean:

Local Authorities are required to review and assess local air quality. If their assessment shows that local pollution levels exceed, or are likely to exceed, local air quality objectives in locations where members of the public might be regularly exposed they must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and develop an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) with the aim of reducing air pollution to within statutory limits. This would include identifying and addressing any issues arising from fast food restaurants and drive-through points.

■ Taxis**Bill Esterson:** [\[13930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) assessment he has made of the potential public health risks of allowing licensed hire vehicle drivers to cross local authority boundaries, including from areas with low rates of covid-19 infection to areas with high rates of infection and (b) representations he has received from local authorities requesting that such drivers are restricted from crossing local authority boundaries.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has published guidance for the taxi and private hire vehicle sector on how to provide COVID-safe services during the pandemic. Taxis and private hire vehicles are able to operate across tier boundaries.

Passengers should follow the Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers and any other restrictions in place.

■ Trains: Hitachi**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[12256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 June 2021 to Question 7907 on Trains: Hitachi, what data he holds on the number of instances in which Hitachi's Intercity Class 800 series trains were found to have failings or structural

defects in three or more joints; and for what reason he has not provided that number in response to previous written parliamentary questions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department does not collate information on failings in three or more joints. Train Operators are responsible for ensuring trains are fit for service as part of their safety duties. This is supported by conditions within the train supply contracts to ensure they meet required safety standards when in use.

Inspections for each train look at critical locations. If the inspection fails at any one of those points the train is immediately prevented from service. I have asked officials to contact Hitachi for this information and respond to the Hon Gentleman as soon as possible.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[14218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it is his policy that international travellers who follow advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office not to travel to Amber or Red countries should be entitled to refunds under travel cancellation policies; and what discussions he has had with the travel insurance industry on that matter.

Robert Courts:

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector on its response to this unprecedented situation and is encouraging insurers to do all they can to support customers during this difficult period.

On the 17 May we published the Passenger COVID-19 Charter setting out the rights and responsibilities for consumers while travel is affected by COVID-19 restrictions and our reasonable expectations on the industry. Not all consumers will have a legal right to a refund from their travel provider for travel to amber and red countries and consumers are advised to check their terms and conditions and insurance policies when booking.

TREASURY

■ **Building Regulations**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[11659\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the stamp duty window for those who are unable to sell their property as a result of new building regulations.

Jesse Norman:

The temporary SDLT relief was designed to stimulate immediate momentum in a property market where property transactions fell by as much as 50 per cent during the COVID-19 lockdown in March. This momentum in the property market has

supported jobs which rely on custom from the property industry, such as retailers and tradespeople.

The SDLT holiday was extended to ensure that purchases that were unable to complete before 31 March because of delays in the sector are able to receive the relief. The Government will not extend the temporary relief further for any transactions.

■ Carbon Emissions: Tax Allowances

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[14019\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of making voluntary emissions reduction certificates tax deductible.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises that for the UK to reach net zero emissions in 2050, removing emissions, or greenhouse gas removals will be necessary to offset residual emissions in hard-to-abate sectors, as advised by the Climate Change Committee.

To deepen our evidence base on greenhouse gas removals and the existing market for voluntary emissions removals, and to support future policy development, BEIS and HM Treasury launched a Call for Evidence on Greenhouse Gas Removals in December last year. This Call for Evidence sought views from stakeholders on the role of Government in incentivising their development and deployment, including the role of tax incentives. A summary of responses to this Call for Evidence will be published in due course.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Stephen Crabb:

[\[11714\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment she has made on the potential effect of the Job Retention Scheme on (a) vacancies and (b) recruitment in the UK labour market.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) aims to support jobs, reduce the risk of permanent business closures (supporting those that had temporarily ceased or reduced trading) and reduce the risk of large losses in incomes, through wage support to furloughed employees.

The number of employees on the CJRS has continued to fall as restrictions have eased. According to provisional data from HMRC, 3.4m employments remained on the CJRS at the end of April from 675,000 employers, down from 4.3m employments at the end of March from almost 765,000 employers. This fall was accounted for by a fall in the number of employments on the CJRS on a full time basis; from 2.9m at the end of March to 2.0m at the end of April.

