



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 June 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:55 P.M., 22 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

■ Buildings and Heating: Carbon Emissions

Sam Tarry:

[\[16262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Heat and Building Strategy will include a carbon saving of at least 71 million tonnes of CO₂ between 2023 and 2032 as a minimum target in order to align with the UK's nationally determined contribution for COP26.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In order to meet our Net Zero by 2050 target, we must act now to tackle the emissions produced by heating. In order to ensure continued progress, we have set a series of legally binding "carbon budgets", which are amongst the most stringent climate targets in the world.

The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in due course, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings, setting out the interventions required to meet our ambitious carbon budget targets, with a particular focus on carbon budgets 4 and 5. These actions include the deployment of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating as part of an ambitious programme of work required to enable key strategic decisions on how we achieve the mass transition to low-carbon heat and set us on a path to decarbonising all homes and buildings.

We will also publish a comprehensive Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26, setting out the Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy. This will raise ambition as we outline our path to meet net zero by 2050, our Carbon Budgets and Nationally Determined Contribution.

■ Disinfectants

Alex Norris:

[\[17816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of existing requirements on (a) hand sanitiser and (b) surface disinfectant products to prove efficacy claims made in their marketing and packaging via appropriate testing in an accredited laboratory.

Alex Norris:

[\[17817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has plans to require (a) hand sanitiser and (b) surface disinfectant products to demonstrate their efficacy claims via appropriate testing in an accredited laboratory.

Alex Norris:

[17819]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has plans to strengthen workplace guidance by highlighting how businesses can confirm the efficacy claims of the (a) hand sanitiser and (b) surface disinfectant products they are purchasing in order to protect staff and customers.

Paul Scully:

BEIS has worked closely with Health and Safety Executive and Public Health England to ensure that the Safer Working guidance for businesses is based on the most up to date understanding of Covid-19. Guidance is kept under constant review and it is updated accordingly. Businesses should carry out Covid-19 risk assessments and follow the Safer Working guidance.

■ Electric Vehicles

John Redwood:

[15993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much additional UK electricity demand from electric vehicles he estimates there will be by 2030.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS regularly publishes projections of energy demand and emissions (EEP) under current policies, including projections of electricity demand in the transport sector. The most recent edition (EEP 2019) was published on 30th October 2020. In these projections, electricity demand from transport in 2030 is expected to be 19 TWh. The projections only take account of policies classed as implemented, adopted, planned or expired as of August 2019, as specified by international reporting guidelines.

The projection of electricity demand covers both electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles as well as electric rail, but do not allow us to separate these out by mode.

For further detail on the projections please see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/updated-energy-and-emissions-projections-2019>.

■ Electricity: Forecasts

John Redwood:

[15992]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent forecast he has made as part of his planning capacity of UK electricity demand for 2030.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS published UK electricity demand projections in the Energy and Emissions Projections (EEP) report. The latest version of the projections, EEP 2019[1], was published in October 2020.

Annex O of EEP 2019 includes two illustrative net zero electricity demand and generation scenarios. The two scenarios are from BEIS' UKTIMES Model (UKTM) and are consistent with reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions across the whole UK economy by 2050. These demand scenarios illustrate possible scenarios

for future electricity demand but are neither forecasts of, nor bounds around, future levels of UK electricity demand.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/updated-energy-and-emissions-projections-2019>

■ Energy: Housing

Stuart Anderson:

[16221]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what advice and support is available to help homeowners increase their household energy efficiency.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Our [Simple Energy Advice Service](#) (SEA), which was launched in 2018, provides impartial and tailored advice to help people improve their household energy efficiency and make their homes greener and cheaper to run. The SEA, which consists of an easy-to-use website supported by a call centre which members of the public may contact for digital assistance, has been accessed by over 1.4 million unique users since its launch.

Homeowners may also refer to the advice provided by their Energy Performance Certificate, which are tailored to the characteristics of the property following an assessment of the building and recommend measures to improve household energy efficiency.

At a local level, the Government has supported skills development and advice provision through a number of local supply chain demonstration pilots, which tested new approaches to supporting home energy retrofit in the able-to-pay sector in England and recognise the importance of locally provided advice. We are also working with Local Authorities through the Local Energy Programme to develop support for local retrofit programmes by addressing local barriers to clean growth activity.

■ Health: Research

Emma Hardy:

[17822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has held discussions with (a) the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on whether the forthcoming Women's Health Strategy is planned to inform the criteria for the allocation of funding from the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) and (b) ARIA on prioritising research into women's health prior to the publication of that strategy.

Amanda Solloway:

ARIA's leaders, not Government, will be responsible for the strategic direction of their programme portfolio. While there are many UK funding programmes for which Ministers do set the strategic direction, ARIA is specifically being set up without those constraints. We aim to establish ARIA in Spring 2022.

■ Heating: Housing

John Redwood:

[15994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much additional UK electricity demand from domestic heating systems he estimates there will be by 2030.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS regularly publishes projections of energy demand and emissions (EEP) under current policies, including projections of electricity demand in the residential sector. The most recent edition (EEP 2019) was published on 30th October 2020. In these projections, electricity demand in the residential sector in 2030 is expected to be 120 TWh. The EEP only takes account of policies classed as implemented, adopted, planned or expired as of August 2019, as specified by international reporting guidelines.

Projections for the component of this demand that is due to electric heating are not available.

For further detail on the projections please see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/updated-energy-and-emissions-projections-2019>.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution set out an ambition to install 600 thousand heat pumps a year by 2028 to keep us on track for net zero. The forthcoming Heat and Buildings Strategy will set out a range of policy approaches to reach this ambition. It will include regulations, targeted public investment policies, and a new market-based mechanism. Once these policies have been consulted on and finalised then they will be represented in published departmental energy projections.

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station

Virginia Crosbie:

[17890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential contribution of Hinkley Point C to electricity supply.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Once operational, Hinkley Point C will provide 3.2 gigawatts of secure, low carbon electricity for around 60 years, meeting around 7% of the UK's current electricity requirements and providing enough electricity to power the equivalent of around 6 million homes.

■ Housing: Insulation

Feryal Clark:

[16250]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to make funding available for local authorities to support the delivery of new home insulation schemes.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Government is funding a number of schemes as part of its commitment to retrofit homes to cut energy bills for households and to make them greener on the path to Net Zero.

The Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD), which supports projects to install energy efficiency measures such as various types of insulation, and low-carbon heating systems for low-income households, has already provided £500million to Local Authorities for upgrades to low-income households across England, and is being delivered up to December 2021. The London Borough of Enfield has already been allocated £305,000 of funding through the first phase of LAD, as well part of the £6.8 million of the Greater London Authority's successful consortium-led bid in that phase.

On 16th June 2021, the Government launched the Sustainable Warmth Competition enabling Local Authorities to apply for further funding under the £200million Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 scheme and from an initial allocation of £150million for the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 1 scheme, for delivery up to March 2023.

In addition, the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator has awarded £62million of funding to social landlords across England and Scotland to test innovative approaches to retrofitting at scale, seeing over 2300 social homes improved to at least EPC band C. The London Borough of Enfield has already been allocated part of the £9.6 million awarded to a consortium of 6 London Boroughs in this phase. The Government has announced around a further £160million for the first wave of the £3.8bn manifesto commitment in financial year 21/22, delivering up to March 2023.

The Government announced in the Sustainable Warmth Strategy a four-year, £4 billion successor scheme to Energy Company Obligation (ECO), to accelerate our efforts to improve homes to meet fuel poverty targets. ECO will continue to be an obligation on suppliers.

■ Life Sciences: Research

Emma Hardy:

[17823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to increase funding for (a) epilepsy treatments and medication and (b) UK life-sciences research more widely.

Nadhim Zahawi:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funds research into epilepsy primarily through the Medical Research Council and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

Funding for research projects that specifically refer to epilepsy in the project title or abstract in each of the last five years are set out in the table below. This does not include wider funding that contributes to epilepsy research.

FINANCIAL YEAR 2014/2015	FINANCIAL YEAR 2015/2016	FINANCIAL YEAR 2016/2017	FINANCIAL YEAR 2017/2018	FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/2020
£8m	£6.2m	£8.4m	£9.7m	£10.6m

The DHSC-funded National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) facilitates and enables life science research, from early translational research, through clinical research, to applied health research. Life science companies can access NIHR resources at any stage in their clinical development process and DHSC ensures all parts of the NIHR are open to collaboration with industry.

The Government is committed to making the UK a global hub for life sciences. This means building on our strengths in basic science and medical research to ensure the UK remains at the forefront of worldwide efforts to tackle the most pressing healthcare challenges, from cancer to dementia.

As part of our commitment, the Government will raise total UK investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. Life Sciences is critical to this – with the pharmaceutical industry accounting for one fifth of the total industrial spend on R&D in the UK ¹.

We will also continue to support our fantastic research infrastructure, which bolsters the sector, stimulates economic growth and drives better outcomes for patients.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Construction

Virginia Crosbie:[\[17888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the need for new nuclear power plants in addition to Hinkley Point C in order to meet net zero targets.

Virginia Crosbie:[\[17891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the role of nuclear power in a net zero energy system.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS analysis of the electricity system in 2050 – published alongside the Energy White Paper in December 2020 – shows that in the majority of modelled scenarios, more new nuclear beyond Hinkley Point C will be required to achieve net zero at low cost by 2050. That is why the Government confirmed in the Energy White Paper that

it aims to bring at least one large-scale nuclear project to a Final Investment Decision by the end of this Parliament (subject to clear value-for-money and all relevant approvals), and that it will provide up to £385m in an Advanced Nuclear Fund (subject to future Spending Reviews) for the next generation of nuclear technology aiming, by the early 2030s, to develop a Small Modular Reactor design and to build an Advanced Modular Reactor demonstrator.

Virginia Crosbie:

[17889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what criteria he will use to assess the business case for large-scale nuclear power project proposals being brought to the Final Investment Decision by the end of the 2019 Parliament.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As with the business cases for all major projects and programmes, the case for a large-scale nuclear power project will be assessed consistent with the approach set out in HM Treasury's Green Book and Guide to Developing Project Business Cases:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-central-government>.

Before entering into commitments to support any nuclear project, as stated in the nuclear Regulated Asset Base (RAB) consultation document, the Government will assess the project business case on whether the project was expected to contribute to the target of net zero emissions by 2050 and deliver security of supply, at a lower total electricity system cost for consumers than alternatives without the project.

■ Restart Grant Scheme

Olivia Blake:

[17893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making businesses based in (a) non-commercial and (b) non-rateable premises eligible for the covid-19 Restart Grant.

Paul Scully:

The £5 billion Restart Grant Scheme announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3 March 2021 are one-off grants to businesses in the non-essential retail, hospitality, leisure, personal care and accommodation sectors, to support businesses to reopen as Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed.

Strand One of the Restart Grants aims to support non-essential retail with grants of up to £6,000. Strand Two is to support hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses, with grants of up to £18,000.

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

However, further funding has been made available via the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to support those businesses that have had their trade adversely affected by the local and national restrictions.

The ARG is a discretionary fund and is also administered by Local Authorities to support businesses in the way they see fit. More than £2 billion of funding has been made available via the ARG, £1.6 billion on Nov 2020 and further £425 million on April 2021.

Businesses should consult their Local Authority to determine whether they might be eligible for ARG support.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 11 Downing Street: Repairs and Maintenance

Cat Smith:

[15292]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total allocated budget was for the renovations and refurbishment of the Downing Street flat; and whether that budget has been exceeded.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer by my noble friend, Lord True (Minister of State at the Cabinet Office), to [PQHL14191](#) on 23 April 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Clinical Trials

Chris Stephens:

[16148]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has plans to (a) honour and (b) make a statement to recognise the volunteers who took part in the covid-19 vaccine trials.

Julia Lopez:

We appreciate there is a huge appetite across the UK to say thank you to all those involved in the successful vaccination programme.

The recently published Birthday Honours List 2021 includes a range of nominations for those who have played crucial roles throughout the COVID-19 effort. A number of people were honoured for their contributions tackling the virus on the frontline and in their communities, building on the nominations brought forward in the Birthday Honours List 2020 and at New Year Honours List 2021. We expect to see more nominations come forward across future Lists, however, there are limits on the numbers who can receive recognition via the honours process.

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

■ Coronavirus: Public Inquiries**Sir John Hayes:**[\[16005\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the terms of reference of the inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 pandemic will be published.

Julia Lopez:

On 12 May, the Prime Minister confirmed to this House that a public inquiry into COVID-19 would be established on a statutory basis, with full formal powers, and that it will begin its work in spring 2022.

Further details, including terms of reference, will be set out in due course.

■ Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee: Lord Frost**Ms Harriet Harman:**[\[17674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Rt Hon Lord Frost CMG plans to appear before the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee following his recent postponement.

Penny Mordaunt:

Lord Frost will appear before the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee on 29 June 2021 alongside the Minister of State for Digital and Culture, Caroline Dinenage MP.

■ Electoral Register: British Nationals Abroad**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[17853\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many additional people will form part of the electorate following the extension of the franchise to citizens who have been living overseas for more than 15 years.

Chloe Smith:

The Government intends to legislate to extend the franchise for UK Parliamentary General Elections to all British citizens living overseas who have been previously registered or previously resident in the UK.

These measures will be included in the Elections Bill, and we will shortly be publishing further information on the impact on the overseas franchise as part of this process.

■ National Fraud Initiative**Afzal Khan:**[\[15385\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the timetable is for publishing his Department's response to the consultation on the expansion of the National Fraud Initiative data matching powers.

Julia Lopez:

Over the 12 week consultation period, a high volume of responses were received and are currently being analysed. A statement will be published on GOV.UK in due course with further details, including the anticipated timetable.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals****Jim Shannon:**[\[16105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that Afghans who have worked for the British Armed Forces will not be forced to leave the UK under the relocation scheme.

Leo Docherty:

The Government is strongly committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to current and former locally employed staff in Afghanistan. Ministry of Defence officials continue to work closely with the Home Office on all aspects of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, which offers current and former Afghan staff the opportunity to build safe and secure futures for themselves and their families in the UK.

The relocation scheme contains no provisions within it that force former locally employed staff who have worked for the British Armed Forces to leave the UK, and the Government has already supported more than 1,380 former Afghan staff and their families in creating new lives in the UK.

■ Afghanistan: Interpreters**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[16036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan interpreters were employed by the UK Government during the past twenty years.

Leo Docherty:

From the available data held between the years 2001 - 2014 the number of Afghan interpreters employed by the Ministry of Defence was 2,821.

We are unable to provide figures for other Government departments who have employed Afghan interpreters.

■ Armed Forces: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[17898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the quarantine arrangements are for armed forces personnel returning to the UK from covid-19 red list areas for personal travel.

James Heappey:

Defence personnel returning to the UK from red-list countries for personal reasons unrelated to duty or operations overseas must comply with the relevant border

regulations. This includes testing negative prior to travel, undergoing managed quarantine and undertaking tests on days two and eight following their arrival in the UK. Limited exemptions from quarantine may be applied for resilience or welfare purposes.

■ Armed Forces: Counter-terrorism

Jim Shannon:

[16106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to provide support to those members of the British armed forces who have been referred to the Government's terror prevention programme; and what steps he is taking in response to that matter.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not tolerate extremism of any kind and it is not compatible with the values and standards of our Armed Forces. Where such behaviour is believed to be occurring, early action is taken to confront and challenge this, including ensuring that referrals are made to the appropriate authorities.

Service personnel referred for suspected extremism are supported through the process, which can result in dismissal, with appropriate advice, guidance, and counselling as required and requested. In addition, the usual welfare mechanisms and pastoral support remain open to the individual through their local Chain of Command and via organisations such as SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity. Membership of proscribed organisations and extremist behaviour is not tolerated and those who have been convicted of offences are unlikely to continue to serve.

The MOD adheres to the Home Office Prevent programme. Further information on Prevent can be found on the Government's counter-terrorism website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>. Internally, Defence uses the Channel process to deal with Service personnel who have shown signs of extremism. Information on the Channel process can be found at the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-and-prevent-multi-agency-panel-pmap-guidance>

■ Armed Forces: LGBT People

Stephen Morgan:

[17825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many applications have been (a) received and (b) granted under the scheme allowing former armed forces personnel discharged over sexuality to apply to have service medals restored.

Leo Docherty:

Diversity and Inclusion continues to be a priority for Defence and while we have made encouraging progress, we still have further to go to achieve the essential cultural change necessary to ensure that we are as open, tolerant, fair, and equal as all high-performing organisations need to be. LGBT+ personnel have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the Armed Forces. It is deeply

regrettable that, because of their sexuality, some members of the Armed Forces were, in the past, treated in a way that would not be acceptable today.

To date, the Ministry of Defence has received six applications from former Armed Forces personnel who were discharged for reasons related to their sexuality to have their medals restored. All of these applications are under active review by the Department. Each case requires careful consideration of the circumstances and reference to contemporary records - some from several decades ago. All applicants will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible.

■ Courts Martial

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[16997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, how many of those members of the armed forces tried before a military court were (a) found not guilty and (b) found guilty of the charges they faced in each calendar year since 2016.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[16998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, how many members of the armed forces were discharged from service as a result of their trial in each calendar year since 2016.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[16999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, how many armed forces personnel tried before a military court were (a) regular personnel and (b) reservist personnel at the time of their trial.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[17000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, if he will publish a breakdown of the number of armed forces personnel tried before a military court from the (a) Army, (b) Navy and (c) Royal Air Force in each year since 2016.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[17001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, how many members of the armed forces tried before a military court in each calendar year since 2016 were recorded as receiving independent legal advice separate from that provided by the armed forces.

Imran Ahmad Khan: [\[17002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, what proportion of those members of the armed forces tried before a military court were (a) officers and (b) enlisted personnel.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[17003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, what proportion of those members of the armed forces tried before a military court were tried for (a) military only offences and (b) military and civilian offences in each calendar year since 2016.

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[17004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11704, how many of those members of the armed forces tried before a military court received a military custodial sentence in each calendar year since 2016.

Leo Docherty:

The detailed information requested to answer the hon. Member's questions will take time to collate, and I will write in due course.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ BBC: Disclosure of Information

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[17696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will have discussions with the BBC Director General to ascertain whether licence fee proceeds have been used in non disclosure agreements between the BBC and former BBC employees.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the government and the government cannot intervene in the BBC's day-to-day operations.

The BBC Board is ultimately responsible for appropriate use of licence fee payers' money.

■ Broadband: Liverpool

Paula Barker:

[\[15440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what timeframe he plans for the rollout of superfast broadband and improved broadband connection speeds throughout the Liverpool area to help support business recovery as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased and as part of the Government's levelling up agenda.

Matt Warman:

Earlier Superfast contracts took place across Merseyside and were completed fully in March 2019. Across the two phases of the contract, 43,966 premises were connected to Superfast broadband.