According to the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, vacancies rose by 49,000 on the quarter to stand at 657,000 in the three months to April, marking the

eighth consecutive month of quarterly growth. Timelier online job advert data from Adzuna suggest that postings were 27 per cent above February 2020 levels at the end of May. According to early estimates from HMRC's Real-Time Information (RTI), the number of paid employees increased by 97,000 in April, marking the fifth consecutive month of growth.

Stephen Crabb:

[\[11715\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the latest figures for the number of employees who are enrolled on the Job Retention Scheme in (a) the UK, (b) Wales and (c) Preseli Pembrokeshire constituency.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs regularly publish statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). The latest statistics were published on 3 June 2021 and can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-3-june-2021>.

The statistics include figures for the number of employments on furlough. This differs from the number of employees on furlough, as an individual employed by more than one employer is counted once for each employment from which they have been put on furlough.

The latest statistics report that on 30 April 2021 there were (a) 3.44 million employments on furlough in the UK, (b) 131,900 employments on furlough where the employee was resident in Wales, and (c) 3,400 employments on furlough where the employee was resident in Preseli Pembrokeshire constituency.

These figures are based on the residential address information that HM Revenue and Customs hold for employees.

■ **Gambling: Automated Credit Transfer**

Carolyn Harris:

[\[12217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect of new bank transfer based payment methods offered by gambling providers on the efficacy of gambling transaction blocks as a tool to support people struggling with gambling harms.

John Glen:

The Government has made no such assessment in relation to the effect of new bank transfer based payment methods. However, licensed gambling operators are only permitted to use payment methods where they are able to ensure they are compliant with all Gambling Commission licence conditions and requirements, including anti-money laundering and safer gambling measures.

The Government also recognises that the financial services industry plays an important role in helping their customers monitor and manage their gambling spending, including by offering gambling transaction blocks. In recent years there has

been considerable voluntary progress in this area by the industry, with almost all the largest UK banks, as well as the larger digital banks, now offering gambling transaction blocks for debit and credit card transactions.

The Government welcomes this progress and continues to work together with industry to identify what more can be done in this area. As such, I will soon be hosting a roundtable with the financial sector to discuss what action has taken place to date on this issue and look at opportunities for additional progress which further support UK consumers. This will include looking at wider payment methods.

■ German Property Group: Investment

Wendy Chamberlain:

[14062]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support the Government plans to provide UK-based investors in German Property Group (formerly Dolphin Trust) who invested directly in the trust without the advice of a third party advisor.

John Glen:

The UK regulatory agencies are aware of the bankruptcy of German Property Group (GPG), formerly known as Dolphin Trust, and the effect on UK-based investors.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has published a joint statement with the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) and the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). The statement sets out what UK consumers should do if they invested in GPG via an FCA authorised firm – either a financial adviser firm or a Self Invested Personal Pensions (SIPPs) operator – and they believe they were mis-sold. This includes how to complain to the FOS or submit a claim to the FSCS. The statement can be accessed on the FCA's website (<https://www.fca.org.uk/news/statements/gpg-companies-preliminary-bankruptcy-proceedings>).

It is important to note that some consumers will not have invested in GPG via a regulated financial adviser or SIPP operator. GPG is incorporated in Germany and is not, nor has ever been an FCA authorised firm. Unfortunately, in these cases compensation would not be available through the FOS or the FSCS routes. Investors should contact the German insolvency administrator, BBL Brockdorff & Partner. Investors may also choose to press charges or appear as a witness in the German criminal proceedings being led by the German Prosecution Office.

■ Hire Services: Northern Ireland

Simon Hoare:

[14016]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to improve the adequacy of the Trader Support Service system for vehicle rental and leasing businesses using the UK Trader Scheme to declare goods not at risk.

Jesse Norman:

The Trader Support Service (TSS) has been established to provide education and guidance and to submit declarations on behalf of traders operating under the NI

Protocol. This service is live, operating well and TSS is implementing improvements regularly based on customer feedback.

Alongside the TSS, the Government has introduced the UK Trader Scheme (UKTS) for authorised traders to be able to declare goods 'not at risk'. In order to qualify for full authorisation for the UKTS, traders need to meet certain conditions, including that they are established in Northern Ireland. Where not established, they must have a fixed place of business in Northern Ireland, carry out their customs elsewhere in the UK and have an indirect customs representative (such as the TSS).