Building Digital UK is looking at how to improve levels of gigabit-capable broadband across the UK, and has split the Project Gigabit programme into three phases of delivery. The programme will carry out a national Open Market Review with

telecommunications providers across the country to establish which premises will not be covered by commercial plans for gigabit-capable broadband rollout in the coming 3 years. Merseyside and Greater Manchester are currently allocated as a single lot as part of the third phase of rollout which is expected to commence in 2022. At this stage, we will work with the local bodies in that region to highlight communities which require improved connectivity and the appropriate procurement processes for ensuring this takes place.

Furthermore, due to Liverpool's location, it benefits from a large amount of commercial investment from telecommunications providers. BDUK will be working over the coming months to establish which specific premises are excluded from these plans, and how these can be specifically addressed as part of Project Gigabit.

Statistics according to Thinkbroadband which also takes into account the commercial build undertaken by suppliers are:

	LIVERPOOL	MERSEYSIDE	UK
Superfast (>24mbps)	97.87%	98.86%	97.13%
Superfast (>30mbps)	97.85%	98.78%	96.82%
Gigabit-capable broadband (>1000mbps)	84.08%	73.44%	40.98%

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[16159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment has he made of the effect of the extension to covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the charity sector.

Rachael Maskell: [\[16160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the extension of covid-19 lockdown restrictions on charities' ability to fundraise.

Rachael Maskell: [\[16162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Government's announcement of 14 June 2021 not to move ahead with Step 4 of the Government's roadmap for the easing of covid-19 restrictions from the 21 June 2021, what assessment he has made of the effect of that announcement on social enterprises.

Rachael Maskell: [\[16163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has commissioned research into the effect of covid-19 on the civil society sector.

Matt Warman:

My department regularly engages with representatives of the charity and social enterprise sectors and reviews emerging evidence to understand the impact of ongoing restrictions. My officials have reached out to stakeholders following the Prime Minister's announcement to seek feedback and offer an opportunity to discuss potential implications further.

We recognise that the restrictions that have been necessary over the last year have impacted on the ability of many in the charity and social enterprise sectors to generate income, including from trading and fundraising. While many of these restrictions have already been lifted, including allowing the return of non essential retail, we understand that this extension will continue to limit certain activities. Guidance is available on a range of activities that will be relevant to charities and social enterprises including, for example organised events and grassroots sport and sports facilities. We have also worked with the Institute of Fundraising and Fundraising Regulator to support the development of guidance on the safe return to fundraising activities, and will continue to do so as events unfold.

We have not commissioned independent research into the impact of the pandemic on the charity and social enterprises sectors. However, we are working closely with stakeholders and academic institutions looking into the effect on these sectors, including Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University. We will also carefully consider the findings of the independent inquiry into the impact of the crisis on social enterprises, launched by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Social Enterprises on 10 June. This work will collectively enable government to generate a complete picture of the impact of the crisis on charities and social enterprises.

■ Culture: Coronavirus**Jo Stevens:****[15281]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what impact assessment was carried out on the effect of the delay to lifting lockdown restrictions on 21 June 2021 on (a) theatres, (b) music venues and (c) cultural organisations.

Caroline Dinanage:

The Prime Minister has always said that we would be led by data, not dates. The government has looked at the data very closely and assessed it against the four tests set out in our roadmap. It is on the basis of worsening data that we have taken the difficult call not to proceed with this reopening at this point, but to pause for four weeks.

There is uncertainty on test 3. The Delta variant is already driving the growth we are seeing in infection rates and hospitalisations, and at the same time non-COVID emergency demand on the NHS is the highest it has been since the start of the pandemic. We have assessed that we have not met test 4. Our assessment of the risks has been altered by the Delta variant: the latest data suggests the Delta variant is between 40% and 80% more transmissible than the Alpha variant.

Therefore, the Government announced a four-week pause at Step 3. We will use this time to get more vaccinations in arms, both first and second doses, and to learn more about the Delta variant. We anticipate that a four-week pause of this kind could significantly reduce the number of hospitalisations and deaths.

We recognise the challenging times facing all sectors currently, the Department has been working closely with stakeholders across the theatre industry, music venues and cultural organisations throughout the pandemic to maintain a complete picture of the financial impact of Covid-19 to ensure they survive this difficult period wherever possible.

Many of these organisations have benefitted from the significant cross-economy support available throughout this pandemic, including the generous employment schemes, grants, loans, a reduction in VAT to 5%, and business rates relief. And some businesses may further be eligible for the unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund - the largest one-off investment in UK culture - as we look to provide support for a wide range of cultural institutions including galleries, theatres, museums, music venues, comedy clubs and festivals, as audiences begin to return.

■ **European Solidarity Corps: Charities**

Rachael Maskell:

[15309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the UK ceasing its participation in the European Solidarity Corps programme on UK charities which benefit from participation in that scheme; and what plans his Department has to support those charities.

Matt Warman:

The UK government set out its approach to negotiations with the European Union in February 2020. This stated that the UK government was open to considering participation in some EU programmes where it is in the UK and the EU's interests that we do so. The decision was taken not to seek participation in the next European Solidarity Corps (2021-27) programme.

The UK continues to participate fully in the 2018-2020 European Solidarity Corps programme. This means that projects that successfully bid for funding during the 2018-2020 programme will continue to receive EU funding for the full duration of the project, including where funding runs beyond 2020 and the end of the transition period.

Looking to the future, international opportunities for young people outside of formal education settings, such as the types of activities funded under the European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+ (Youth) programmes, are being considered as part of the DCMS-led Youth Review. Future funding is subject to decisions at the next Spending Review.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK government made available an unprecedented £750 million package of support, specifically to charities, social enterprises and the voluntary sector to ensure that charities and other civil society

organisations, including those at risk of financial hardship, were able to continue their vital work.

■ Exercise: Young People

Rosie Cooper:

[15199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support the promotion of physical activity among young people.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people have the best opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity. Our Sporting Future strategy sets out how important it is for all children to have a good experience of sport and physical activity while they are young.

The Government's arm's-length body, Sport England, has invested over £190 million into physical activity for children and young people over 2016-2021, including programmes such as the £40 million Families Fund, which encourages low-income families with children to do sport and physical activity together. Initiatives such as the Studio You video platform, funded by Sport England and powered by This Girl Can, are also encouraging more teenage girls to be active.

The Government's School Sport and Activity Action Plan (jointly published by the Department for Education, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and Department for Health and Social Care in July 2019) sets out a commitment to ongoing collaboration to support the delivery of high-quality PE lessons and to ensure that sport and physical activity are an integral part of both the school day and after-school activities. This is supported by £320 million per year through the PE and sport premium. More recently, the Government has hosted roundtables on how to take support for young people even further, and has committed to updating the Government sport strategy, with children and young people central to this.

■ Gambling Act 2005

Carolyn Harris:

[16165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to publish the responses to the Gambling Act Review Call for Evidence that closed on 31 March 2021.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Review of the Gambling Act 2005 was launched on 8 December 2020 with a wide-ranging Call for Evidence, which closed on 31 March. We received c.16,000 submissions to the Call for Evidence from a range of stakeholders and members of the public. We are committed to undertaking a thorough, evidence-led review and are carefully considering the submissions we received. While the government does not routinely publish responses to Calls for Evidence, we aim to publish a white paper by the end of the year which will set out clearly the evidence on which it draws and our

analysis. It will also include a list of respondents to the call for evidence, subject to compliance with rules on data protection.

■ **Gambling: Criminal Proceedings**

Carolyn Harris:

[14180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the number of criminal cases in 2021 where gambling addiction is a relevant factor exceeding 2020 figures, what assessment he has made of the Gambling Commission's performance against the statutory licensing objectives set out in the Gambling Act 2005.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government does not hold information on the number of criminal cases where gambling addiction is a relevant factor.

■ **Loneliness**

Rachael Maskell:

[16164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his priorities are for tackling loneliness in 2021.

Matt Warman:

In the Tackling Loneliness Strategy, published October 2018, government set out three overarching goals which guide its work on loneliness: reducing stigma by building a national conversation on loneliness; driving a lasting shift so that loneliness is considered in the work of government and other organisations across society; and improving the evidence base on loneliness. Delivering progress against these three goals remains a priority, particularly as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the coming year, we will carry out a range of activity to make progress against our three goals. We will deliver communications activity to amplify loneliness messaging and reduce the stigma associated with loneliness. We will continue to work across government and support organisations to tackle loneliness through our Tackling Loneliness Network. We will convene a new group of funders interested in social connection, meeting regularly to share learning and look for opportunities to align and join up funding where possible. Finally, we will convene organisations interested in coordinating research activity so that we can fill priority gaps in our understanding of the issues surrounding loneliness.

■ **Loneliness: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[16161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the extension of covid-19 lockdown restrictions on loneliness.

Matt Warman:

Government is monitoring the level of loneliness via the [Community Life Survey](#); the most robust source for assessing the level of loneliness across the UK. As this survey

only produces yearly data, our understanding of loneliness over the various lockdowns is supplemented by more timely tracking data from the [UCL COVID Study](#) and the [ONS Social Impacts of Coronavirus Study](#).

We will continue to work closely with the civil society sector and across government to assess how we can best support the continuation of vital work to tackle loneliness.

Government is committed to tackling loneliness. We have delivered £34 million of funding to tackle loneliness over the past year, are encouraging organisations to take action and are aiming to reduce the stigma of loneliness through our campaign 'Let's Talk Loneliness'.

■ Planning Authorities: EU Law

Wera Hobhouse:

[15347]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Answer of 17 November 2020 to Question 114987, whether local planning authorities that were made competent authorities under EU Directive 2014/61/EC retain that status under EU Directive 2018/1972/EC.

Matt Warman:

The European Electronic Communications Code Directive updated the EU telecommunications regulatory framework, and was transposed into UK law via the Electronic Communications And Wireless Telegraphy (Amendment) (European Electronic Communications Code And Eu Exit) Regulations 2020.

Whilst the Directive gave member states flexibility to assign certain functions to competent authorities, as under prior EU and domestic law, Ofcom is retained as the designated telecoms national regulatory authority in the UK

Local planning authorities were not made competent authorities through EU Directive 2014/61/EC, as the government was already content that the functions in question relating to planned civil works were already in place. The transposition of the EECC would have no effect on the status of local planning authorities where they are considered competent authorities under EU Directive 2014/61/EC.

■ Sports: Gender Recognition

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[17805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Sports Council Equality Group guidance on trans inclusion in domestic competition, which was commissioned in March 2020, will be published.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, as well as the safety and fairness across all levels of sport. This is at the heart of our strategy 'Sporting Future'. However, sports governing bodies each have their own rules on transgender issues and it is appropriate that they can determine the right position for their own sport.

The Sports Councils' Equality Group (SCEG) is in the process of reviewing Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport in the UK, commissioned in 2020. Subsequently a wide-ranging consultation has taken place. They are now processing the information they have collected as they work towards a carefully considered outcome in this complex environment. It is anticipated that the revised guidance on trans participation in sport will be released later this year.

■ Video on Demand: Classification Schemes

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[17700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department (a) has made and (b) plans to make an assessment of how many video-on-demand platforms apply the BBFC age ratings framework; and what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the proposed timeline for further platforms to adopt the BBFC classification system.

Caroline Dinenage:

As the designated body for age classification of film content, the Government has great trust in the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) best practice age ratings.

A number of video-on-demand services currently use BBFC ratings for some of their content, including Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV+, Curzon Home Cinema and BFI Player. In December 2020, Netflix became the first video-on-demand service to achieve complete coverage of their content under the BBFC's ratings.

We have not made an assessment of the number of services that use these ratings, though we have discussed with the BBFC and individual companies their current and potential future use of these ratings. We continue to engage with industry to encourage other platforms to adopt the BBFC's ratings across all of their content, and will keep the evidence for legislation in this area under review.

EDUCATION

■ Assessments: Finance

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[15284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) schools and (b) teachers in England will receive additional financial support to carry out the work associated with providing pupils with teacher assessment grades.

Nick Gibb:

This year, due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, students are being awarded grades determined by their teachers and based on a range of evidence. Assessing students and determining their standard of performance is an important part of teachers' roles in a typical year. Nevertheless, many elements of the approach to awarding qualifications in 2021 have been designed with workload in mind. The

Department is regularly engaging with teacher unions and other sector representatives to ensure the processes developed, and the guidance that supports them, reflects their feedback. The Joint Council for Qualifications and the exam boards have published extensive guidance and materials for schools and colleges to support teachers with their assessment, marking and making their judgements of students' performance in these challenging circumstances.

Exceptionally for 2021, the Department is providing additional funding to centres for teachers to process priority appeals following results day. This will be £75 per each priority appeal. In addition, we are providing funding to awarding organisations so that state-funded schools will not need to pay a fee for formal appeals this year. Last year, we announced the biggest pay rise the teaching profession has seen since 2005, with above-inflation rises to the teacher pay scales. We are also committed to introducing a £30,000 starting salary.

■ Breakfast Clubs

Dan Jarvis:

[\[17741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to allocate additional local authority funding to support schools to provide (a) breakfast clubs and (b) after school clubs until the Breakfast Clubs programme procurement closes.

Vicky Ford:

Earlier this year, we released an invitation to tender worth up to £24 million to continue our support for school breakfast clubs. This will enable our investment in school breakfast clubs to continue until 2023, making sure that thousands of children in disadvantaged areas have a healthy start to the day. The outcome from this procurement process will be available shortly. This builds on the investment of up to £38 million in school breakfast clubs which the government has delivered since 2018. The current contract is due to complete in July 2021, and the new procurement will enable our provision to continue seamlessly.

■ Children and Young People: Mental Health

Rosie Cooper:

[\[15200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the role that physical education and school sport can play in promoting mental wellbeing among children and young people.

Nick Gibb:

The Department works with the Department of Health and Social Care to regularly review the latest evidence on children and young people's mental wellbeing, including the impact of physical activity and sport. Physical education (PE) and school sport play a central role in ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to take part in sport and exercise. For this reason, PE is a foundation subject in all four Key Stages of the National Curriculum.

Evidence suggests that good quality sporting activity can have a positive impact on children and young people's general wellbeing and mental health. For example, research by the National Centre for Social Research shows that participating in organised sports and joining after school clubs can help to improve primary school children's academic performance and social skills.

There is also evidence that organised sporting activity can have a positive effect on personal development and contribute to wellbeing such as improved self-esteem, self-confidence, and social skills. Such activity can have a beneficial effect on mental health in terms of reducing anxiety, emotional distress, and depressive symptoms.

■ Children: Disability

Rosie Cooper:

[15198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that children with disabilities can participate in appropriate physical activity at school.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has provided £900,000 to the Inclusion 2020 programme since 2018, which supports 9,328 schools with continuing professional development to ensure that physical education (PE) and school sport is inclusive of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This programme funded the development of new teacher resources such as the 'All about Autism, All about Me' digital toolkit, endorsed by the National Autistic Society, which provides support for making PE and sport inclusive to pupils with autism spectrum conditions.

The Department has committed to continue to fund a programme to support children and young people with SEND to take part in PE and school sport. It launched an open competition process last month to select a new programme.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[16023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what Government funding has been provided for (a) respite care and (b) additional support for the families of disabled children in the West Midlands to help alleviate the impact of covid-19 on those families.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield to the answer I gave on 2 June 2021 to Question [7328](#).

■ Children: Exercise and Sports

Rosie Cooper:

[15196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress he is making on implementing his policies on improving children's health and wellbeing through the provision of physical education and school sport; and if he will make a statement.

Rosie Cooper:

[15197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of adopting a long-term strategy to help improve physical activity and wellbeing in young people.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Health and Social Care to provide children with greater opportunities to do 60 minutes of sport and physical activity every day inside and outside school.

The Government set out initial actions in the School Sport and Activity Action Plan in July 2019. The Department has worked to adapt to the challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak and is delivering on the actions set out in the plan. This includes providing £11.6 million to Sport England to understand and overcome barriers to schools opening their sport facilities, funding nine teaching school networks to develop and deliver Physical Education (PE) continued professional development programmes and Sport England has provided £1.5 million of National Lottery funding to launch a new digital schools' platform, designed to reach girls who have disengaged from PE. The Department subsequently announced £10.1 million in funding to support schools to open sports facilities outside of the school day.

The Government has confirmed its intention to publish an update to the action plan following the Spending Review later this year and is working closely with sport organisations through the School Sport and Activity Sector Forum to discuss the Government's long term approach to PE and school sport.

■ Children: Homelessness

Mohammad Yasin:

[901529]

What steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure that homeless children aged 16 and 17 without family support are accommodated by their local authority as looked-after children.

Vicky Ford:

The Department for Education and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have issued joint guidance to local authorities which makes clear that children's services have responsibility for assessing the needs of 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness and that, if they need to be accommodated, they should normally become a looked after child. A copy of this guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation>.

There are only two circumstances in which a local authority might find that a homeless young person should be accommodated by homelessness services under the Housing Act 1996, rather than by children's services under section 20 of the

Children's Act 1989 – becoming looked after. These are where the young person is either:

- not a child in need, or
- a 16 or 17 year old child in need who, having been properly and fully advised of the implications and having the capacity to reach a decision, has decided that they do not want to be accommodated under section 20.

Alongside this guidance, Coram Voice's 'Always Heard' safety net service, funded by the Department for Education, has provided vital advocacy support for looked after children, care leavers and children on the edge of care since 2017. As a direct result of the work of the Always Heard service, children have been made safe, removed from homelessness, and poor or unlawful care planning decisions have been challenged. Coram Voice continued to provide vital advocacy support during the COVID-19 outbreak to young people at most risk – with over half of the children and young people using the safety net service in 2020-21 from harder to reach groups, including homeless children. The department will continue to work together with MHCLG, to ensure this group of young people receive support and accommodation which meets their needs and, most importantly, keeps them safe.

■ Education: Digital Technology

Helen Hayes:

[15329]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish his Department's long term plans for embedding digital learning in his Department's covid-19 education recovery programme.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is building on its significant investment in devices, platforms, training and digital services to develop a sustainable strategy for digital technology in education.

The Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy, to provide video lessons and resources in a broad range of subjects for Reception up to Year 11. To support education recovery, Oak National Academy is developing free, high quality resources that will be available online throughout the summer holidays.

The Department has also continued to fund the Demonstrator Schools and Colleges programme, a peer to peer support network which will aim to bridge the gap between crisis response and long term implementation of technology, focusing on upskilling the profession to realise the wider benefits of technology. This includes demonstrating the ways in which technology can bolster pupil progress and outcomes, and support catch up and recovery activities. For example, through online and in-person teaching and tutoring, and supporting high-quality assessment and feedback.

■ GCSE

Thangam Debbonaire: [15282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to schools to ensure that the individual circumstances of pupils can be taken into consideration and discretion exercised in awarding GCSE grades.

Thangam Debbonaire: [15283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students taking GCSEs and A Levels have access to set texts for upcoming assessments.

Nick Gibb:

Students should have confidence in their grades this year. Awarding organisations have provided assessment materials, guidance, and training to support centres to make fair, consistent, and evidence based decisions which are without bias. Ofqual has also published information for centres about making objective judgements this year.

For the 2021 summer series, reasonable adjustments for disabled students and access arrangements should have been in place when evidence was generated. Where they were not, centres should take that into account when coming to their judgement. Teachers have had the flexibility to substitute or discount evidence where reasonable adjustments were not applied. For all assessments completed in the summer term, centres should have ensured students had access to reasonable adjustments. Special circumstances that may lead a teacher to disregard a piece of evidence or to replace it with another piece of evidence would cover instances where students were not provided with their approved access arrangements or reasonable adjustments when completing their work. This also applies where temporary illness or injury, bereavement, or some other event outside of the student's control might have temporarily affected their performance.

This year, teachers have assessed their students based on what they were taught, not what they missed. Regarding the use of set texts, the Department expects students to have been assessed on the specific texts taught by their schools. Schools should follow their own processes for ensuring students have access to set texts, as they would in any other year.

Centres should follow the schools operational guidance on equipment when using classroom based resources, available to view here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance#system-of-controls>.

Where schools have taught remotely, they should follow the guidance on remote education, which refers to the provision of resources, available to view here:

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

[coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance#system-of-controls](#).

Where only some of the text has been taught, teachers had the flexibility to focus their assessments on the proportion taught.

Deadline for centres to submit their teacher assessed grades was 18 June so centres have therefore completed their assessments for the 2021 series.

■ Office for Students: Finance

John McDonnell:

[14134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the annual budget was for the Office for Students in the (a) 2019-20 and (b) 2020-21 financial years; and what the budget is for the 2021-22 and (b) 2022-23 financial years.

Michelle Donelan:

The budgets for the Office for Students (OfS) for financial years 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 are as follows:

2019-20 - £1.5 billion

2020-21 - £1.5 billion

2021-22 - £1.5 billion

2022-23 - Not yet confirmed

The funding for the financial year 2022-23 will be confirmed as part of the Spending Review.

The OfS budget includes the Strategic Priorities Grant. The Grant is funding supplied by the government on an annual basis to support higher education (HE) providers' ongoing teaching and related activities. Since 2012, grant funding has been reduced, while student fees income has increased for HE providers. Fees now make up the bulk of providers' income. The Strategic Priorities Grant accounts for a relatively small proportion of the total income of HE providers today.

■ Primary Education: Sports

Jonathan Gullis:

[15428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the PE and Sport Premium for primary schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's primary PE and sport premium survey, published in July 2019, assessed the impact of the doubling of the PE and sport premium to £320 million from September 2017.

The findings indicated that a large majority of schools identified that, following the doubling of the premium, there had been increases in the profile of PE and sport in supporting whole-school improvement, the confidence, knowledge and skills of all

staff in teaching PE, the level of competitive sport being offered and the range of PE and sport being offered. The detailed findings can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-pe-and-sport-premium-survey>.

In addition, local Active Partnerships conduct an annual review of a large sample of schools' uses of their PE and sport premium including impact, and they report the results of this review to the Department.

Ian Byrne: [17882]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 9 June to Question 10698 on Primary Education: Sports, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of uncertainty on the primary physical education and sport premium for the 2021-22 academic year on (a) school finances and (b) the ability of schools to agree programmes of support for pupils for the next academic year.

Nick Gibb:

The Department aims to give as much notice as possible to schools of future funding to support effective planning and has now confirmed the overall funding for the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium will continue at £320 million for the 2021/22 academic year. Schools will be permitted to carry forward any unspent PE and sport premium funding from the current academic year to ensure it is spent to benefit primary pupils' physical education, school sport and physical activity recovery. Funding will be allocated according to a formula and details will be confirmed in the autumn.

■ Pupils: Disadvantaged

Andrew Gwynne: [901519]

What assessment he has made of the adequacy of catch-up funding for disadvantaged pupils.

Julie Elliott: [901526]

What assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for disadvantaged pupils.

Stephen Morgan: [901528]

What assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for disadvantaged pupils.

Liz Twist: [901535]

What assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for disadvantaged pupils.

Nick Gibb:

All children have had their education disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak, but it is likely that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups will have been hardest hit.

Since 2011 we have spent more than £20 billion to provide Pupil Premium funding for school leaders to use, based on the needs of their disadvantaged pupils. Between 2011 and 2019, the attainment gaps between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils narrowed by 13% at age 11 and 9% at age 16.

On top of this funding, we increased core schools funding by £2.6 billion last year and are increasing core schools funding by £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively, compared to 2019-20.

In addition, over the past year we have made three major interventions to support education recovery, totalling over £3 billion additional spend: £1 billion in June 2020, a further £700 million in February 2021 and our latest £1.4 billion package announced in June 2021.

Recovery programmes have been designed to allow early years, school and college leaders the flexibility to support those pupils most in need, including the most disadvantaged. The latest announcement expands our reforms in two areas where the evidence is clear our investment will have a significant impact for disadvantaged children, high quality tutoring and great teaching.

We are providing over £1.5 billion for tutoring programmes, including an expansion of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), an ambitious scheme that supports schools to access targeted tutoring intervention for disadvantaged pupils who have missed out on learning due to school closures. We will also provide greater flexibility to schools to make it easier for them to take on local tutors or use existing staff to supplement those employed through the NTP. This new blended offer ensures that the NTP works for all disadvantaged children, giving schools the flexibility to choose what type of approach best suits their needs and those of individual pupils.

The £302 million Recovery Premium has been weighted so that schools with more disadvantaged pupils receive more funding and includes £22 million to scale up proven approaches to reduce the attainment gap.

We have also invested more than £400 million to provide internet access and over 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Mr Richard Holden:

[17874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to schools for carrying out covid-19 track and trace on pupils and staff.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has issued guidance which covers how to manage cases of COVID-19 amongst the school community. This recommends that schools keep a record of pupils and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes places between pupils and staff in different groups, to help identify close contacts.

Schools may receive support through the dedicated advice service introduced by Public Health England (PHE), which can be reached through the Department's helpline on 0800 046 8687 or their PHE local health protection team if the case is escalated.

Schools: Food**Caroline Lucas:** [\[16061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 27 April 2021 to Question 186003 and to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 914739, whether he took into account the Climate Change Committee recommendation of January 2020 for a reduction in beef, lamb and dairy consumption to tackle the climate crisis, following the advisory group discussions in 2019 of key stakeholders in the school food, nutrition and health sectors on updates to the School Food Standards; if he will make it his policy to publish a clarification in the existing School Food Standards for lunches in schools to highlight that the Standards allow schools the flexibility to provide plant-based food and drink options to pupils, in place of meat and dairy options, if there is a demand for them; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas: [\[16062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to review his decision not to update the Schools Foods Standards during the covid-19 outbreak when covid-19 restrictions in England are lifted; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

We are aware of the Climate Change Committee recommendation of January 2020. The issue of balancing meat and plant-based meals was discussed by the expert advisory group in place for the school food standards update. Due to the priority of responding to the COVID-19 outbreak and the pressures on schools this presents, and considering the robustness of the existing standards, the government will not be taking further action during the course of the COVID-19 outbreak on updating the school food standards. We do however keep this position under review.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**Fisheries: Biodiversity****Helen Hayes:** [\[17791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to (a) improve the sustainability of the fishing industry and (b) ensure that fishing practices do not damage the biodiversity of global oceans.

Victoria Prentis:

The Fisheries Act's objectives, together with their strong legal framework of the Joint Fisheries Statement and Fisheries Management Plans set out our commitment to achieving sustainable (in all senses of the word) fishing and protecting the marine environment.

Internationally, the UK is expanding and enhancing our efforts to sustainably manage fisheries, protect ecosystems and combat illegal fishing at an international scale through our engagement in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, other international organisations such as the FAO, and directly with individual States.

The UK is championing efforts to achieve ambitious and transformative outcomes from the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) COP15 in October later this year, including targets for sustainable fishing practices, and is co-leading global efforts to ensure the adoption of a target to protect at least 30% of land and ocean globally by 2030 (the '30by30' target). Importantly, the UK also supports the conclusion of negotiations on a new implementing Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), which will have provisions that allow for the creation of MPAs in these areas, a key mechanism to deliver '30by30'.

■ Fishing Vessels: Marine Environment

Helen Hayes:

[\[17792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the proportion of (a) UK and (b) global waters which have been damaged by bottom trawling and supertrawlers.

Victoria Prentis:

The impacts of all fishing activities are considered when we assess the status of UK seas and set targets to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) under the UK Marine Strategy. Our last assessment (2019) showed that pressure and disturbance caused by fishing activities occurs to some degree in 57% of habitats in UK waters.

Work is currently underway to update Part Three of the UK Marine Strategy, which sets out the programmes and measures we are taking in our waters to help us move towards or maintain GES. Included as part of these measures will be the new Fisheries Act which now allows UK Authorities to manage fishing activity in our waters and will help to achieve the UK's vision of a clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse ocean and seas.

The [IPBES 2019 Global Assessment](#) shows us that human activities have had a large and widespread impact on the ocean. Globally, direct exploitation of organisms in particular overexploitation of fish, shellfish and other organisms, has had the largest relative impact on biodiversity. An increasing proportion of marine fish stocks are overfished, and industrial fishing covers at least 55% of the ocean. Coastal habitats, including estuaries and deltas critical for marine biota and regional economies, have been severely affected by sea-use changes, including bottom trawling.

Evidence indicates that effective protection of at least 30% of the global ocean can help in reversing these adverse ecological impacts, preserve fish populations, increase resilience to climate change, and sustain long-term ocean health. That is why, in addition to protecting 38% of the UK's own waters in Marine Protected Areas, the UK is co-leading global alliances in support of a target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 ('the 30by30 target'). Under UK leadership, over 80 countries have now committed to support the adoption of this target at Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP15, due to be held in October 2021.

Helen Hayes:

[\[17793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to reduce the use of bottom trawling and supertrawlers by the fishing industry.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is continuing to work with fishermen to develop ways to reduce the impact of fishing gear on the seabed, whilst still allowing the industry to remain profitable. For example, 98 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in inshore waters have management measures in place to protect sensitive features from bottom towed fishing gears. The Marine Management Organisation has recently concluded the first in a series of consultations on measures for offshore MPAs, which again seek to reduce the impact of bottom trawling.

The issue of supertrawlers is more complex as they generally target pelagic species of fish within the water column and are unlikely to damage the seabed. We are currently reviewing our policy on these vessels but perhaps more importantly, working to develop more robust management of non-quota stocks which these vessels are targeting as well as quota stocks.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fisheries

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[15348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of fully or highly protected Marine Protected Areas on the ecological health of inshore waters and the livelihoods of local fishing communities.

Rebecca Pow:

On 8 June 2021, the Government published its response to the Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs). The Government accepted the central recommendation that we should take forward pilot sites and we will designate these next year. The purpose of HPMAs is biodiversity recovery and by setting aside areas of sea with high levels of protection, HPMAs will allow nature to recover to a more natural state, allowing the ecosystem to thrive in the absence of damaging activities. The Benyon Review Panel reviewed clear evidence and heard strong support for the ecological benefits that HPMAs can deliver. The Government will identify pilot HPMAs with ecological value, including areas with potential to recover. Defra will then use social and economic principles to minimise the impacts on sea users, including fishing communities. Defra will evaluate socio-economic concerns, including fisheries displacement, before designating HPMAs.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[12998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 16 April 2021 on compulsory microchip scanning, reference ZA56243.

Victoria Prentis:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 14 June 2021.

■ **Plants: EU Countries**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[15319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in EU member states to build competence and trust in respective phytosanitary processes with the aim of establishing inspections at points of embarkation for plant and tree imports.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra officials have been looking at a wide range of measures to make the import of plants and trees as efficient as possible, without compromising our high biosecurity standards. There is regular dialogue between our plant health services and those of our key trading partners in the EU, including on e-certification most recently, which will streamline the exchange of phytosanitary certificates for the benefit of businesses and regulators alike.

As to checks at point of embarkation, there are legal limitations with locating GB officials in a different jurisdiction to perform statutory functions, and whilst internationally there are precedents for locating inspectors in other countries, these staff typically perform an audit and assurance role rather than performing pre-import checks. Consequently, we are not actively pursuing this option with trading partners now, but Defra officials will continue to work with stakeholder organisations and those that import regulated plants and plant products from the EU to ensure GB plant health controls work as effectively and efficiently as possible.

■ **Wildlife: Smuggling**

Sir Roger Gale:

[\[15160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department spent on measures to prevent the illegal wildlife trade in each year since 2015.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has invested over £26 million since 2015 on work to directly counter illegal wildlife trade in animals and plants internationally to benefit nature, people, the economy and protect global security. This includes projects to reduce demand, strengthen enforcement, ensure effective legal frameworks and develop sustainable livelihoods.

Since 2015, we have also provided close to £1 million to support the National Wildlife Crime Unit in tackling wildlife crime in the UK, which includes combating the illegal wildlife trade.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Bahrain: Human Rights

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[15392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will meet with the pro-democracy leaders Saeed Alshehabi, Ali Mushaima and Moosa Mohammad to discuss ongoing human rights violations in Bahrain.

James Cleverly:

There are no plans to meet with Dr. Saeed Alshehabi, Mr Ali Mushaima or Mr Moosa Mohammad.

Defending human rights and promoting democracy around the world is a core priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and its diplomatic network. While we recognise that challenges remain, we believe that consistent, positive steps are being made on security and justice reform in Bahrain. The FCDO considers a range of information and sources when making our assessment of the HRs picture in Bahrain, including meeting individuals or groups when we deem appropriate.

■ Eritrea: Sexual Offences

Fiona Bruce:

[\[17729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress he has made in deploying UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict experts to Eritrea.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[17730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking in Eritrea to help ensure that (a) perpetrators of sexual violence are brought to justice and (b) to ensure that evidence of sexual violence is (i) collected and (ii) preserved.

James Duddridge:

We are appalled at the prevalence of sexual violence in Tigray. We have raised this issue in a variety of multilateral fora, including the G7.

To strengthen justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, we are finalising the deployment of personnel from the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative UK Team of Experts. We are signing contracts and hope to deploy within the next few weeks. Recommendations from an initial scoping mission will outline options for supporting the Government of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and other key stakeholders to safely collect and preserve evidence, and bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice. We continue to explore options for

addressing the immediate needs of survivors, preventing further sexual violence and delivering justice and accountability. The UK is also supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross, UN agencies, specialised NGOs and civil society partners to provide adequate essential services to survivors as well as supporting refugee survivors through the UN High Commission for Refugees.

■ Eritrea: War Crimes

Fiona Bruce:

[\[17727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the UK is taking in Eritrea to help ensure that UN investigators have the necessary access to conduct an assessment of atrocities.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[17728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is giving to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to help ensure that that agency's joint investigations with the Ethiopian High Commission into atrocities in Eritrea are (a) independent, (b) transparent and (c) impartial, and whether those investigations address specifically the situation of ethnic and religious groups.

James Duddridge:

We are appalled by systematic killing of civilians, widespread rape, including of children, indiscriminate shelling and the forcible displacement of ethnic Tigrayans. Those responsible for such abuses and violations need to be held to account.

We welcome the joint Enquiry of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into human rights violations and abuses in Tigray, and continue to press for unfettered access to the region and victims. Investigators must be given unhindered access to Tigray, be able to speak to the victims of the religious and ethnic groups most affected, and allowed to report their findings in full. We have lobbied in Asmara for Eritrean cooperation with the UNOHCHR Joint Investigation. The EHRC has previously shown its willingness to act independently and must continue to do so through the joint investigation, which we judge is the most credible prospect available for holding the perpetrators of atrocities in Tigray to account. The UK will therefore support the UNOHCHR to ensure that their joint investigation into atrocities in Tigray with the EHRC is independent, transparent and impartial. We will also continue to press the Eritrean government to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea to enable him to fully carry out his mandate.

The UK further welcomes the proposed African Union Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights, calls for the Government of Ethiopia to allow access to this inquiry and is in touch with the African Union on how we might support this effort.

■ Europe: MI6**Robert Halfon:** [\[16836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds in its archives on MI6 operations that (a) took place in (i) the Ukraine, (ii) Belarus, (iii) Germany and (iv) the Baltic States between 1945 and 1953 and (b) reference Stanislaw Chrzanowski.

James Cleverly:

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on intelligence matters.

Robert Halfon: [\[16837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what files held by his Department on MI6 operations in (a) the Ukraine, (b) Belarus, (c) Germany and (d) the Baltic States between 1945 and 1953 have been (i) lost and (ii) destroyed; and whether any of those files referenced Stanislaw Chrzanowski.

James Cleverly:

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on intelligence matters.

Robert Halfon: [\[16838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make available to Parliament (a) all files on MI6 operations in (i) the Ukraine, (ii) Belarus, (iii) Germany and (iv) the Baltic States between 1945 and 1953 and (b) those referencing Stanislaw Chrzanowski.

James Cleverly:

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on intelligence matters

Robert Halfon: [\[16839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will allow the CIA to release material that (a) refers to MI6 involvement in operations in (i) the Ukraine, (ii) Belarus, (iii) Germany and (iv) the Baltic States between 1945 and 1953 and (b) material that references Stanislaw Chrzanowski.

James Cleverly:

It is the longstanding policy of successive British Governments that we do not comment on intelligence matters.

■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[15215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what procedures are in place to ensure that financial resources intended to assist the

humanitarian situation of the people in Gaza is not directed into the control of Hamas or other terrorist organisations.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO has robust controls against fraud and diversion of aid. We work with implementers and partners that have strong safeguards in place, which reduces risk and ensures the maximum impact of UK aid for Palestinians. FCDO funding agreements commit partners to understand and comply with UK and international counter terrorism legislation. In Gaza, we implement robust controls to monitor spending, including enhanced due diligence assessments, annual audits, and regular field visits. All these ensure that UK aid reaches its intended beneficiaries.

■ **Iraq and Syria: Kurds**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[17795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help provide long-term protection for the Kurdish communities of northern (a) Iraq and (b) Syria.

James Cleverly:

The UK supports a strong and successful Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) within a peaceful and prosperous Iraq. The Foreign Secretary's visit to the KRI on 9 June 2021 was the first by a Cabinet Minister since 2017. He spoke with President Barzani about the Iraq elections in October, regional security and the threat from militia groups, and highlighted our continued support to Iraq and the KRI on security sector reform.

In north east Syria, we welcome the fact that the ceasefire is broadly holding and we urge all parties to continue adherence, while pressing for a UN-led political settlement as the only long-term solution to the Syria conflict. As a leading member of the Global Coalition against Daesh, the UK continues to support both the Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish Security Forces in maintaining capacity and capability to tackle the threat from Daesh. We will also maintain our significant humanitarian and early recovery support to liberated areas of Iraq and Syria, thereby helping communities recover from the brutality of life under Daesh.

■ **Iraq: Foreign Relations**

Robert Halfon:

[\[16070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the (a) outcome was and (b) implications for bilateral relations is of his recent visit to the Kurdistan Region in Iraq; and if he will make a statement .

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary's visit to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) was the first visit by a Cabinet Minister since 2017. He spoke to President Barzani about the Iraq elections in October, regional security and the threat from militia groups, security

sector reform, our continued support to Iraq and the KRI in the fight against Daesh, and the importance of freedom of expression.