However, the Government has also introduced a temporary easement for traders who are not established in Northern Ireland, or who do not have a fixed place of business in Northern Ireland; the Government is aware that this is the case for some GB-based businesses providing vehicle rental and leasing services in Northern Ireland. The easement is designed to assist businesses while they make preparations to meet the full requirements in cases where the trader delivers to fixed places of business in Northern Ireland from where goods are sold to or used by end consumers in Northern Ireland. In order to be authorised for the UKTS until 1 November 2021, the trader must still carry out customs operations elsewhere in the UK and have an indirect customs representative established in Northern Ireland. Further guidance on the easement is available on GOV.UK. HMRC continue to work with businesses to improve this process based on their feedback.

■ **Hospitality Industry: Insurance**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[12295\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure small firms in the leisure and hospitality industry, including those in the LGBT+ community, have access to insurance.

John Glen:

It is important that SMEs have access to suitable insurance and the Government is working closely with the sector to understand what more they can do to help businesses both now and in the future.

The commercial decisions taken by insurers are also subject to regulation and legislation. Insurers must treat customers fairly and firms are required to do so under the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) rules. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits firms from discriminating against consumers with most protected characteristics, including sexual orientation.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Hire Services**

Simon Hoare:

[\[14017\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of VAT use and enjoyment rules relating to rental and leased vehicle movements between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Jesse Norman:

At the end of the transition period, the VAT rules for the place of supply of services, including the use and enjoyment rules, were amended to reflect that the UK is not part of the EU Single Market. The use and enjoyment rules for the short term hire and leasing of vehicles ensure that UK VAT is due when the vehicles are effectively being used in the UK.

■ **Niramax****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[11491\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether HMRC has brought any civil cases against Niramax as a result of its investigations of that company.

Jesse Norman:

Under the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 (CRCA), HMRC have a statutory duty of confidentiality to protect the information they hold about taxpayers and as a result, HMRC cannot comment on any civil action being taken against any specific taxpayer or entity.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Children: Maintenance****Marco Longhi:**[\[13237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will take steps to investigate the matter of unclaimed child maintenance payments made by fathers when the child and mother have moved abroad.

Guy Opperman:

The Child Maintenance Service is only able to make a maintenance calculation when the paying parent, receiving parent and qualifying children are all habitually resident in the UK.

■ **Disability: Public Consultation****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[11598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the (a) Answer of 26 March 2021 on Disability: Public Consultation and (b) Social Security Advisory Committee's Occasional Paper 25 of December 2020 entitled How DWP involves disabled people when developing or evaluating programmes that affect them, if she will implement the primary recommendation of that Paper which recommends that her Department should develop a clear protocol for engagement with disabled people, which should be co-produced and applied consistently and comprehensively and cover both national and local engagement, and policy design and operational development and evaluation.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[11599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Social Security Advisory Committee's Occasional Paper 25 of December 2020 entitled How DWP involves disabled people when developing or evaluating programmes that affect them, if she will implement Recommendation 3 of that Paper that recommends that her Department should recruit a large-scale panel of disabled people with experience of social security that it can consult regularly, and draw from, to work on detailed projects.

Justin Tomlinson:

I am grateful to the Committee for their report and pleased to see that our sustained efforts to engage with disabled people have been recognised. We are planning to respond to the Committee in the coming weeks.

■ **Employment Support Allowance: Telephone Services**

Kirsten Oswald:[\[11576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average call waiting times were for the employment support allowance (a) enquiry and (b) service telephone lines in each of the last twelve quarters.

Mims Davies:

a) The average call waiting time (Average Speed of Answer) for calls to the Employment Support Allowance helpline in each quarter from April 2018 to March 2021 is shown in the table below in the format of hours:minutes:seconds.

b) It has not been possible to present data to answer the question posed as there are upward of 100 service lines operated by DWP. If the Member of Parliament was to indicate which service line(s) the ASA was required for, this information could be provided.

YEAR	QUARTER		AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER
2018 -2019	1	April - June	00:20:01
	2	July - September	00:19:23
	3	October - December	00:14:31
	4	January - March	00:19:50
2019 - 2020	1	April - June	00:23:36
	2	July - September	00:25:59
	3	October - December	00:25:11
	4	January - March	00:19:04

YEAR	QUARTER		AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER
2020 - 2121	1	April - June	00:22:25
	2	July - September	00:30:46
	3	October - December	00:20:12
	4	January - March	00:20:24

Data Source: BT - Historical Management Information (GI2 – HMI)

The data supplied is derived from unpublished management information which was collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. The data should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Employment: Carers

Rachael Maskell:

[\[10504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help ensure that carers have support into employment.

Mims Davies:

Many carers experience considerable challenges balancing work with caring responsibilities. This can have a big impact on their careers and limit their participation in the workplace. The impact falls disproportionately on women, who make up 60 per cent of carers.

The Government is clear that flexible working can have a beneficial impact for a number of different groups, including those with caring responsibilities. There is a legal framework in place that grants all employees with 26 weeks' continuous service the statutory Right to Request Flexible Working, where employees can request a change to their hours, working patterns or to work from home. In 2019 the Government committed to encourage flexible working and consult on making it the default unless employers have good reasons not to. This consultation will happen in due course. The Government has also consulted on proposals to introduce a new employment right to one week's additional leave for unpaid carers, to support those with caring responsibilities balance employment. The consultation received a significant number of replies, and the Government will issue its response in due course on the way forward.

To support carers to remain in work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department have been working with employer organisations to encourage employers, including small and medium sized enterprises, to retain employees who are carers, hosting a series of webinars delivered by the Business Champion for Older Workers and Employers for Carers. Carers can also access other resources, for example the

Business in the Community (BITC) [Supporting Carers toolkit](#), or [COVID 19: Supporting Carers in the work place](#), published in March 2020.

For those carers who are actively searching for work, the Government's Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure they receive tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and to build the skills they need to get into work.

- Job Finding Support (JFS) and Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) updating their digital skills, job searching tools and helping them to identify their transferable skills;
- Sector Based Work Academy Programme (SWAPs) in providing opportunities to those who need to change career or sectors.
- The Restart Programme, which will support individuals through regular and personalised provider support who have been in unemployment for over 12 months.

Jobcentre Plus also offer on a voluntary basis, access to the Flexible Support Fund; and payment for replacement care, childcare travel and course costs to allow the carer to undertake approved activity or interviews with Jobcentre Plus, providers or employers.

■ **Employment: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[11597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her predecessor's Written Statement of 5 March 2019, Health and Disability Announcement, HCWS1376, if she will publish the independent research commissioned by her Department to understand the needs of disabled people to live independent lives and how health and disability benefits can better support them.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department commissions independent research with disability benefit claimants on an ongoing basis. The forthcoming Health and Disability Support Green Paper, will explore proposals to improve the health and disability benefit system in the short and long-term, which are grounded in research evidence, data analysis and consultation.

■ **Financial Assistance Scheme: Pensions**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[13957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the total amount paid out to members of the Financial Assistance Scheme for pensions in each of the last five years.

Stephen Doughty:

[\[13958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the total amount paid out to members of the Financial Assistance Scheme in Wales in each of the last five years.

Guy Opperman:

The table below provides details of the total amount paid out to members of the Financial Assistance Scheme in each of the last five years for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

YEAR	GREAT BRITAIN	NORTHERN IRELAND	TOTAL
2016-2017	£189,739,599	£4,968,275	£194,707,874
2017-2018	£211,930,501	£5,474,513	£217,405,014
2018-2019	£211,614,050	£5,499,935	£217,113,985
2019-2020	£212,227,970	£5,693,023	£217,920,993
2020-2021	£218,793,879	£6,149,583	£224,943,462
Total	£1,044,305,999	£27,785,329	£1,072,091,328

The Department does not breakdown information for Wales.

Source of information: Department for Work and Pensions Annual Report and Accounts. Northern Ireland Department for Communities Annual Report and Accounts

■ Habitual Residence Test

Emma Hardy:[\[13209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of covid-19 international travel restrictions on an individual's ability to meet the criteria for the Habitual Residency Test.

Justin Tomlinson:

Eligibility for Universal Credit and other income related benefits depends on an individual's immigration status. In order to assess this the Department operates a Habitual Residence Test (HRT). The HRT contains two elements: an assessment of the legal right of residence and an assessment of factual habitual residence.

All claimants to income related benefits must be factually habitually resident in the UK in order to make a claim. Existing benefit recipients who have left the country on a temporary basis and found it difficult to return due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, will satisfy the second element of the HRT upon their return if they can be shown to be resuming a former period of residence. Each case would be dealt with on an individual basis.