The UK supports a strong and successful Kurdistan Region of Iraq within a thriving Iraq. The UK looks forward to continued close engagement with the Kurdistan Regional Government as a critical, valued and longstanding partner in the region with the aim of progressing security cooperation, increasing our business links, and supporting sustainable economic reform that delivers for all Iraqis.

■ Iraq: Human Rights

Margaret Ferrier: [\[15274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what human rights issues and cases of concern he raised when he met Iraqi officials during his visit to Baghdad on 8 June 2021.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary discussed efforts to hold militia groups to account for their actions, including work with the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq to identify those responsible for violations against demonstrators in 2019-20. He also discussed the need to help internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other vulnerable communities, which had previously been under Daesh control.

We will continue to speak out against human rights violations and abuses, and support the Government of Iraq to safeguard the human rights of all Iraqis.

■ Iraq: Kurds

Margaret Ferrier: [\[15271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what human rights issues and cases of concern he raised when he met the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, and his officials on 9 June 2021.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[15272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he made on (a) violations of freedom of the media and expression and (b) the cases of (i) Sherwan Sherwani, (ii) Ayaz Karam Brushki, (iii) Kohidar Mohammed Zebari and (iv) other arbitrarily detained journalists and activists when he met the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, and his officials on 9 June 2021.

James Cleverly:

During the Foreign Secretary's visit to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on 9 June he raised the importance of freedom of expression, including media freedom, as well as the KRI's progress on religious tolerance and support for internally displaced people.

I have raised and continue to raise the importance of media freedom during my engagements with political leaders from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Our Ambassador in Baghdad, and our Consul General in Erbil, also regularly discuss

these issues with their interlocutors in the Kurdistan Regional Government, and made a public statement on the detained journalists and activists in May 2021.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[15273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which officials he met when he visited the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on 9 June 2021.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary met with Nechirvan Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Qubad Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister; Minister of the Diwan, Fawzi Hariri; Vice President Jaafar Mustafa; and Vice President Mustafa Said Qadir.

■ Middle East: Peace Negotiations

Stephen Morgan:

[\[16273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 27 November 2020 to Question 118120, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the of the Nita M. Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act 2020; and whether the UK will assume one of the international seats on the governing board of the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace created by that Act.

James Cleverly:

The UK government shares the objective of increasing understanding and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. In support of this, we continue to fund peacebuilding projects focused on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. UK officials also remain in close contact with the US government regarding the International Fund. We look forward to hearing more from the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) and US Government about the International Fund's objectives and the projects it will support. Once more information is available, we will consider options for collaboration.

■ Myanmar: Politicians

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[16042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of reports that members of Myanmar's N.D.L. party have died in unknown circumstances.

Nigel Adams:

We are monitoring the current situation closely. The UK condemns the military coup in Myanmar and the detention of members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and civil society, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint. We firmly condemn the violent crackdown by Myanmar's military on peaceful protests and politicians alike. We urge the military to exercise utmost restraint and respect human rights and international law.

The specific reports of the arbitrary detention of the NLD members, as well as credible reports of torture and killings are deeply concerning. It is essential that all those detained arbitrarily are released. The UK has used its leadership role at the G7 and the UN Security Council, including through a Presidential Statement on 10 March, to call for an end to violence and the release of all those detained arbitrarily.

■ Overseas Aid

Caroline Lucas:

[\[15210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6304 on Overseas Aid, what impact assessment the Government has carried out on the decision taken on 30 April 2021 to defer the start dates of the UK Aid Match grants under round 4 to 1 April 2022.

Nigel Adams:

We are monitoring the impact of the ODA budget reductions on our partners, including UK charities, very closely. We have protected all active UK Aid Match projects and we are fully committed to match fund all appeals which were approved under UK Aid Match round 4. Due to the reduction in ODA, we've had to make the difficult decision to defer the start dates for round 4 projects to 1 April 2022. Officials have been in touch with all 16 organisations affected to sign grant agreements in advance to provide additional assurance to their partners and supporters that the FCDO is still matching their fundraising appeal pound for pound.

■ Overseas Aid: Children and Mothers

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[17722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much ODA his Department allocated to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children in 2020.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[17723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which of his Departments (a) projects, (b) programmes and (b) spending counted as spend on ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children in 2020.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[17724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much ODA his Department plans to allocate to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children in 2021.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[17725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which of his Department's (a) projects, (b) programmes and (c) spending will count as spend on ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children in 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State provided thematic ODA allocations for 2021/22 in a written ministerial statement which included £1,305 million allocated to global health. Ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborn and children requires a work across sectors to address the complex pathways leading to mortality. This includes provision of family planning, maternal and neonatal health, immunisation, nutrition, water and sanitation and health systems strengthening work. FCDO supports a range of programmes covering these areas, including support to the Global Financing Facility, Reproductive Health Supplies and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

FCDO spend is calculated using OECD-DAC sector codes. Details of FCDO spend by sector code for 2020 will be available in the Statistics on International Development publication in Autumn 2021 and details of FCDO spend for 2021 will be available in the Statistics on International Development publication in Autumn 2022. FCDO programme sector codes are available on DevTracker. We do not calculate spend on ending preventable deaths interventions in their totality. Broad donor Reproductive Maternal Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) spend is calculated by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine using the internationally recognised Muskoka2 methodology. Figures for 2020 are not yet available.

Yasmin Qureshi:[\[17726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much ODA his Department allocated to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children; and what the definition of spending on that commitment was in each year between 2015 and 2019.

Wendy Morton:

The most up to date UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) were published in the British Medical Journal with data analysis provided by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), using the internationally accepted Muskoka2 methodology. These are found here: <https://gh.bmj.com/content/6/6/e006089.full>

The LSHTM Muskoka2 estimates show FCDO spend, adjusted for inflation, as:

- £1,084 million on RMNCH in 2015
- £1,025 million on RMNCH in 2016
- £1,138 million on RMNCH in 2017
- £1,130 million on RMNCH in 2018
- £1,116 million on RMNCH in 2019

We previously stated FCDO spent approximately £1 billion per year on RMNCH between 2013 - 2017. These figures were based on the preceding Muskoka1 methodology and were not adjusted for inflation.

■ Saudi Arabia: Human Rights

Margaret Ferrier: [\[15275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what human rights issues and cases of concern he raised when he met Saudi officials during his visit to Saudi Arabia on 7 June 2021.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[15276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he raised the (a) assassination of Jamal Khashoggi and (b) the cases of detained Saudi activists (i) Abdulkarim Al-Khoder, (ii) Fowzan Al-Harbi, (iii) Dr. Mohammad Al-Qahtani, (iv) Mohamed Al-Otaibi, (v) Raif Badawi, (vi) Samar Badawi and (vii) Nassima al-Sadah, when he met Saudi officials during his visit to Saudi Arabia on 7 June 2021.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary raised a number of human rights issues during his visit to Saudi Arabia on 7 June 2021, including judicial reform and the cases of the women's rights defenders. During my visit to Riyadh in May 2021, I [Minister Cleverly] also raised issues including women's rights, the death penalty and freedom of religion or belief. In March 2021, Lord Ahmad discussed human rights with the President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, including individual cases.

The British Embassy Riyadh also raises cases on a regular basis.

■ Sri Lanka: Wrecks

Tom Randall: [\[15441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance the Government has provided to Sri Lanka following the (a) fire on and (b) sinking of the X-Press Pearl.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains concerned about the environmental impact caused by the fire on the X-Press Pearl ship. We have engaged regularly with the Sri Lankan authorities and international experts on the ground to determine how the UK can best support the response.

The UK Government is providing marine pollution expertise to Sri Lanka to help respond to the potentially devastating impact on the marine life and coastal habitats of Sri Lanka. The UK will also provide expertise and analytical capacity to support plastic pollution monitoring, as well as environmental and socioeconomic impact assessments. The UK's Centre for the Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science will partner with Sri Lankan Government Departments, academics and responsible authorities to support effective emergency response and implementation of a post spill integrated monitoring plan.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Zarah Sultana:

[\[17856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the level of risk of contracting covid-19 for people travelling overseas for (a) study and (b) work; and what steps he is taking to mitigate that risk.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) travel advice has a box at the top of all pages setting out the government message that to prevent new COVID-19 variants from entering the UK, travellers should not travel to Amber or Red list countries. Every page also states the Traffic Light status for that country (Red, Amber or Green).

The FCDO currently advises against all but essential travel to many countries and territories on the basis of COVID risks. Whether travel is essential or not is a personal decision; individuals should make an informed decision on whether or not to travel based on their personal circumstances, judgement of the risks, relevant legislation or regulations where they are resident and the entry requirements of their destination country.

■ Turkey: Arms Trade

Feryal Clark:

[\[15431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the use of UK arms exported to Turkey; and whether he plans to review the licensing of such exports.

James Cleverly:

The UK 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.

■ Yemen: Humanitarian Situation

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[16000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

Nearly 80% of the Yemeni population, or 24 million people, need some form of humanitarian assistance. The crisis is exacerbated by severe food insecurity, a collapsing economy, the C-19 pandemic and the escalation of fighting in Marib. The UK has played an important role in responding to this crisis, contributing over £1 billion since the conflict began. Our pledge of at least £87 million for this financial

year 2021 - 2022 will feed an additional 240,000 of the most vulnerable Yemenis every month, support 400 healthcare clinics and provide clean water for 1.6 million people. We will also provide one-off cash support to 1.5m of Yemen's poorest households. We continue to call on all parties to facilitate unhindered access for humanitarian actors and agencies and ensure that humanitarian workers are able to conduct their work safely.

■ Yemen: International Assistance

Fleur Anderson:

[\[17868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the G7 on increasing the level of international aid to Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly engages with international partners and the UN to co-ordinate the humanitarian response in Yemen and to discuss ways to improve the conditions for NGOs on the ground. The most recent meeting was the Senior Humanitarian Officials meeting on 1 June. On 5 May, G7 Foreign and Development Ministers, through their London Ministerial meeting communiqué and the Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises compact, confirmed their commitment to provide humanitarian funding to Yemen and other humanitarian crises. They further called on all parties in Yemen to agree to UN proposals for an immediate ceasefire, the free flow of imports through Red Sea ports, the reopening of Sana'a airport, full humanitarian access and the resumption of inclusive political talks. We remain a leading donor to Yemen, committing at least £87 million in aid this year and over £1 billion since the conflict began.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Stephen Morgan:

[\[423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to the (a) mental health and (b) social care budgets in each of the last three years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have made no such assessment. However, funding for National Health Service mental health services has increased every year since 2018-19 in line with the commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan to invest at least £2.3 billion of extra funding a year in mental health services by 2023-24.

Public spending on adult social care services has increased in real terms in every year since 2015-16, reaching £18.8 billion in 2019-20. We are providing councils with access to over £1 billion of additional funding for social care in 2021-22. This includes

£300 million of new grant funding for social care, on top of the £1 billion social care grant announced in 2019.

■ **Air Pollution: Coronavirus**

Ben Bradley:

[12284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of NHS East England on their purchase of photohydroionization (PHI) technology to prevent covid-19 transmission via aerosol and water droplets.

Edward Argar:

We have had no specific discussions.

■ **Care Homes: Staff**

Marsha De Cordova:

[17828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what equalities impact assessment his Department has undertaken on mandatory vaccines for care home staff for (a) disabled people (b) women (c) Black, Asian and ethnic minority people.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Public Sector Equality Duty Equality Impact Assessment form for making vaccination a condition of deployment in care homes was published on 16 June and is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994476/Vaccination as a condition of deployment in care homes - public sector equality duty impact assessment.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994476/Vaccination_as_a_condition_of_deployment_in_care_homes_-_public_sector_equality_duty_impact_assessment.pdf)

■ **Coronavirus: Children**

Navendu Mishra:

[16976]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on children's physical and mental wellbeing.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England's (PHE) 'Wider Impacts of COVID-19 on Health' tool is monitoring the wider impacts of the pandemic on population health and is available at the following link:

<https://analytics.phe.gov.uk/apps/covid-19-indirect-effects/>

PHE has worked with colleagues across Government, to track impacts on mental health and wellbeing using data and research from a wide range of sources. The 'COVID-19: mental health and wellbeing surveillance' report, which also looks at the effects on children and young people, is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report>

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Julian Sturdy: [\[16092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of people who were advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace after coming into close contact with someone that had tested positive for covid-19 later tested positive themselves.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not currently available in the format requested.

Allan Dorans: [\[17842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the Track and Trace App in England and Wales recognises Scottish postcodes.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS COVID-19 app has been designed for use by people in England and Wales and does not recognise postcodes from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The Scottish Government has developed their own contact tracing app, Protect Scotland, and people resident in Scotland are encouraged to use this app. Contacts between users of these apps will be detected and users will be notified of potential exposures. Scottish app users can continue to use the Protect Scotland app whilst visiting England and Wales.

■ Coronavirus: Leicester

Gareth Thomas: [\[7085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in Leicester had been identified as carrying the covid-19 Indian variant prior to 14 May 2021; and how many people have contracted that variant to date.

Jo Churchill:

Data prior to 14 May is not available in the format requested. As of 16 June, 954 cases of the Delta variant have been recorded in the Leicester local authority area.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Paul Maynard: [\[16059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to (a) regulate providers of covid-19 testing and (b) help ensure that companies deliver testing kits on the dates promised.

Jo Churchill:

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

The Department is working closely with private providers to ensure appropriate standards of performance are met. Providers' performance is continually monitored including their ability to provide samples, analysis and report results on time. The Department takes rapid action when providers deliver inadequate services. This includes providers receiving a five-day warning to demonstrate they have rectified their service and if they do not, they are removed from the appropriate GOV.UK list.

Mr David Davis:

[\[17682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what checks his Department carries out on covid-19 testing providers before adding them to the Government approved list of providers; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders MP) on 21 May 2021 to Question [1099](#).

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Julian Sturdy:

[\[16093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the daily capacity for covid-19 vaccinations is in England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[16094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on how many days has the maximum number of vaccinations possible, according to the logistical capabilities rather than supply, been administered in England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[16095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the most recent date is on which the maximum possible number of covid-19 vaccinations according logistical capabilities rather than supply was administered in England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[16097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of which age groups would benefit from a covid-19 booster vaccine in the autumn and winter months of 2021-22.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are preparing for a potential booster vaccination programme from the autumn. Whilst we are planning for several potential scenarios, final decisions on the timing

and scope of the booster programme will be taken in line with results from key clinical studies. Any decision on a booster vaccination programme will be informed by independent advice from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation.

Cat Smith: [\[16141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assistance he is providing to people participating in the Novavax covid-19 vaccine trial to enable those people to show proof of vaccination when travelling overseas.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Since 17 May, individuals in England can demonstrate their COVID-19 vaccination status for the purposes of outbound travel via the NHS App, the National Health Service website or by requesting a letter through 119, for those countries where they are accepted. The Government is working on an upgrade to the App to allow residents in England who have taken part or are participating in a clinical trial to demonstrate their COVID-19 vaccine status.

■ Defibrillators

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[17794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) install additional defibrillators in public spaces including parks and (b) raise awareness of how to use defibrillators.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan sets out that a national network of community first responders and automated external defibrillators (AEDs) will help save up to 4,000 lives each year by 2028. Many community defibrillators have been provided in public locations through national lottery funding, community fundraising schemes, workplace funding or by charities. From May 2020, the Government has required all contractors refurbishing or building new schools through centrally delivered programmes, to provide at least one AED.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are procuring a partner to co-ordinate skills development over the next two years which will significantly increase the use of AEDs by individuals in community settings supported by confident cardiopulmonary resuscitation skills.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[8719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps in response to reports of (a) lengthy queues for covid-19 test centres and (b) people with disabilities or learning difficulties being denied a covid-19 test as a result of healthcare staff deeming them unable to consent.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 June 2021]: We have not experienced significant reports of lengthy queues at test centres. However, NHS Test and Trace assess, review and adjusts testing services in response to changing demand and seeks to minimise waiting times wherever possible. Test sites have been located where there is the greatest need and mobile testing units are deployed in areas where there is highest demand.

At all test sites, those with disabilities or learning difficulties can be accompanied to assist with testing.

■ Electronic Cigarettes**Mr David Jones:**[\[17697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of appointing a champion to promote public awareness of the benefits of e-cigarettes as a reduced-harm alternative to combustible tobacco for people seeking to quit smoking.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made.

■ Health Services: Bridlington**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[17693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve NHS facilities in Bridlington.

Edward Argar:

Local health systems have received confirmation of their capital envelopes for 2021-22 and the settlement from HM Treasury has enabled us to protect the level of capital funding for trusts. This will enable them to progress priority investments agreed with local health partners. The Bridlington Primary Care Network is currently undertaking a review of its estate to identify future requirements, working with the local authority and local trusts.

■ Imperial College Health Partners**Ben Bradley:**[\[16205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out the (a) value and (b) purpose of each contract awarded by his Department to Imperial College Health Partners since March 2020.

Edward Argar:

The Department has not awarded any contracts with Imperial College Health Partners since March 2020.

■ Injuries: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon: [\[16848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of people who have suffered (a) broken bones and (b) torn ligaments during the covid-19 lockdowns.

Edward Argar:

The information is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Medical Records: Data Protection

Jane Hunt: [\[16991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of changing general practice data sharing from an opt-out to an opt-in system.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In line with the National Data Guardian's independent 'Review of data security, consent and opt-outs' in 2016, which considered an opt-in approach, an opt-out model provides the best balance between providing high quality services and providing individuals with a choice on how their data is used.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review

Marsha De Cordova: [\[16944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps are being taken to respond in full to the findings of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, published in July 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is carefully considering the recommendations of the Review and will provide an update in due course.

■ Menopause

Gareth Thomas: [\[2874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional steps his Department will take to reduce the stigma of menopause; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

From September 2020, relationships, sex education and health education became compulsory in all state funded schools. As part of this, pupils are taught about menstrual health and the menopause.

On 8 March, we launched a 14-week call for evidence as part of the first Government-led Women's Health Strategy for England. The online survey within the call for evidence seeks information on the menopause. By better understanding

women's experiences, we can ensure key parts of the health service are meeting their needs. We will respond to the call for evidence after the summer and we aim to publish the Women's Health Strategy before the end of the year.

■ Menopause: South Yorkshire

Dan Jarvis: [R] [\[2992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase the number of menopause clinics in South Yorkshire.

Dan Jarvis: [R] [\[2993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to women's sexual health of increasing the number of menopause clinics in South Yorkshire.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a statutory responsibility to commission healthcare services that meet the needs of their whole population. Increasing the number of menopause clinics is a matter for the relevant CCG to consider.

■ Mental Health Services: Expenditure

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[16828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the real terms changes in spending on mental health services have been in each year from 2009-10 to date.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[16829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the real terms changes in spending on community mental health have been in each year from 2009-10 to date.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: Data prior to 2015/16 is not held in the format requested. The real terms increase for 2015/16 is not available as we do not hold the data for 2014/15. The latest data available is for financial year 2019/20. The following table shows the year on year increase and total spend on mental health services, including learning disabilities and dementia. Information relating to community mental health services is not available in the format requested.