Income-related benefits are only payable to people who are in the UK and cannot be claimed by those outside the UK. The Department has put into place measures to support existing benefit recipients in exceptional cases where their absence abroad

goes over the period allowed under the temporary absence benefit rules and are awaiting repatriation due to covid-19 travel restrictions.

FCDO consular staff continue to provide advice and support to British nationals who face financial difficulties overseas due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Those in real financial distress whilst stranded overseas can seek advice and support from their local consular team, who will be able to advise on any local support that may be available as well as facilitate contact with friends and families who may be able to help.

■ **Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing**

Chris Stephens:

[11590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children live in households that are subject to the under-occupancy penalty.

Will Quince:

The removal of the spare room subsidy policy has been an important tool to help to manage housing support expenditure and enable mobility within the social rented sector. For those who require additional support with housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments are available.

The information requested for households in Housing Benefit is published and available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for users is available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The information for Universal Credit is not readily available.

■ **Jobcentres: Newton Abbot**

Anne Marie Morris:

[13068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason her Department is to open a second job centre site in Newton Abbot.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 14 June 2021]: The Department has seen an increase in demand for its services as a result of Covid-19 and is rapidly expanding the space available, on a temporary basis, in locations where we anticipate or have already seen, that increase.

As part of the Government's ongoing commitment to support claimants back into work, the Department has recruited 13,500 additional Work Coaches to help support and deliver the full range of Jobcentre services needed, providing tailored, face-to-face support in a Covid-secure environment. Existing DWP premises do not currently allow us to accommodate additional and existing staff safely and ensuring our staff and claimants are safe is vital to the Department.

This expansion will drive forward our ambitious £30 billion Plan for Jobs, helping people back into work right across the UK.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Rural Areas

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[11544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of Kickstart placements have been made available in rural areas.

Mims Davies:

Delivering the Kickstart Scheme at pace has meant an initial concentration on the production of a limited data set. The geographic data we produce does not currently include rural/urban classification. We do hold regional information on jobs made available for young people to apply for and for placements started which can be seen in the table below, as of 3rd June.

As of the 3rd June there have been 138,000 jobs advertised and over 31,000 Kickstart job placement starts in total since the scheme started. The tables below show these figures split by location and the data presented has been rounded according to DWP statistical rounding convention. Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

LOCATION	JOBS ADVERTISED	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
East Midlands	9,270	1,700
East of England	10,690	2,120
London	28,020	6,710
North East	5,760	1,420
North West	17,610	4,130
Scotland	9,810	2,720
South East	15,630	3,500
South West	9,930	2,170
Wales	7,780	1,620
West Midlands	12,840	2,800
Yorkshire and The Humber	10,630	2,310

LOCATION	JOBS ADVERTISED	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
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Figures may not add up to provided totals due to rounding.

■ National Insurance

Rachel Hopkins: [12356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of whether an online application process for a National Insurance number would improve efficiency.

Rachel Hopkins: [12358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to reform the National Insurance number application process.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is in the process of reforming the National insurance number (NINo) process and has developed a digital application service.

From 28th April 2021 all employment inspired NINo applicants can make their initial request for a NINo online at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>

For applicants who have been through an Identity verification process with another government department they are no longer required to attend a face to face identity appointment.

■ National Insurance: Complaints

Rachel Hopkins: [12357]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many formal complaints her Department received on the national insurance number application process in (a) 2019 and (b) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is unable to provide this information, as to do so would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Poverty: Lone Parents

Colleen Fletcher: [13082]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on trends in the level of poverty among single parent families in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 14 June 2021]: It is not possible to estimate the impacts of COVID-19 on relative and absolute poverty as this requires estimates of income for all people in the UK and this data is not yet available.

A range of measures are designed to support claimants, including one parent families such as easements from work-related requirements, same day advances and signposting to expert third-party services. There is also help available for childcare costs for children of any age. Claimants can recover up to 85% of their eligible childcare costs through UC (or 70% of those costs through working tax credits). Further assistance may be available through the Flexible Support Fund.

Since Covid-19, we have also strengthened the welfare system, spending £7.4 billion on measures such as the Universal Credit uplift, on top of additional support such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

We have built on this extra support through the introduction of our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, now running until 20th June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, backed by £220 million, has already provided support during the Easter holidays this year, and will continue to do so during the summer and Christmas holidays.

■ Social Security Benefits

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[11624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6423, if she will publish (a) the conclusions of the two internal process reviews following receipt of a Prevention of Future Death Report, and (b) the steps her Department has taken in response to those reviews.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[12254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6423, if he will publish (a) the conclusions of the two Internal Process Reviews following receipt of a Prevention of Future Death Report and (b) any actions the Department has taken following these reviews.

Justin Tomlinson:

Internal Process Reviews are internal retrospective investigations, focussed on organisational learning. They are internal reviews that check if process was followed, in order to encourage learning and to drive change through the Department. We have no plans to publish any Internal Process Reviews or their conclusions, but will continue to follow our duties under the Freedom of Information Act, in line with the 2016 First Tier Tribunal ruling on what information can lawfully be disclosed.

The steps the Department has taken following the cases in question is outlined in our responses to the relevant Prevention of Future Deaths reports. The reports and responses can be found at the links below:

<https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/michael-osullivan/>

<https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/alexander-boamah/>

■ Social Security Benefits: Artificial Intelligence

Kirsten Oswald: [\[12179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for which social security benefits her Department is using artificial intelligence to assist in the (a) processing and (b) auditing of applications; and what plans she has to extend the use of artificial intelligence for the processing and auditing of other categories of social security benefit applications.

Guy Opperman:

The Department does not use artificial intelligence software or machine learning to make automated decisions regarding people's benefit entitlement. The Department will increasingly use intelligent forms of automation to focus on everyday repetitive tasks which then enables colleagues to spend more time supporting vulnerable claimants. Our use of machine learning is about making the system simpler for people.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Marsha De Cordova: [\[13217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to publish its review of the Special Rules for Terminal Illness.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[13218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the reasons are for the time being taken by her Department to publish the results of its review of the Special Rules for Terminal Illness.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. The Department remains committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation and will announce the outcome in due course.

■ Work Capability Assessment

David Linden: [\[13203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 187305 on Work Capability Assessment, what assessment she has made of the effect of (a) regulation 23, (b) regulation 35(1) and (c) schedule 1 of the Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and

Employment and Support Allowance (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations 2013 on the determination of the commencement of award following (i) a scheduled review by her Department of that claimant's level of entitlement and (ii) completion of a new UC50 disclosing a change of circumstances by that claimant.

Justin Tomlinson:

The provisions referred to provide for a decision to be superseded for a change of circumstances and the date from which that change takes effect. In terms of its effect on the decision which commenced the award, that of course will depend on whether it is a relevant change which does indeed affect that award. If the original award was that the claimant had Limited Capability for Work (LCW) and the change (confirmed or identified following a work capability assessment) had seen a deterioration in the same condition such that the claimant now had Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity, then the award would be superseded and increased effective from the appropriate date.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Declaration on Government Reform

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS93\]](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has strained our country's resilience like nothing we have seen out of wartime, and the public has endured huge sacrifices. Our mission now is to respond by transforming the country for the better, levelling up, and making opportunity more equal. These changes will require the re-wiring, and renewal, of government. That is why reform is necessary – not as an end in itself, but as a means of delivering the better Britain the public demands and deserves.

To this end, the Cabinet and Permanent Secretaries have committed today to a collective vision for reform, agreeing immediate action on three fronts:

1. People - ensuring that the right people are working in the right places with the right incentives;
2. Performance - modernising the operation of government, being clear-eyed about our priorities, and objective in our evaluation of what is and is not working; and
3. Partnership - strengthening the bond between ministers and officials, always operating as one team from policy through to delivery, and between central government and institutions outside it.

The *Declaration on Government Reform* sets out the Government's ambitions in more detail, with a set of concrete actions underway and more planned for the year ahead. Copies of the Declaration have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Strengthening Transparency and Fairness in Elections

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith): [\[HCWS92\]](#)

The Government's 2019 manifesto pledged to take steps to protect the integrity of our democracy, tackle electoral fraud, and prevent foreign interference in elections.

Further to the written statements of 12 May 2021 ([HCWS10](#)) and 27 May 2021 ([HCWS62](#)), I am announcing today further measures to be included in the forthcoming Elections Bill to support public confidence in the integrity of our electoral system, by strengthening and updating political finance and campaigning regulation. This will ensure that our electoral law continues to be fair and transparent.