YEAR	TOTAL NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE SPEND ON MENTAL HEALTH £ MILLION	YEAR ON YEAR REAL TERMS INCREASE ¹ £ MILLION
2015/16	10,978.9	-
2016/17	11,601.9	374.0

YEAR	TOTAL NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE SPEND ON MENTAL HEALTH £ MILLION	YEAR ON YEAR REAL TERMS INCREASE ¹ £ MILLION
2017/18	11,976.0	177.7
2018/19	12,513.2	264.7
2019/20	13,324.8	529.6

Source: NHS Mental Health Dashboard, NHS England and NHS Improvement

Note:

¹ Growth adjusted for inflation based on Gross Domestic Product deflators, 31 March 2021

■ Mental Health Services: West Midlands

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[16025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps the Department has taken to reduce the average waiting time was for accessing NHS mental health services in the West Midlands.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In the West Midlands, the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has received additional funding for mental health services during 2021/22. National planning guidance sets out the deliverables which are expected will be achieved with this funding and some of these relate to further improving access and reducing waiting times for patients. Birmingham and Solihull CCG have undertaken modelling work to help understand and plan for an increase in demand for services to ensure that waiting times are maintained or improved.

■ Mental Health Services: Young People

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[17005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide mental health support to people under the age of 30 in (a) Wakefield, (b) West Yorkshire and (c) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In March we launched a Mental Health Recovery Action Plan, backed by £500million for 2021/22. This includes £79 million to significantly expand children's mental health services, allowing approximately 22,500 more children and young people aged 0 to 25 years old to access community health services, 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services and a faster increase in the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges over the 2021/22 financial year. It also includes £13 million to ensure young adults aged 18 to 25 years old, including

university students, are supported with tailored mental health support, helping bridge the gap between children's and adult services

In Wakefield district child and adolescent mental health services responsive adolescent and children's home-based treatment (ReACH) team are operating seven days a week. Turning Point deliver talking therapy services in Wakefield available for children and young people aged 16 years old and above who are registered with a general practitioner surgery in the Wakefield district. An online confidential support service, Kooth, provides a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support designed specifically for young people aged 11 to 25 years old.

In West Yorkshire, in line with the NHS Long Term Plan, all clinical commissioning groups in the region are committed to delivering the Mental Health Investment Standard, which sees the overall budget for mental health growing faster than overall National Health Service budget.

■ **Pregnancy: Coronavirus**

Jim Shannon:

[\[2977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that soon to be mothers are not (a) attending appointments and (b) going through labour alone as covid-19 restrictions ease.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement published refreshed guidance on visiting restrictions for maternity services on 15 April 2021. The guidance sets out that all trusts should facilitate access to support for pregnant women as soon as possible by undertaking risk assessments, configuring the space used in providing care alongside infection prevention and control measures and using available testing capacity.

Guidance produced by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is clear that women should be encouraged to have a single birth partner, who has no symptoms of COVID-19, present with them during any type of labour and birth, unless the birth occurs under general anaesthetic. If the birth partner has symptoms, an alternative, birth partner can attend in their place.

■ **Pregnancy: Epilepsy**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[16946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Women's Health Strategy, if he will allocate additional funding to research on anti-epileptic drugs so that babies born to women with epilepsy can avoid preventable disabilities.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Women's Health Strategy is still in development. The call for evidence will inform the priorities, content and actions in the new Strategy.

■ Princess Alexandra Hospital Harlow**Robert Halfon:** [\[16835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) nurses and (b) doctors are working in the Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow, compared with 2019.

Helen Whately:

The information is not held centrally.

■ Respiratory System: Drugs**Jim Shannon:** [\[13945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the progress on delivery against article 3.57 of the 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access agreement within respiratory, relating to five highest health gain categories.

Jim Shannon: [\[13946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to article 3.57 of the 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access agreement within respiratory, relating to the five highest health gains ambitions, who is responsible for the delivery of increased uptake of that target, when that target is planned to be set, and whether Accelerated Access Collaborative is planned to be involved in that matter.

Jim Shannon: [\[13947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of selecting countries in the Office for Life Sciences Life Science Competitiveness Indicators to form the comparator countries as detailed in article 3.57 of the 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access agreement within respiratory, relating to five highest health gains ambitions.

Jim Shannon: [\[13948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the NHS Accelerated Access Collaborative's (AAC) rapid uptake programme for asthma biologic therapies in response to the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the work of the AAC.

Edward Argar:

The Department, the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) and NHS England and NHS Improvement set the objective of reaching the upper quartile of uptake in relation to comparator countries for the five highest health gain categories during the first half of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access, which was published in 2019. This objective is not intended as a target for the prescription of medicines. Medicines prescribing, including the highest health gain categories, remains a decision between the clinician and patient in line with guidance and recommendations made by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

When selecting the countries for international comparison of uptake of the five highest health gain categories, NHS England and NHS Improvement looked for countries with similar health systems and populations to England. NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned an independent third party to develop an objective methodology to compare uptake rate between countries.

The Accelerated Access Collaborative (AAC) worked closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement in the identification of potential five highest health gain categories for support through its Rapid Uptake Products programme. Following the open selection process, asthma biologics were selected for tailored support to increase their adoption in the National Health Service for the treatment of severe asthma as part of the 2021/22 programme. The Academic Health Science Networks are also providing leadership and support to NHS organisations to implement changes to transform severe asthma services locally and improve access to these medicines. Support for the programme will continue to be kept under review.

■ Topwood

Karin Smyth: [10469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the ownership of shares in Topwood Ltd by his family members were listed on his appointment under S7.3 of the Ministerial Code.

Karin Smyth: [10470]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he took advice from the Permanent Secretary under S7.2 of the Ministerial Code when Topwood Ltd was awarded a place on a framework contract by SBS NHS from 2 January 2019.

Karin Smyth: [10471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice he received from the Permanent Secretary under S7.2 of the Ministerial Code when Topwood Ltd was awarded a place on a framework contract by SBS NHS from 2 January 2019.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 9 June 2021]: The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's declarations of interests are published bi-annually and are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-ministers-interests>

The declaration of interests was discussed with the Permanent Secretary and advice was provided. These matters have been considered in the Annual Report of the Independent Advisor on Ministerial Interests which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-report-of-the-independent-adviser-on-ministers-interests-may-2021>

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Prime Minister have exchanged correspondence on this matter, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/correspondence-between-the-prime-minister-and-the-secretary-of-state-of-health-and-social-care-28-may-2021>

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Ruth Cadbury: **[16134]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help lower the cost of covid-19 PCR tests for people entering the UK.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova MP) on 14 June to Question [10629](#).

Ruth Cadbury: **[16871]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the affordability of PCR tests for people arriving in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova MP) on 14 June to Question [10629](#).

HOME OFFICE

■ **Asylum**

Bambos Charalambous: **[17800]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff were allocated to processing asylum claims in (a) 2014, (b) 2018, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021.

Bambos Charalambous: **[17803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims were decided within the 26-week period in (a) 2014, (b) 2018, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021 to date.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office are unable to state how many asylum applications were decided within the 26-week period in 2014, 2018, 2020 and 2021 to date but can state the number of applications decided within the 24-week period (6months) from Q2 2014 to Q2 2020.

This information can be found at Asy_01 of the published Migration Transparency data:

[Immigration & Protection data: February 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The number of staff who were allocated to processing asylum claims in 2021 is not recorded and held in a reportable format. To obtain this information would require detailed reporting against multiple cost centres and could only be obtained at disproportionate costs.

However, the Home Office can provide the number of asylum case working staff from 2014 to 2020. This data can be found in ASY_04 of the published Transparency data:

[Immigration & Protection data: February 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-sets/immigration-and-protection-data-february-2021)

Bambos Charalambous:

[17801]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims were received in (a) 2014, (b) 2018, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021 to date.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum applications lodged in the UK are published in table Asy_D01 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#), and includes a breakdown for year of application. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to March 2021. Additionally, the Home Office publishes further data on asylum and resettlement in the [asylum and resettlement summary tables](#). The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

Bambos Charalambous:

[17802]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims were decided in (a) 2014, (b) 2018, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of initial decisions on asylum applications are published in table Asy_D02 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#), and includes a breakdown for year of initial decision. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to March 2021. Additionally, the Home Office publishes further data on asylum and resettlement in the [asylum and resettlement summary tables](#). The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](#)'.

■ Asylum: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous:

[16923]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers living in high-risk environments have been offered a covid-19 vaccine.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The accommodation we provide is safe, habitable and fit for purpose.

Asylum seekers have the same access to the Covid-19 vaccination as the general population.

The Home Office will follow the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on prioritisation.

■ **Asylum: Finance**

Tony Lloyd: [\[16790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information she holds on the progress on the roll-out of the Aspen card; and what percentage of those planned to receive that card have received it to date.

Tony Lloyd: [\[16791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has published for people who have not yet received the Aspen card.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: If a service user is eligible for asylum support and a payment card but has not received their card, they have been advised this should be reported to Migrant Help as per the existing published process and guidance for service user concerns or issues.

Migrant Help will forward the concern onto the relevant operational team to investigate and action a replacement card, if needed, as well as issue an Emergency Cash Payment (ECP) to cover the period until the card arrives and is activated.

Service users can also contact their accommodation provider who have been instructed to reach out to service users known to not have activated their cards. Through these checks, accommodation providers are actively ensuring service users have both received their card and activated accordingly as well as self-authorise ECPs accordingly.

Finally, service users can also reach out to any third sector representatives/voluntary sector partners to escalate an issue on their behalf. Third sector colleagues have a direct escalation route to Home Office teams where they can direct issues (such as the need for replacement cards and issuing ECPs to service users) for Home Office colleagues to investigate and action.

The vast majority of service users have now received their new Aspen card, activated it and have been using it successfully since the service went live on Monday 24th May 2021.

Numbers are fluid as activation numbers continue to increase on a daily basis as well as having new eligible asylum seekers coming into the system over the same period of time.

We are proactively working with partners to ensure any eligible service users receive their new Aspen card and activate it successfully. In the interim, Emergency Cash Payments (ECPs) are being provided to support their critical needs.

Jessica Morden:

[\[17701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what risk assessments were made ahead of her Department's change of contractor for the provision of Aspen cards.

Jessica Morden:

[\[17702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have waited over four weeks for access to a working Aspen card from the date of their application in (a) the UK, (b) Wales and (c) Newport East in 2021.

Kevin Foster:

All Home Office projects, including the delivery of the new contract providing asylum support payments, have robust risk management mechanisms and practices in place. Engagement with our strategic delivery partners, accommodation providers and Migrant Help-including the consideration of risks-took place well in advance of the project rollout/go-live.

This will continue through an already-established service delivery management process which ensures ongoing risks are understood and appropriately managed across the many different provisions which support the asylum-seeking population.

The number of people eligible for asylum support; as well as the card activation rate; is a fluid and fluctuating figure. They change on a daily basis due to new service users entering the system, the provision of support and card activation numbers in particular increasing over time.

Fully functioning and tested Aspen cards have been distributed to all service users. The vast majority have activated it and have been using it successfully since the service went live on Monday 24th May 2021. Where replacement cards have been requested, they are being actioned swiftly and are being dispatched to service users accordingly.

■ Asylum: LGBT People

Martyn Day:

[\[15324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure LGBTQ+ individuals seeking asylum in the UK from homophobic, biphobic or transphobic persecution are (a) treated fairly and with dignity and (b) protected from persecution and harassment during their application.

Kevin Foster:

All LGBTQ+ individuals seeking asylum in the UK are given every opportunity to disclose information relevant to their claim before a decision is taken, including where it may be sensitive or difficult to disclose.

Each case is considered on its individual merits by caseworkers who receive extensive training. All available evidence is carefully and sensitively considered in light of published country information ensuring all individuals are treated fairly and with dignity.

The Home Office work closely with a range of organisations specialising in asylum and human rights protection to trans and LGB communities. We ensure LGBTQ+ asylum seekers are signposted to relevant NGOs specialising in the support of these individuals. This is done through an information leaflet given to all asylum claimants at the point of claim which includes sections on legal advice, additional help and assistance with links to relevant legal bodies and support organisations. LGBTQ+ claimants can access specialist support upon claiming asylum from Rainbow Migration (formerly known as the UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG)) who will guide them through the asylum procedure, including providing relevant information. They also offer one-to-one and group peer support to claimants.

■ Asylum: Napier Barracks

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[16924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the steps necessary to prevent future covid-19 outbreaks at Napier Barracks.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The accommodation has been adapted to ensure social distancing can be maintained and occupancy in dormitories is limited to ensure a minimum distance between beds of at least two metres.

This is complemented by a range of additional safety measures including increased cleaning, availability of personal cleaning products and hand sanitisers, lateral flow tests for all residents three times a week and a track and trace system. Our service providers have robust plans in place to minimise the risk of an outbreak of COVID-19 and an action plan should a COVID-19 outbreak occur.

We have established links to the appropriate leads from the local authority, PHE and statutory bodies and are committed to working with them to support the people we accommodate and the wider community. Regular Multi-Agency Forums are held to ensure concerns are understood, so issues are managed and resolved accordingly.

■ Biometric Residence Permits

John Spellar:

[\[15165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of Biometric Residence Permits are despatched to applicants within seven days of them receiving their decision letter.

Kevin Foster:

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) advise applicants they can expect delivery of their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) within 10 working days of receiving their decision notification.

BRPs are produced on behalf of UKVI by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). DVLA have a service level agreement to complete 90% of production requests within one working day and the remaining 10% within two working days. For

the financial year 2020/21 they achieved 69.3% (630,173) within 24 hours and 97.9% (259,977) within 48 hours. 2.1% (19,250) took longer than 48 hours.

The production of BRPs outside the 48 hour target was the result of a production failure at DVLA over a three working day period between 22 – 26 October 2020. The average processing time of the 19,250 affected was three working days. This will have enabled our secure delivery provider, FedEx, to attempt to deliver all BRPs within 10 working days of the decision notification being issued.

FedEx took over the BRP delivery contract from DX in February 2020, after a bedding in period formal reporting started in July 2020. Between 1 July 2020 and 31 March 2021 FedEx attempted to deliver 99.2% of BRPs within 48 hours of collection from DVLA, against a target to attempt delivery within 48 hours of collection for 99% of BRP packages.

■ Direct Selling: Fraud

Stuart Anderson:

[14217]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect consumers from scams, fraud, and rogue trading on the doorsteps of private homes.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: Fraudsters are sophisticated and will exploit any vulnerabilities they can, especially as more of us find ourselves at home and online.

The Government recognises the serious risks presented by scams and fraud and the huge financial and emotional impact they can have on victims. We are working collaboratively with law enforcement and the private sector to reaffirm messages to consumers setting out how they can protect themselves from fraud, scams, and rogue traders.

We know one of the best ways to deal with these crimes is for consumers to be well-informed on how to protect themselves. This is why we published guidance on how to spot potential frauds and the steps to take to avoid them. This advice can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fraud-and-cyber-crime>.

Alongside this, consumers can also keep abreast of scam and fraud trends through alerts provided by Action Fraud, the national reporting service for fraud and cybercrime, via their website:

www.actionfraud.police.uk/news

Further details can be found through the ScamSmart campaign run by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) at:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart>.

We continue to encourage anyone who has been targeted by fraud to report it. Action Fraud can be contacted by phone on 0300 123 2040 or through their website:

<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime>.

This information is being used by the City of London Police alongside crime reports to identify, disrupt and stop fraudsters. Any contact with rogue traders should also be reported to Trading Standards at

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/report-to-trading-standards/>

■ Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Bambos Charalambous:

[16922]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education to ensure that her Department's policies on visa renewals for international students are aligned with the International Education Strategy.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: Ahead of the update to the International Education Strategy published in February 2021, I reaffirmed our commitment to the ambition outlined within it.

The Home Office has already made several changes which ensure alignment with the International Education Strategy.

With the launch of the Student route on 5 October 2020, we have simplified and streamlined the previous Tier 4 route to make it easier for students to apply for further courses of study within the UK.

We have extended the ability for students to apply for a further course of study within the UK to students studying at all types of institution, and to switch into the Student route from a greater number of other immigration routes.

All students can apply for a further course within the UK, provided they are able to demonstrate they are progressing academically to a higher level of study.

Students who have been in the UK for 12 months or more with valid permission on the date of application, are not required to demonstrate evidence of finances with their application.

The Government has also removed the time limit on study above degree level, to enable talented students to undertake further qualifications.

The launch of the Graduate route on 1 July will further enhance our offer to international students. Students who successfully complete an eligible qualification at degree level or above at a Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance will be able to work or look for work at any skill level for two years (three for PhD students) after their studies. The Graduate route will enhance the UK as a destination for study and will attract and retain talented individuals to develop their careers within the UK.

The Government will continue to work constructively between departments to support the delivery of the International Education Strategy.

A welcome sign of the results of this are the number of international students applying for permission on the Student and Child Student routes has recovered strongly despite the Covid-19 pandemic, in the year ending March 2021, there were 250,683 sponsored students granted permission.

■ Fraud: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[16129]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the number of scams related to the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps she is taking to help (a) prevent, (b) protect people from and (c) warn people about such scams.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The Government is aware criminals are exploiting the pandemic to commit opportunistic crimes such as fraud.

Although Covid-19 related fraud represents a small proportion of overall fraud reporting, we understand the devastating impact it can have on individuals. Along with partners, we have been implementing measures to ensure the public has the protection and advice needed to shield themselves from these crimes.

We know one of the best ways to deal with these scams is for the public to be well-informed on how to protect themselves. We published guidance for the public to spot potential frauds and the steps they can take to avoid them. This advice can currently be accessed at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fraud-and-cyber-crime

As well as this, Action Fraud, the national reporting service for all victims of fraud and cybercrime, regularly provide fraud alerts via their website, which can help individuals raise their awareness of these sorts of scams and obtain advice on how to combat these scams. This can currently be accessed at:

www.actionfraud.police.uk/news

The National Cyber Security Centre launched its Suspicious Email Reporting Service last year to remove harmful scams online. It has already seen high levels of success and, as of 31st May the number of reports received stand at more than 6,100,000 with the removal of more than 45,000 scams and 90,000 URLs. We continue to encourage anybody who suspects an email, text or other form of communication to be suspicious to report it to report@phishing.gov.uk or forward a text to 7726, free of charge.

The Government recognises there is more to do to tackle fraud and is working closely with law enforcement colleagues, consumer groups and industry partners to consider further legislative and non-legislative solutions.

■ Immigration and Visas

Rachael Maskell: [16893]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many cases are still to conclude for (a) visa applications and (b) immigration cases as at 16 June 2021.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The Home Office is committed to ensuring all applications are considered without unnecessary delay. Information on our immigration routes with service standards and whether they have been processed against these standards is available as part of our transparency data, at: Migration transparency data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

If an application is deemed complex and expected to take longer than the standard processing timescale, UKVI will write to the customer within the standard processing time and explain what will happen next. The published information on processing times for complex/ non straightforward visa applications is published as part of the Migration Transparency data, available at [Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

All asylum claims are carefully considered on their individual merits on the evidence available to the decision maker. We are committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay, so those who need protection are granted as soon as possible. Although we concentrate on oldest cases there may be reasons where some applications may be prioritised due to several factors such as vulnerability. Delays may also occur where we require further information/investigations before a decision can be made on the application.

Rachael Maskell: [16894]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long on average people have waited for the full processing of (a) visa applications and (b) immigration cases in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The Home Office is committed to ensuring all applications are considered without unnecessary delay. Information on our immigration routes with service standards and whether they have been processed against these standards is available as part of our transparency data, at: Migration transparency data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

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■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Clive Lewis:

[15325]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department plans to provide to (a) care workers and (b) other EU citizens who fail to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021; and if she will publish that guidance.

Kevin Foster:

Non-exhaustive guidance on reasonable grounds for submitting a late application has already been published.

The guidance can be found at pages 26 to 44 of the caseworker guidance, EU Settlement Scheme: EU, other EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members, which is available here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-caseworker-guidance.

Bambos Charalambous:

[16925]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the long-term costs to local authorities of supporting residents who miss the deadline for the EU Settlement Scheme.

Bambos Charalambous:

[16926]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the costs to local authorities of supporting residents with pre-settled status to secure settled status over the next five years.

Bambos Charalambous:

[16927]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent guidance has been given to local authorities as the EU Settlement Scheme deadline approaches.

Bambos Charalambous:

[16929]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to make funding available to support (a) late applicants and (b) people with pre-settled status apply for settled status.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The success of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) – with more than 5.6 million applications received and more than 5 million grants of status, to 31 May 2021 – has been underpinned by joint working with and support for local authorities.

This includes £22 million in Home Office grant funding, through to 30 September 2021, for 72 organisations across the UK (including several local authorities and local government associations) to help vulnerable people – so far more than 310,000 – to apply to the EUSS. We have also provided additional funding, following a new burdens assessment, for local authority work in helping looked after children and care leavers to obtain EUSS status.

Alongside this, we have provided guidance, a toolkit of communications resources and ongoing webinars and other support for local authority staff concerning the EUSS.

We will continue to work closely with local authorities as we approach the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications to the EUSS by those resident in the UK by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020. We will take a pragmatic and flexible approach to dealing with late applications in line with the non-exhaustive guidance on this published on 1 April 2021.

The entitlement to central and local government benefits and services of those granted EUSS status, whether on the basis of an in-time or late application, is consistent with our obligations under the Citizens' Rights Agreements.

Neil Coyle:

[18532]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to work with (a) employers and (b) landlords to ensure that people who (i) applied for the EU Settlement Scheme before the June 2021 deadline and (ii) do not receive a decision until after that deadline has passed have their rights and entitlements upheld while that application is pending.

Kevin Foster:

Consistent with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, the rights of an individual who has made a valid application to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) before 30 June 2021, will have their rights protected and can continue to live their life in the UK.

EEA citizens who submit a valid EUSS application by 30 June will be issued with a Certificate of Application. Pending the outcome of their application, they can rely on this to demonstrate their eligibility for work and rent, when it is verified by the Home Office employer and landlord checking services.

Guidance for employers and landlords was published on GOV.UK on 18 June which sets out the steps they should take when carrying out right to work or right to rent checks from 1 July. We have a comprehensive and ongoing programme of engagement with businesses of all sizes, across the UK, to ensure they fully understand their obligations as employers and landlords of EEA citizens.

The Home Office also has established an employer and landlord helpline. This service is equipped to provide advice on compliance with right to work and rent checks.

■ Immigration: Fees and Charges

Dr Rupa Huq:

[16172]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the financial impact of immigration and nationality application fees on applicants; and what plans she has to reduce those fees.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: Immigration and nationality fees are kept under review and we ensure they are within the parameters agreed with HM Treasury and Parliament, as set out in Section 68 (9) of the Immigration Act 2014.

The most recent fees regulations were laid on 10 March 2021 and can be viewed via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-fees-transparency-data>

These are accompanied by an impact assessment which can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2021/269/impacts/2021/12>

■ Migrant Workers: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Hywel Williams:

[14140]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of adding drivers of heavy goods vehicles to the Shortage Occupation List to tackle shortages in labour supply.

Hywel Williams:

[14141]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a Seasonal Visa Scheme for qualified lorry drivers to tackle shortages in labour supply.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The UK Government is working with the haulage sector to promote jobs, training and a range of other initiatives to get more people into HGV driving.

Like other sectors the focus should be on training and recruiting from the UK based workforce in the first instance, especially given the impact of the pandemic resulting in more looking for secure new employment. Immigration policy will be considered alongside strategies to do this, not separately or as an alternative to doing so.

The Government therefore has no plans to introduce a seasonal visa scheme for heavy goods vehicle drivers in the UK. The job of HGV driver is not eligible to be sponsored for a Skilled Worker visa so cannot be added to the Shortage Occupation List.

The Home Office has though amended the Immigration Rules to enable drivers who come to the UK on an international journey to transport goods or people on journeys

within the UK and undertake cabotage operations in line with Department for Transport rules.

■ **Visas: Married People**

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[17692]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of means-testing the spouse visa fee.

Kevin Foster:

Immigration and nationality fees are kept under review and we ensure they are within the parameters agreed with HM Treasury and Parliament, as set out in Section 68 (9) of the Immigration Act 2014. Full details can be reviewed via the following link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/68>.

These include the cost of processing the application, the wider cost of running the migration, borders and citizenship system and the benefits which are likely to accrue from a successful application.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Buildings: Insulation**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[15286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Trespa Meteor FR cladding has been subject to fully independent, government-recognised fire tests; what assessment his Department has made of whether that cladding is fire-safe; and whether his Department has plans to commission independent tests for individual cladding products.

Christopher Pincher:

Trespa Meteor FR is a High Pressure Laminate (HPL). In the summer of 2019, the Department commissioned a large scale (BS 8414) test of an external wall system which included an FR HPL (Class B-s1, d0) and mineral wool insulation (class A1). The test was successful as the system met the criteria of BR 135 *Fire performance of external thermal insulation for walls of multistorey buildings*. The results can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-test-report-mhclg-bs-8414-hpl>.

The Department also commissioned research into the burning behaviours of a range of non-ACM cladding materials including HPL. The aim was to identify if there were other types of cladding that burn like the type of metal composite material which was present on the Grenfell Tower, which was an aluminium composite material (ACM) with an unmodified polyethylene core (called ACM PE, or 'ACM category 3'). The research was published in March 2020 and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-performance-of-cladding-materials-research>.

The findings of both the large-scale test and the aforementioned research supported the advice provided by the Expert Panel – notably building safety advice for building owners, including around fire doors – that ACM PE presents the most significant fire hazard. The consolidated advice note, including the expert panel advice with regards to HPL, can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869532/Building_safety_advice_for_building_owners_including_fire_doors_January_2020.pdf.

■ Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund

Wendy Chamberlain:

[17852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the devolved nations receive the full amount of funds allocated to them under the (a) Community Renewal Fund and (b) Levelling up Fund in the event that insufficient applications are submitted to reach that amount.

Luke Hall:

We are committed to ensuring that local partners across the UK are able to benefit through both the Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund.

The Levelling Up Fund is a competitive fund, with funding distributed to places across the UK on the basis of successful bid selection. The Fund will set aside at least £800 million across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland over four years from 2021-2022 to 2024-2025. For the first round of funding, at least 9% of total UK allocations will be set aside for Scotland, 5% for Wales, and 3% for Northern Ireland.

For the Community Renewal Fund, we have assigned a lead authority for each local area across Great Britain. Lead authorities have invited bids from a range of project applicants, appraised and prioritised a shortlist of projects up to a maximum of £3 million per place, which were submitted on 18 June to UK Government for assessment and approval. In Northern Ireland, project applications were invited to bid directly to the UK Government.

Bidding authorities across the UK have been well supported for both funds to submit quality applications through webinars and guidance. Capacity funding will also be made available to all eligible bidding authorities.

■ Parking: Urban Areas

Rachael Maskell:

[17790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to reduce car parking in urban centres.

Luke Hall:

Government recognises the link between parking provision, local transport policy and the vitality of our urban centres. However, operationally, parking is the responsibility of local authorities and it is for them to determine what is appropriate in their own area.

■ Platinum Jubilee 2022

Chris Grayling: [\[15181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to issue guidance or other forms of support to local authorities to help them facilitate events to mark the Queen's Platinum jubilee.

Eddie Hughes:

A national programme of events and celebrations is being planned around the momentous occasion of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. This will include a weekend of national street parties and the lighting of beacons across the whole of the United Kingdom. MHLCG has previously supported local celebrations for VE/VJ day and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and we are currently producing guidance for local authorities on how they may choose to mark the occasion which will include timelines, a variety of suggested activities, and a 'how to' guide on preparing for street parties and other public events.

■ Rents: Arrears

Lucy Powell: [\[17746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on Monday 14 June, Official Report, col 4, that over nine out of 10 people are not in rent arrears at all; what recent estimate he has made of the number and proportion of people in rent arrears.

Eddie Hughes:

The latest published data from the English Housing Survey Household Resilience Study from November – December 2020, suggests that the vast majority (91%) of private renters are up to date with their rent. Of the 9% (353,000 households) in arrears, two thirds are in arrears of less than 2 months.

The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support which is available to tenants.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September helping 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.

Renters will continue to benefit from longer notice periods, giving them more time to make alternative arrangements. As of 1 June, until at least 30 September, notice periods will be at least 4 months except in the most egregious cases.

■ Tenants: Evictions

Bill Esterson:

[\[17732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on tenants of the amendment from six months to four months to the minimum Section 21 notice period in England; and what representations he has received from housing charities on that amendment to that notice period.

Eddie Hughes:

As we gradually ease restrictions introduced during the coronavirus pandemic, the time is now right to start to lift the emergency measures that were put in place to support renters and landlords. These measures could only ever be temporary. However, we are tapering down protections gradually to minimise the impact on tenants and public services.

The Government has to balance supporting tenants with landlords' ability to exercise their right to justice where needed. Tenants will continue to benefit from longer notice periods, giving them more time to make alternative arrangements. As of 1 June, until at least 30 September, notice periods will be at least 4 months except in the most egregious cases. Bailiffs have been asked not to carry out an eviction if anyone living in the property has Covid-19 symptoms or is self-isolating.

Other protections also remain in place, including new court rules and arrangements that were introduced in September to respond to the pandemic. Courts will continue to carefully prioritise the most serious cases first, such as anti-social behaviour, and the Government is funding a new mediation pilot as part of the court process.

Extensive financial support remains in place to help people meet their outgoings, including the furlough scheme and the Universal Credit uplift, which have both been extended until the end of September.

We regularly meet with key stakeholders across the sector, including housing charities, to ensure they are informed of the latest information and have the opportunity to provide representations.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Agricultural Products: Australia

Tim Farron:

[\[17721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to help facilitate the export of British farm produce to Australia.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is helping our farmers and food producers to capitalise on the demand for British food and drink in Australia and elsewhere in the world. DIT is working with organisations such as the Agriculture and

Horticulture Development Board, farmers' unions and the Food and Drink Federation to deliver tailored support for agriculture and food exporters through our Open Doors programme. We are also looking carefully at what further export support we can put in place, in response to the recommendations from the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

■ **Forced Labour: Xinjiang**

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[17757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which (a) organisations, (b) Government departments, (c) Non-Governmental Organisations and (d) others attended the roundtables on forced labour in Xinjiang in March 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 24 May, UIN: 3032.

■ **Investment and Trade: Wales**

Hywel Williams:

[\[17695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her Departments allocated budget is for the (a) establishment, and (b) running of the proposed trade and investment hub in Wales.

Graham Stuart:

The budget allocated to the Department for International Trade (DIT) Wales hub for the current financial year is £419k, to cover staff pay for the initial team. We expect costs to increase as our delivery progresses under the Places for Growth programme, which will see the DIT grow its presence in Cardiff, Edinburgh, Belfast and Darlington. The budget allocated for running the DIT Wales hub in future years will be determined after the upcoming spending review has concluded.

■ **Mining: Standards**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[15455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the UK critical minerals industry on a globally coordinated approach on environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards in mining.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade and the Cabinet Office supported a recent Wilton Park conference which sought to identify and catalyse practical steps to develop coordination and governance for critical minerals worldwide. The conference included participants from across industry, academia and international organisations and has informed wider international discussions. We will continue to address the challenges of delivering a just global energy transition, while developing greater regulatory and practical cooperation on technology-critical minerals, as part of our presidency of COP26.

■ Timber: EU Countries

Drew Hendry:

[\[17762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions officials in her Department have had with their European counterparts on helping to reduce the time taken for the movement of timber products from the EU into the UK.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Forestry Commission is responsible for helping British importers and their agents prepare for the customs entry procedures for timber products.

HM Government is supporting businesses adjusting to new trading arrangements, including the guidance published by the Forestry Commission on GOV.UK on importing timber products.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Ben Lake:

[\[17808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 10566 on Trade Agreements: Australia, if she will publish her Department's assessment of the impact of the UK-Australia trade deal on future EU imports into the UK of (a) beef and (b) lamb.

Greg Hands:

Following the conclusion of negotiations, a full impact assessment will be published prior to scrutiny by Parliament.

■ Trade Agreements: Climate Change

Rachael Maskell:

[\[17781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to assess the potential impact of trade deals and associated global goods transportation on the climate.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government seeks to assess the potential impact of new free trade agreements, including on several aspects of the environment, such as transport emissions, air and water quality, and biodiversity.

We have already published scoping assessments for agreements with the United States, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. An impact assessment for the United Kingdom-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has been published too.

■ Trade Agreements: Turkey

Feryal Clark:

[\[15430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2021 to Question 7981 on Overseas Trade: Turkey, on what occasions she has raised

human rights concerns with representatives from the Turkish Government since the implementation of the UK-Turkey Free Trade Agreement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government is clear that more trade need not come at the expense of our values. We have a longstanding relationship with Turkey and will continue to engage the Turkish government on such issues.

JUSTICE

■ Knives: Crime

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[15407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of longer sentences on deterring people from carrying knives without good reason.

Chris Philp:

We understand the devastating impact knife crime has on victims and their families and are determined to do all we can to break the deadly cycle of violence that devastates the lives of individuals, families and communities. We are taking significant action to both prevent and respond to crimes involving weapons through the Serious Violence Strategy, the introduction of Knife Crime Prevention Orders, the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers, and increasing stop and search powers.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently before Parliament, introduces Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs). These will give the police powers to make it easier to stop and search those already convicted of knife and offensive weapon offences. A person who is subject to an order will know that if they persist in carrying a weapon, there is a greater chance they will be searched, detected and arrested.

In respect of sentencing, deterrence is one of the purposes, but there are other important aims. These include public protection and a strong punitive element, to help make our streets and communities safer and to give victims confidence that justice has been served.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Freight: Northern Ireland

Carla Lockhart:

[\[16265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many meetings he has had with representatives of the road haulage industry in Northern Ireland in the last 18 months on the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Government engages extensively with businesses to understand how the Protocol is working on the ground and listen to concerns that arise.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I have met with representatives of the road haulage industry in Northern Ireland numerous times individually and through the Business Engagement Forum. These discussions have informed the Government's approach to the implementation of the Protocol and discussions with the EU during and after the Transition Period.

Following engagement with industry representative organisations and their members, the Government will be publishing additional guidance to the Haulier Handbook focused on Northern Ireland on gov.uk shortly as well as hosting webinars to update and provide support for them on changes. We will continue to engage with the industry.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[17815\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, with reference to WhatsApp communications dated 27 March 2020, published by Dominic Cummings on 16 June 2021, if he will publish his WhatsApp communications with (a) Dominic Cummings and (b) the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care between 1 February 2020 and 16 June 2021 on the roll out of covid-19 testing.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon Member to the response I gave him on 21 June, UIN 16936.

■ Members: Correspondence

Angela Rayner:

[\[17750\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he plans to respond to the letters of 9 and 10 June 2021 from the hon. Member for Ashton under Lyne.

Boris Johnson:

A reply will be sent shortly.

TRANSPORT

■ Cycling: Infrastructure

Rachael Maskell:

[\[15317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with stakeholders on the potential merits of adapting cycling infrastructure to accommodate mobility scooters.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Departmental officials regularly meet with a range of stakeholders to discuss the design and delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure at meetings of the

Department's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure group and the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Stakeholder Advisory Group. The latter includes a representative from the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

In July 2020 the Department published updated Cycle Infrastructure Design Guidance (Local Transport Note 1/20) which provides guidance on designing cycle infrastructure for all users.

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency: Coronavirus**

Drew Hendry: [\[15296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to (a) ensure that concerns raised by workers' unions on the covid-19 outbreak at the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) headquarters during the second wave are taken account of, (b) streamline DVLA processes to help improve work flow and (c) ensure that sufficient resources are available to allow the timely progress of drivers license renewal applications.

Drew Hendry: [\[15297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of an immediate work place safety inquiry into the covid-19 outbreak at the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency's Swansea offices.

Rachel Maclean:

Throughout the pandemic, the DVLA has implemented Welsh Government legislative requirements and advice fully, including its workplace guidance for offices and contact centres. It has made significant investment in making its estate Covid-secure, working closely with Public Health Wales, Swansea Council's Environmental Health team and the trade union. In its visits to assess DVLA's Covid control measures, Swansea Environmental Health confirmed a high level of compliance and did not identify any additional concerns over the control regime in place.

Extensive safety measures have been put in place across the DVLA's sites. These include lateral flow testing for all staff on site, enhanced cleaning, social distancing, leasing an additional building, thermal imaging stations and perspex screens installed, floors divided into zones with no mixing within zones, one-way systems introduced, and communal areas closed. All staff whose jobs can be done remotely are working from home, with more than 2,000 staff doing so exclusively.

The DVLA's online services have been available and unaffected throughout the pandemic and are the quickest and easiest way to renew a driving licence. Motorists are strongly advised to use these channels where possible. During the pandemic to help streamline processes and improve work flow the DVLA has accelerated the development of additional online services to reduce paper applications and supported their take up through a publicity campaign. Further digital service enhancements are underway.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[15411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress the DVLA is making in tackling backlogs in (a) HGV and (b) car driving licences.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online services have been available and unaffected throughout the pandemic and are the quickest and easiest way to renew a driving licence. However, many people still choose or have to apply for their driving licence using a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person.

The DVLA has had a reduced number of operational staff on site to allow for social distancing, in line with Welsh Government requirements. The DVLA has leased an additional building to accommodate more operational staff and has extended the opening hours of its contact centre.

The number of applications awaiting processing fluctuates on a daily basis as driving licences are issued and new applications received. The DVLA is currently processing paper applications for both HGV and car driving licences within around six weeks of receipt. However, drivers with a medical condition may experience further delays because the DVLA is often reliant on receiving information or test results from medical professionals before a licence can be issued, to ensure drivers can meet the required medical standards.