Political parties

While political parties are already required to give details of their assets and liabilities in their annual accounts, a new requirement will be brought in for new political parties to declare if they have assets and liabilities of over £500 when registering with the Electoral Commission and, if so, to provide details of these. This will allow earlier public scrutiny of

their finances and ensure public confidence in the transparency of all political parties' financial positions.

We will also protect the integrity of spending limits further by prohibiting third-party campaigners (also known as 'non-party campaigners') from additionally registering as a political party. This closes a loophole that was highlighted in the 2019 general election, as a route to access multiple spending limits and unfairly increase spending potential.

Third-party campaigning

All third-party campaigning will be restricted to UK-based (or otherwise eligible, including overseas electors) campaigners, further ensuring that only groups with a legitimate interest in UK elections are able to spend money to campaign at UK elections.

In addition, to bring about greater transparency in electoral campaigning, we will introduce a new tier of registration for third-party campaigners. This will require any campaigners spending more than £10,000 during a regulated period to register with the Electoral Commission, ensuring clarity about who is campaigning.

The Government will extend reporting requirements for joint campaigns to cover political parties and third-party campaigners who are working together. This will ensure existing spending limits cannot be unfairly expanded by sharing costs and will rightly increase the transparency of such arrangements.

Candidates

To ensure transparency and fairness around political finance, the Elections Bill will clarify the rules on notional expenditure so that candidates and agents are only liable to report benefits in kind that they have used themselves or have directed or encouraged others to use on their behalf.

Following a Supreme Court ruling in 2018, the current rules in this area have led to widespread uncertainty and risk a democratic chilling effect by discouraging parties from campaigning in marginal constituencies. This clarification will also be extended to other campaigners who are subject to notional expenditure controls. This will defend the British tradition of party leader 'soapbox' visits. Expenditure which promotes an individual candidature would continue to count towards a candidate's own spending limit.

Campaigning material

The Elections Bill will legislate to extend the 'imprint' regime to digital campaigning material. The imprint regime ensures there is accountability over who is promoting campaigning material (and on whose behalf), provides a recourse to challenge, and can help discourage the publication of anonymous intimidatory material.

The Government today is publishing a response to the consultation on how digital imprints should be implemented. This is a complex area, given the need to avoid unreasonably restricting the free speech of individuals, or impose disproportionate measures which would discourage political campaigning. These balanced measures on digital imprints will update our campaigning laws for the modern age and protect the

integrity of our democratic processes. A copy of the response has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Government has engaged with the Electoral Commission, social media companies and political parties through the Parliamentary Parties Panel in developing all these provisions, and carefully considered policy recommendations made by respondents to the consultation, think tanks and by Parliamentary Select Committees.

Overall, these measures strike the right balance between further strengthening our regulatory framework and ensuring democratic engagement in this country can continue to be vibrant and inclusive.

TREASURY

■ **Business Plan of the United Kingdom Debt Management Office**

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): [\[HCWS91\]](#)

The United Kingdom Debt Management Office (DMO) has today published its business plan for the financial year 2021-22. Copies have been deposited in the Libraries of both houses and are available on the DMO's website, www.dmo.gov.uk.

■ **Public Service Pensions: Government Actuary Review of the Cost Control Mechanism**

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): [\[HCWS90\]](#)

The Government has today published the Government Actuary's final report on his review of the cost control mechanism.

The Government is committed to providing public service pensions that are fair for public sector workers and for taxpayers. The cost control mechanism was introduced into the valuation process for public service pension schemes in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 following consultation with member representatives. It was designed to ensure a fair balance of risk with regard to the cost of providing defined benefit (DB) public service pension schemes between members of those schemes and the taxpayer.

I commissioned the Government Actuary to conduct a review of the mechanism amidst concerns that it was not operating in line with its original objectives. These objectives are:

- To protect taxpayers from unforeseen costs
- To maintain the value of pension schemes to the members
- To provide stability and certainty to benefit levels – the mechanism should only be triggered by 'extraordinary, unpredictable events'

The Government Actuary's report sets out his findings and makes a number of recommendations on possible changes to the mechanism. The Government will respond to this report in due course.

The report can be found on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cost-control-mechanism-government-actuaries-review-final-report>