■ Driving Licences

Drew Hendry:

[\[17760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his officials in his Department have had with representatives of the DVLA on the waiting times for provisional drivers licences in the event that a medical assessment is required.

Rachel Maclean:

The potential for delays where an applicant for a provisional driver licence requires a medical assessment is recognised. This is because DVLA is often reliant on receiving information from healthcare professionals involved in dealing with the pandemic or its impacts.

■ Driving Licences: Disability

Drew Hendry:

[\[17761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 13069 on DVLA: Recruitment, what discussions officials in his Department have had with officials for Government Equalities Office on undertaking an equalities impact assessment on the potential effect on the rights of disabled people of delays in the processing by the DVLA of requests for drivers licences from drivers with medical conditions.

Rachel Maclean:

The law requires that the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) investigate the health of all driving licence holders and applicants who have a medical condition that may affect their ability to drive safely.

The DVLA is aware of its duties under equality legislation, in particular the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in Section 149 Equality Act 2010. The medical standards are applied consistently regardless of characteristics and in accordance with the law.

■ Ferries: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry: [\[15444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing financial support for ferry routes operating from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK in recognition of the cost differentials of those routes compared to other transport options.

Robert Courts:

The Government continues to monitor the maritime freight industry to ensure that routes are available for the transport of goods both around and outside of the UK, including between Northern Ireland and other parts of the country. As an open market the Government does not wish to disrupt competition, however if necessary, we have intervened to protect the transport of critical goods in exceptional circumstances. At present there are no specific plans to do so on routes between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

■ Great British Railways

Jim McMahon: [\[17798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 13162 on Great British Railways, what assessment he has made of how ministerial powers to issue (a) guidance and (b) mandatory directions to Great British Railways (GBR) interact with the regulatory powers that the Office for Rail and Road will have to scrutinise GBR.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Further to the previous Answer to Question 13162, Ministers will hold Great British Railways to account through a structured framework underpinned by legislation.

The ORR will focus on monitoring and reporting, scrutinising Great British Railways' delivery of its objectives and providing expert advice to Ministers. It will be a core part of the system that will hold Great British Railways to account.

We will make an announcement on next steps in relation to the legislative framework that underpins the relationship between Ministers and Great British Railways in due course.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Biodiversity

Dr Matthew Offord:

[16079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the HS2 project supports and promotes biodiversity along the whole of the route.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 is committed to being the most environmentally responsible major infrastructure project in UK history, and to deliver 'no net loss' to biodiversity across all of its phases. It was the first major infrastructure project to make such a commitment.

However, in June 2021 the Government stated its further aim to deliver a 'net gain' to biodiversity for the Phase 2b (Crewe to Manchester) section. This goes further than no net loss and sets a new standard for HS2's environmental commitments on future phases.

The HS2 Green Corridor initiative, brings together the core mitigation and compensation measures planned for Phase One (London to West Midlands) and Phase 2a (West Midlands to Crewe) with dedicated funds including the £45m Community and Environment Fund, £7m Woodland Fund and the £2 million Phase 2a biodiversity fund, in order to amplify positive environmental impacts.

HS2's commitments will protect the natural environment, and leave behind richer, more diverse and better-connected landscapes and wildlife habitats, to deliver on the Government's pledge for a positive future for nature.

■ Invalid Vehicles: Global Positioning System

Rachael Maskell:

[15318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether GPS technology will be provided on mobility scooters in line with the use of that technology for e-scooters.

Rachel Maclean:

We have no plans to introduce GPS technology on mobility scooters. I note that individual owners of mobility scooters are able to purchase GPS tracking devices for their vehicles in order to reduce theft and track stolen mobility scooters.

■ Northwich Station: Safety

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[16200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the recent station roof collapse at Northwich station and pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6425 on Railway Stations: Safety, when the last (a) visual and (b) detailed inspection of that station roof was undertaken.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail is investigating this matter, in accordance with strict protocols, and is not currently in a position to comment on the specific questions. Additional inspections of comparable buildings are also being undertaken, to mitigate the risk of

similar incidents across the North West route. The independent ORR is also conducting its own investigation into the Northwich incident.

■ Rail Delivery Group: Contracts

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[15358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department (a) plans to undertake a tendering process for the new National Rail contracts or (b) allocate those contracts by direct award.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

National Rail Contracts are directly-awarded contracts. The first two were awarded and commenced operation in May 2021. Their purpose is to bridge the gap from existing emergency agreements, as they expire, to the new Passenger Service Contracts (PSCs) outlined in the recently published Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail. Passenger Service Contracts will be competed at regular intervals.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[15368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with train operators with reservation-only bookings on (a) ensuring social distancing measures are (i) applied and (ii) adhered to on their services and (b) other steps required to comply with covid-19 regulations.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department and operators are encouraging passengers to make a reservation on board long distance services to help passengers maintain social distancing during their journey. Some seats on each service are kept available for passengers who are unable to book a seat before travelling, preserving the flexibility of the walk-up railway for those who need it. Passengers are urged to check before they travel and to plan ahead, as services are likely to be busier as restrictions ease. They are reminded to follow safer travel guidance when they travel, including wearing a face covering unless exempt, sanitising their hands regularly and keeping their distance where possible.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[15369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with rail operators with reservation-only services to ensure that they have alternative procedures in place in the event that social distancing and other measures cannot be adhered to.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department and operators are encouraging passengers to make a reservation on board long distance services to help passengers maintain social distancing during their journey. Some seats on each service are kept available for passengers who are unable to book a seat before travelling, preserving the flexibility of the walk-up railway for those who need it. This policy remains under regular review, with the level to which passengers are able to practice social distancing on board regularly discussed

with operators. Passengers are urged to check before they travel and to plan ahead, as services are likely to be busier as restrictions ease. They are reminded to follow safer travel guidance when they travel, including wearing a face covering unless exempt, sanitising their hands regularly and keeping their distance where possible.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[15370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 15 April 2021 to Questions 181397, 181398, 181399, 181400, 181401, 181402, 181403, what changes in (a) services and (b) safety procedures have been made by each train operator to ensure safe travel for passengers as passenger numbers increase in line with the implementation of the roadmap of easing covid-19 restrictions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On 17 May service levels increased to around 85 percent of pre-pandemic levels as further easing of restrictions took place. The Department continues to work closely with operators and Network Rail to ensure that services are appropriate to passenger demand, as well as delivering good performance and value to the tax payer.

The Department continues to work with industry to provide safe travel to passengers and staff. Operators are also providing information on how busy services are likely to be so that passengers can plan ahead and use quieter services where possible.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[15371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 15 April 2021 to Questions 181397, 181398, 181399, 181400, 181401, 181402, 181403, what discussions he has had with train operators on increasing service levels beyond 75 per cent; and when that planned increase will happen.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On 17 May service levels increased to around 85 percent of pre-pandemic levels as further easing of restrictions took place. The Department continues to work closely with operators and Network Rail to ensure that services are appropriate to passenger demand, as well as delivering good performance and value to the tax payer.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[15372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support he is providing to (a) train operators, (b) British Transport Police and (c) other officials to ensure that covid-19 safety measures are being adhered to by passengers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

During the course of the pandemic, the Department has worked closely with train operating companies and Network Rail to ensure that staff and passengers are kept safe when travelling on the railway. Government has published safer transport guidance for operators which sets out measures to assess and address the risks of coronavirus for passengers and staff. This includes guidance on steps operators can take to encourage high rates of compliance with safety measures.

The Department has provided additional funding to support the costs of enhanced levels of policing by the British Transport Police required in response to changes in COVID-19 travel restrictions as well as other additional Covid-related costs (including PPE).

■ Railways: Franchises

Jim McMahon:

[\[17797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what settlement figure his Department agreed after the termination of the rail franchise agreements for (a) Greater Anglia, (b) TransPennine, (c) West Midland Trains, (d) South Western Railway and (e) c2c; what assessment he has made of the value for money of the settlement figures agreed; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The following termination sums were agreed with Train Operators (rounded to the nearest 100,000) – (a) Greater Anglia - £30,500,000, (b) TransPennine - £0, (c) West Midland Trains - £90,500,000, (d) South Western Railway - £68,800,000 and (e) c2c - £7,900,000.

In addition to the termination sums, there are further sums due from certain operators as part of their termination obligations. These are to be finalised and a further update will be provided on these amounts in due course.

The Termination Sums were arrived at following a stringent process which took into account value for money as well as a range of other factors.

■ Railways: Tickets

Rachael Maskell:

[\[15303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a separate assessment was made on the potential merits of refunding or extending the expiration date on Senior Railcards as part of the decision not to refund the costs of railcards which have expired during the period of national covid-19 restrictions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department recognises that Senior railcard holders have been unable to use their railcards whilst travel restrictions have been in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and have not been able to benefit to the fullest extent over recent months. Changing the refund policy for railcard holders could come at an additional cost to taxpayers.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[15304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential cost of (a) refunding or (b) extending the expiration date of railcards which have expired during the period of national covid-19 restrictions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department recognises that railcard holders have been unable to use their railcards whilst travel restrictions have been in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and railcard holders have not been able to benefit to the fullest extent over recent months. Changing the refund policy or extending the validity for over 5.1 million railcard customers could come at an additional cost to taxpayers.

Passenger demand has fallen dramatically over the last year and my Department recognises that recovery is uncertain. We will continue to work closely with industry on initiatives to encourage passengers back to the railway when the time is right.

■ Railways: Yorkshire and the Humber**Rachael Maskell:****[15301]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to improve the rail journey between York and Hull by (a) investing in infrastructure, (b) reducing journey times and (c) reducing the cost of rail travel.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

More than £1.5 million has been invested in the station part of Hull Paragon Interchange during the TransPennine Express contract including the refurbishment of redundant station space for community use, reconfiguration of the car park to create disabled spaces and improved ticket office facilities.

Network Rail published the 'Hull Area Strategic Study' (<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/long-term-planning>) in February 2020, which examined what would be required to accommodate future train services in the Hull Area to support economic growth up to 2043.

Following publication of the Hull Area Strategic Study, we continue to work with industry and local stakeholders to determine the most effective way to address rail capacity and performance issues in and around Hull.

New national rail flexible season tickets have been announced as part of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, matching modern working habits and saving many passengers hundreds of pounds. We are releasing these new flexible season tickets across England this year, with the tickets going on sale on 21 June and becoming available for travel on 28 June.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance**Kate Griffiths:****[15402]**

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

Rachel Maclean:

The funding provided by the Department for Transport for highways maintenance funding to Staffordshire County Council in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020 is shown in the table below.

YEAR	£M
2017/18	28.321
2018/19	29.574
2019/20	22.993
2020/21	33.802
Total	114.690

2020/21 also includes an allocation of the £2.5 billion Pothole Fund announced at Budget 2020, to be allocated over 5 years between 2020/21 – 2024/25.

■ **Rolling Stock****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese:**[\[15374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made on the (a) rollout of class 701 Arterio units and (b) withdrawal of Class 455, 456, 458 and 707.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

South Western Railway (SWR) is responsible for oversight for entry into passenger service of ninety Class 701 units which are being built and tested by train manufacturer Alstom. Once SWR and Alstom have completed the testing programme, the Class 701 units will be phased into service allowing for the withdrawal or cascade of other units as appropriate.

■ **Shipping: Fire Prevention****Tom Randall:**[\[15442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the fire on the X-Press Pearl, what recent assessment he has made of fire safety on container ships.

Robert Courts:

The recent fire and explosion on board the X-Press Pearl and the subsequent environmental impact of the incident highlights the importance of fire safety on container ships. There are two main international standards applicable in these cases, these are the International Code for Fire Safety Systems and the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code. These are implemented in the UK and compliance is monitored through the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) survey and inspection regime.

The MCA is part of an international working group assessing certain provisions of the IMDG Code and developing amendments which would enhance safety and fire prevention. These amendments will be made to the next edition of the IMDG Code.

The MCA is also reviewing existing legislation related to the carriage of dangerous goods by sea and fire safety systems on ships and will be consulting on these later this year. The proposed amendments would allow a swifter implementation of new provisions and standards so that the UK can quickly embed the latest provisions for dangerous goods and fire safety on containers ships into domestic regulations.

■ **Transport for the North: Contracts**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[15356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether Transport for the North will have the power to specify and tender rail passenger services jointly with Great British Railways.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The goal is to develop new partnerships between Great British Railways and local and regional government as appropriate, but this will take time to establish. As we plan for the transition to Great British Railways, in the interim we'll make the best use of the existing Rail North Partnership.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[15394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria his Department uses when determining the length of time travellers are granted to return to the UK before a country is moved to (a) amber or (b) red list.

Robert Courts:

The government has been clear that given the spread of the virus globally, people should not travel to amber or red list countries.

Changes to the traffic light system are implemented as quickly as possible, balancing the public health risks posed by those countries and the time required to operationalise changes at the border. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we are guided by the latest scientific evidence.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[15410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress the Global Travel Taskforce has made on the safe normalisation of post-Covid international travel policy.

Robert Courts:

The Government's priority is to protect public health. That is why we introduced the Traffic Light System on 17 May as a cautious approach to reopening international travel.

The government will review the travel measures in place through the Global Travel Taskforce at a series of checkpoints, no later than 28 June, 31 July and 1 October, taking into account the latest domestic and international data.

TREASURY

■ Apprentices

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[17011\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to encourage employers to take on more apprentices.

Steve Barclay:

We are encouraging employers of all sizes to hire new apprentices through our employer hiring incentives. Employers who hire a new apprentice of any age until 30th September will receive £3,000 per apprentice. These payments build on the scheme originally launched as part of the Plan for Jobs: between 1st August 2020 and 4th May 2021, nearly 53,000 payments have been claimed by employers.

We are also continuing to improve the apprenticeships system for employers by: introducing more flexible training options, such as the front-loading of training and accelerated apprenticeships; making the transfer of unspent Levy funds to SMEs easier through the introduction of a new pledge function and employer matching service in August 2021; and supporting apprenticeships in industries with flexible working patterns, including through the launch of a £7m fund in July 2021 to help qualifying employers set up and expand the flexi-job apprenticeship scheme. These improvements will help put employers more firmly in the driving seat, enabling them to utilise apprenticeships in ways that suit their business needs and encouraging them to take on more apprentices.

■ Business Premises: Rents

Emma Hardy:

[\[16940\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department will take to support businesses after the rent arrears forfeiture moratorium ends on 30 June 2021.

Emma Hardy:

[\[16941\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the rent arrears moratorium forfeiture for businesses in response to the delay in the easing of covid-19 restrictions that was planned for 21 June 2021.

Steve Barclay:

The Government recognises that many businesses have struggled to pay rent to landlords during the pandemic and have built up debt. That is why we introduced measures to protect commercial tenants from eviction and against aggressive debt recovery.

We welcome negotiations between commercial landlords and their tenants to resolve any outstanding debts. But to provide more certainty, I announced on 16 June that the government will legislate to ringfence rent debt accrued during the pandemic by business effected by Covid-19 closures and set out a process of binding arbitration to be undertaken between landlords and tenants where agreement cannot be reached.

Until this legislation is in place, the existing moratorium on evictions will be extended to 25 March 2022.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Tony Lloyd: [\[901628\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the support available to businesses in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Sarah Jones: [\[901629\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the support available to businesses in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Rushanara Ali: [\[901630\]](#)

What economic contingency planning his Department has undertaken in the event of a third wave of covid-19.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[901640\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the support available to businesses in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK.

We have put in place an economic package of support totalling £352 billion through the furlough and self-employed income support schemes, support for businesses through grants and loans, business rates and VAT relief.

At the Budget, the Chancellor extended this package of economic support to accommodate even the most cautious view about the time it might take to exit restrictions and to provide certainty and continuity to business. The Government continues to keep all impacts and policies under review.

■ Business: Finance

Sir Desmond Swayne: [\[17673\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to allocate funding to local authorities for distribution to businesses not eligible for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business rates relief.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is providing £1.5 billion of additional support to businesses that have not already received business rates relief. The relief will be allocated to local authorities based on the stock of properties in the area and the sector-specific economic impacts of COVID-19. The Government will also work with and support local government to enable ratepayers to apply as soon as possible this year, once the legislation relating to Material Change of Circumstance provisions has passed and local authorities have set up local relief schemes.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Quarantine

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[17687\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he had with officials in his Department on the potential merits of expanding the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to include people who are self-isolating.

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[17690\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason his Department did not widely publicise that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme could be used by employees who were self-isolating due to covid-19.

Layla Moran: [\[17827\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what communications he has received as at 17 June 2021 from Ministerial colleagues in (a) the Treasury and (b) other Government departments requesting that guidance be updated to reflect that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme can be used to provide financial support to people who are required to self-isolate as a result of covid-19.

Jesse Norman:

It has always been clear that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is designed to protect jobs. HMRC guidance has been clear from the start that the scheme is not intended for short term absences from work due to sickness, and self-isolation should not be a consideration for employers when deciding if they should furlough an employee. The Government has specific, separate support in place for those self-isolating and has always been clear that businesses should support staff who are self isolating to work at home where possible.

An extensive support package is in place for those self-isolating due to coronavirus including help for those on low incomes through the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, where eligible individuals unable to work from home can receive a £500 one off payment, as well as Statutory Sick Pay being payable from Day 1. If an employer wants to furlough an employee for business reasons and they are currently off sick, then they are eligible to do so as with other employees. This has been set out in guidance since April last year.

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[17688\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the number of businesses who were aware that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme could also be used to cover self-isolation of employees.

Jesse Norman:

No such estimate has been made.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is not to be used simply because of short-term absences from work due to sickness or self-isolation.

Where an employee is on sick leave or self-isolating as a result of coronavirus, the rules in relation to Statutory Sick Pay apply.

Conversely, an employee is eligible for CJRS if they are unable to work because they are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or are in the equivalent highest-risk group for severe illness from coronavirus, and following the public health guidance.

These rules have been in place and clearly reflected in all versions of the guidance, since March 2020.

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[17689\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses who claimed on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to cover self-isolation of employees with covid-19.

Dame Angela Eagle:

[\[17691\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of businesses that did not claim for self-isolating employees on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and (b) savings were to the public purse as a result of those non-claims.

Layla Moran:

[\[17826\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) successful and (b) total applications to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for temporary furloughing of staff due to covid-19 self-isolation in each month to date; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The information requested is not available.

HM Revenue and Customs neither collect nor hold data on the reasons that eligible employers make claims through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is not to be used simply because of short-term absences from work due to sickness or self-isolation.

Where an employee is on sick leave or self-isolating as a result of coronavirus, the rules in relation to Statutory Sick Pay apply.

Conversely, an employee is eligible for CJRS if they are unable to work because they are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or are in the equivalent highest-risk group for severe illness from coronavirus, and following the public health guidance.

These rules have been in place and clearly reflected in all versions of the guidance, since March 2020.

■ Corporation Tax

Sarah Olney: [\[17799\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of an international minimum corporate tax rate.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is delighted that the G7 has come together to back the proposals developed by the OECD to reform the international tax framework.

Reaching final agreement, with the G20 and OECD Inclusive Framework, on a two-pillar solution which reallocates taxing rights and introduces a global minimum tax would be a major multilateral achievement and introduce greater stability into the international tax landscape.

The details of a final agreement are still subject to international negotiation, and it would not be appropriate to provide a detailed impact assessment.

■ Debt Respite Scheme

Zarah Sultana: [\[17855\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including universal credit advance payments in the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space).

John Glen:

The breathing space scheme launched on 4 May 2021, and includes most personal debts and debts owed to Government, including Universal Credit overpayments. The Government considers that, for breathing space to be successful, it needs to include a wide range of debts.

The Government recognises the importance of including all Universal Credit debts in breathing space, and is committed to including Universal Credit advances within the scheme as soon as possible.

This will happen at a later date to ensure that the significant IT changes the Department for Work and Pensions needs to make do not compromise the safe delivery of Universal Credit, which is now supporting 6 million people. It has always been possible to defer repayments of Universal Credit Advances for 3 months in cases of hardship. In addition, from April 2021, the timeframe for the repayment of advances has been extended from 12 months to 24 months.

■ Environment Protection: Investment

Jamie Stone:

[\[17804\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Committee on Climate Change's report entitled The Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's path to Net Zero, published in December 2020, whether he has plans to publish a roadmap for increasing low-carbon investment from £10 billion per year to £50 billion per year by 2030 prior to COP26 in line with the recommendations in that report.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously. The Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan demonstrates this commitment to tackling greenhouse gas emissions. It sets out £12 billion of new government investment in green industries.

In addition to this £12 billion, the ambitious policies and significant new public investment will mobilise private sector investment. Providing the co-funding, regulatory certainty and robust green finance frameworks included in the plan is expected to attract up to £42 billion of low-carbon private investment across energy, buildings, transport, innovation and the natural environment by 2030.

Further detail on the plan for decarbonising and increasing low-carbon investment will be set out in the Government's Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26.

■ Financial Services

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[17017\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support the financial services sector following the end of the transition period.

John Glen:

The Chancellor set out the Government's strategy on financial services to the House in November, a vision of a sector that is more open; more technologically advanced; and a world-leader in the use of green finance, serving the communities and citizens of this country.

Since then we have passed a Financial Services Act to begin the necessary reforms to our framework, and agreed text with the EU for a regulatory cooperation forum paving the way for a more stable relationship.

In addition, we have set out our response to Ron Kalifa's review of UK Fintech to ensure we continue to build on our existing strengths as a world leader in financial technology. We've also set out how we will take forward each of the recommendations in Lord Hill's recent Listings Review that were addressed to the Treasury, and shared our plans to consult on reforms to the wider capital markets regime this summer, with the aim of supporting competitiveness, whilst ensuring the UK maintains high regulatory standards.

■ Financial Services: Fraud

Stephen Timms: [\[901634\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on tackling online financial crime.

John Glen:

Whilst the FCA is an independent, non-governmental regulator, the Treasury, as the department jointly responsible for economic crime policy with Home Office, is in regular contact with the FCA on matters to do with online financial crime. I can confirm that my officials hold regular discussions with their FCA counterparts on these issues, including on the delivery of the Economic Crime Plan, the prevention of online harms, including financial promotions and online fraud, and issues related to anti-money laundering supervision. In addition, the FCA is a member of the Economic Crime Strategic Board, through which the government, regulators, law enforcement, and industry discuss and drive forward the UK's overall response to economic crime.

■ Government Assistance: Coronavirus

Stephen Farry: [\[15450\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend furlough and other covid-related support mechanisms in the event that the 21 June 2021 date for the further easing of covid-19 restrictions is delayed.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout this pandemic, our Plan For Jobs has supported jobs and businesses with over £400 billion of economic support – one of the most generous and comprehensive packages in the world.

At Budget the Government deliberately went long and erred on the side of generosity – specifically to accommodate short delays to the roadmap. Most of the Covid economic support schemes do not end until September or after, in order to provide continuity and certainty for businesses and families.

The Recovery Loan Scheme (RLS) announced at Budget 2021 ensures lenders continue to have the confidence to lend, ensuring viable businesses continue to have access to Government-backed finance needed throughout 2021. The scheme launched on 6 April 2021, following the closure of the emergency schemes to new loan applications on 31 March 2021, and will run until 31 December 2021. The scheme operates UK-wide, providing an 80% guarantee to lenders for term loans, overdrafts, and invoice and asset finance.

The CJRS was introduced to help employers whose operations have been severely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) to retain their employees and protect the UK economy. All businesses across the UK can access the scheme, with employees receiving 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. At Budget the government extended the CJRS until the end of September 2021, to support businesses and employees through the next stage of the pandemic.

The economy now is in a stronger position than it was last autumn, when businesses also contributed up to 20 per cent of wage costs.

In line with the extension to the CJRS, the government announced at Budget 2021 that the SEISS will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant. This provides certainty to business as the economy reopens and means the SEISS will continue to be one of the most generous schemes for the self-employed in the world.

As restrictions have been lifted, it is right that we ask employers to contribute more to strike the balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work.

■ Money

Dean Russell:

[\[16979\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that cash continues to be accepted at businesses throughout the UK.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that the ability to transact in cash remains important to millions of people across the UK and has committed to legislating to protect access to cash.

The Government made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses as part of the Financial Services Act 2021. Furthermore, the Government has announced that it will consult this summer on further legislative proposals for protecting cash for the long term.

However, firms should continue to be able to make decisions over which payments methods they offer their customers on a commercial basis, including cash, cards, and digital payments.

■ Parliamentary Scrutiny: Taxation

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[17873\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to enable parliamentary scrutiny of proposed (a) changes to the taxation of products that could be distinguished by their strength and (b) tax distinctions that could be made based on those products' place of retail.

Kemi Badenoch:

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

Any legislative changes will be taken through the Finance Bill in the usual way, ensuring there is sufficient opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny.

■ Performing Arts and Weddings: Coronavirus

Drew Hendry:

[17758]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing additional sectoral support to the (a) live performance and (b) wedding industries to cover costs that may have been incurred through the extension of covid-19 restrictions beyond 21 June 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on sectors like live events and weddings.

During this difficult time the Treasury is working intensively with employers, delivery partners, industry groups, and other government departments to understand the effects of Covid-19 across all key areas of the economy.

Eligible events and businesses may already benefit from available employment schemes, government grant and loan schemes, a reduction in VAT and business rates relief; as well as the Culture Recovery Fund which has already supported thousands of organisations including theatres, music venues, comedy clubs and festivals. Much of this support will continue to be available to September, reflecting the Chancellor's decision at Budget to extend the package of economic support to accommodate even a very cautious view about the time it might take to exit restrictions and to provide certainty and continuity to business.

Changes to restrictions announced by the Prime Minister will also remove the 30-person limit on wedding venues, with venue capacity based on the number of attendees who can be accommodated with social distancing in place. We are also removing the cap on numbers for outdoor weddings, but with a requirement to socially distance.

We will continue to monitor the impact of government support, such as the extension of restrictions beyond 21 June, on public services, businesses, individuals and sectors, including the events sector, as we respond to this pandemic.

■ Private Equity

Jim Shannon:

[16847]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to take steps to protect investors in the UK from equity buyouts.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK continues to represent an attractive and fair place to do business, and is a world-leading, global financial centre. Investment is central to this vision and the UK has some of the world's deepest and most liquid equity markets, attracting the best companies from around the globe and connecting them with investors.

The Takeover Code, written and enforced by the Takeover Panel, ensures investors are given an appropriate degree of protection when there is a takeover of a company.

It ensures that investors are treated equally, given appropriate information, and have time to consider the offer.

Further to this, in the recently published Audit Reform white paper, the Government set out its ambitious plans to strengthen the UK's audit, company reporting and corporate governance framework. The reforms will ensure that the UK's most significant corporate entities are regulated responsibly and will empower investors by giving them access to reliable and meaningful information on company performance. Under the proposals, a reformed statutory regulator will be given new investigation and enforcement powers in relation to wrongdoing by directors. Additional measures will support company resilience and protect the interests of shareholders.

■ **Small Businesses: Coronavirus**

Caroline Nokes:

[15233]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the effect on the income of small businesses of the decision to extend covid-19 restrictions beyond 21 June 2021.

Kemi Badenoch:

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods while also supporting businesses and public services across the UK.

The Government put in place an economic package of support totalling £352 billion through the furlough and self-employed income support schemes, support for businesses through grants and loans, business rates and VAT relief.

At the Budget, the Chancellor announced a generous extension of economic support to reflect the easing of restrictions and enable the private sector to bounce back as quickly as possible. As the Chancellor put it in his Budget speech: "we're going long, extending our support well beyond the end of the Roadmap to accommodate even the most cautious view about the time it might take to exit the restrictions".

Eligible businesses and employees across the United Kingdom are benefitting from the extension of the CJRS until the end of September, with employees receiving 80% of their salary for hours not worked, up to £2500 per month. From July, employers will contribute 10% of costs of unworked hours, followed by 20% in August and 20% in September. Many other countries have already done the same (Denmark, Netherlands, France, Spain), and economy-wide schemes have ended in Australia and New Zealand. Furthermore, the economy now is in a stronger position than it was last autumn, when businesses also contributed up to 20 per cent of wage costs. And lastly, the labour market is in a stronger position, with 5.5 million fewer people on furlough than in April 2020 and hiring intentions and job vacancy levels in June around 29 per cent above February 2020 levels.

Businesses that have legally remained closed or effectively cannot operate also recently benefitted from Restart Grants of up to £18,000 and can continue to benefit from the Government's £2 billion of discretionary grant funding for Local Authorities

(LA) in England. Throughout the pandemic these businesses have also benefited from the £25 billion grant support that has been made available.

As restrictions have been lifted, it is right that we ask employers to contribute more to strike the balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work.

The delay of Step 4 is accommodated by the continuation of the Government's package of economic support, with CJRS, SEISS, business grants, business rates relief and loan programmes all extending into the autumn or beyond.

■ SME Brexit Support Fund

Sarah Olney: [\[15342\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the deadline for the SME Brexit Support Fund beyond 30 June 2021.

Jesse Norman:

Ministers have considered a range of options to support small and medium-sized enterprises. No extension to the SME Brexit Support Fund is planned at this time.

■ Social Rented Housing: Planning

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[15364\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on (a) investing in social housing and (b) ensuring that reforms to the planning system deliver more social rented housing than the current system.

Steve Barclay:

The Housing Secretary and I meet regularly to discuss a range of important issues.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing is a priority for the Government. The £12.2bn Affordable Homes Programme is the largest cash investment in affordable housing for a decade, will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country.

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the Government has committed to an ambitious planning bill so that local areas will have the tools to create a strong local vision. A key part of the reform programme includes proposals for a new Infrastructure Levy to help deliver affordable housing in an efficient and clearer way. The *Planning for the Future* White Paper proposes that the new Infrastructure Levy should deliver at least as much - if not more - affordable housing as at present.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Children: Discrimination

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[15285\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to tackle discrimination against people with children.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for employers, public authorities or service providers to discriminate or harass a person because of or for reasons related to the protected characteristic of 'sex', or victimise them for bringing a complaint, in any of the areas covered by the Act. The prohibition on indirect discrimination may provide protection for parents – for example, it is unlawful discrimination for an employer to apply a provision, criterion or practice which puts women, who are more likely to have childcare responsibilities, at a particular disadvantage unless it can be justified.

However, as far as providing specific protection for parents under the Act - for example by making parenthood a protected characteristic – is concerned, my assessment is that a change of this sort to equality law would risk providing additional rights for some groups at the expense of others and should therefore be treated with caution as having a potentially divisive effect. We have no plans to do this.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[17829\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential effect of mandatory vaccines for care workers on equalities.

Kemi Badenoch:

As Minister for Equalities, I frequently discuss with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and other Ministers the impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority people and how the government should respond to this.

The new regulations on vaccinations for care home staff follow an extensive consultation with the social care sector, staff, residents and their families.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[15360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 1 June 2021 to Question 6432 on chemicals: regulation, how many full time equivalent staff of the Chemicals Regulation Division work specifically on (a) REACH, (b) biocides, (c) pesticides, (d) chemical classification and (e) other matters as of 1 January 2021.

Mims Davies:

The number of Health and Safety Executive full time equivalent staff working in its Chemicals Regulation Division regulating the supply and use of chemicals under the GB chemicals framework on 1 January 2021 were:

REGIME	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT ON 1 JANUARY 2021
(a) REACH	49
(b) biocides	83
(c) pesticides	130
(d) chemical classification	9
(e) other matters	40
Total	311

Some staff work across a number of regimes, so while they have been allocated to a specific regime for the purposes of this response, their role may cover work on other regimes.

The 'other matters' category includes staff dealing with enforcement, Prior Informed Consent Regulations, divisional support/administrative staff and senior leaders.

■ Discretionary Housing Payments: Homelessness

Catherine West:[\[15338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of removing the additional covid-19 support funding from the Discretionary Housing Payments allocations to local authorities on levels of homelessness.

Will Quince:

The Government has made available £140m in DHPs funding for local authorities in England and Wales for 2021-22 to help support vulnerable people with housing costs.

We increased the LHA rates in April 2020 to the 30th percentile of local rents, an investment costing nearly £1 billion and have maintained rates at the same cash level in 2021/22.

In addition to the central government contribution, English and Welsh local authorities are able to top up Discretionary Housing Payments funding up to a maximum of two and a half times this figure, using their own funds.

We consider the allocation of Discretionary Housing Payments to individual local authorities each year. We also monitor evolving demand and trends by analysing the information that local authorities provide regarding the amount of Discretionary Housing Payment funding they are awarding.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have been monitoring the DHPs spend more closely than in previous years and will continue to monitor spend throughout 2021/22.

■ **Employment Schemes: Visual Impairment**

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[17731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the scholarship programme for universal credit claimants announced on 26 May 2021 in partnership with Google, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that the (a) courses, (b) application process and (c) communications for that programme are accessible to blind and partially sighted people.

Mims Davies:

Google has partnered with DWP to offer free flexible online IT training for 9,000 jobseekers across the UK, developed by Google. Through the DWP National Employer and Partnership Team (NEPT), jobseekers will have access to Google IT Certificates which focuses on IT Support, Data Analyst, Project Manager and UX Designer ensuring that the labour market of tomorrow stands a better chance of getting that job. These certificates are recognised by industry experts and employers.

All of the course content and registration form is hosted on the Coursera platform. Coursera is committed to ensuring that learners with visual and hearing impairments, as well as other disabilities, are able to succeed in their courses. Coursera strives to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") 2.1 AA published by World Wide Web Consortium. All of the course content should be compatible with these screen readers:

- JAWS (Windows)
- NVDA (Windows)
- VoiceOver (iOS and Mac)
- TalkBack (Android)

DWP work coaches have access to communications about the programme which they can tailor depending on each customers circumstances. Where customers need additional support, their work coach can explain the courses to them and are able to complete the registration on their behalf. In addition, Coursera support DWP work coach queries through a dedicated email address and 24/7 support to participants through email, online discussion forums, live chat and accessibility support tickets.

■ **Employment Services: Enfield**

Feryal Clark:

[\[16248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that the Enfield constituency receives adequate funding for employment support services.

Mims Davies:

DWP is committed to supporting everyone who has been affected by the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on the economy and the labour market. We want everyone to be able to find a job, progress in work and thrive in the labour market, whoever they are and wherever they live.

Through the Plan for Jobs, the government invested £30bn in measures to create, support and protect jobs. Plan for Jobs has been developed to run alongside existing provision and we conduct regular reviews of funding for employment support services in Enfield to ensure that the needs the community are met, both through existing provision and locally sourced services through our Flexible Support Fund.

Health and Safety Executive: Staff

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[15361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 1 June 2021 to Question 6431 on Health and Safety Executive (HSE): Staff, what the differences are in the terms and conditions between (a) contingent labour and (b) staff employed by the HSE.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese: [\[15362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 1 June 2021 to Question 6431 on Health and Safety Executive (HSE): Staff, what proportion of HSE contingent labour is employed for reasons connected to the covid-19 pandemic.

Mims Davies:

Contingent labour is hired by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on an on-demand basis and are defined as temporary staff not on HSE's payroll. They are engaged via employment agencies and are subject to the terms and conditions of employment by the agency not HSE's employment terms and conditions. HSE's HR policies and procedures are not applicable to those engaged as contingent workers.

HSE staffs' terms and conditions include:

- Salary consistent with HSE's grading structure including allowances relevant to the specific job an individual does;
- pension contributions;
- holiday entitlements;
- occupational sick pay;
- occupational maternity and paternity leave;
- relevant redundancy payments and notice periods.

Contingent workers are not entitled to the same terms and conditions as HSE staff. Pay rates and related terms and conditions, including those described above are determined by the market with an overriding principle of agency staff not being paid any less than an equivalent HSE member of staff doing the same job. As part of the

engagement process we provide agencies with equivalent rate of pay for an HSE member of staff.

Two thirds of the contingent labour working for HSE at 30 April 2021 were employed for reasons connected to the covid-19 pandemic (150 of the 227 previously disclosed). One of the specific conditions of the additional funding for covid-19 related work means that HSE is unable to employ permanent staff for this purpose.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus

Andy McDonald:

[17747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Health and Safety Executive has identified hotspots of the Delta variant of covid-19; and whether the number of (a) health and safety workplace inspections undertaken by and (b) enforcement actions issued by the HSE has increased in those areas.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is not responsible for identifying variant hotspots, however they closely monitor the information provided by public health authorities.

Through the Spot Check Programme, HSE has supported the enhanced response in surge and variant testing areas (including the Delta variant). They have increased checks across multiple areas to continue raising awareness of the needs for businesses to operate in a COVID-secure way, checked the measures implemented and, when requested, have assisted public health bodies in responding to workplace outbreaks. More than 5,400 additional checks have been completed since 24th May 2021 as part of this response. Where there are matters of concern, the dutyholder is referred for intervention by an inspector.

HSE's evidence is that the vast majority of dutyholders are complying with the government guidance and there has been no change in HSE's enforcement profile. Where contraventions are identified, the approach taken by inspectors to enforcement decisions is consistent across all areas of GB.

Andy McDonald:

[17748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Health and Safety Executive plans to reclassify covid-19 as a serious workplace risk in response to the Delta variant of covid-19.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) takes Covid-19 safety at work very seriously and is playing a critical role in the national response to the pandemic. HSE has recently carried out a review of the classification of Covid-19 within its Enforcement Management Model (EMM) and has no plans to undertake a further review at this time.

On 16 June 2021, HSE placed on its website the most recent review of HSE's proportionality of enforcement decision making in the pandemic and how EMM

supports this - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/regulating-health-and-safety/enforcement-coronavirus.htm>.

The review included consideration of the effect on the working age population of new variants, known to be circulating at the time, to determine if there is any evidence to support the new variants posing a greater risk to this age group. Fully quantifying or isolating the effect of variants on overall infection or mortality rates is complex, due to confounding factors. Infection and mortality rates have fluctuated over the course of the pandemic and continue to do so, due to a number of factors including the degree of societal restrictions, changes in people's working and social practices, seasonal variations in terms of vulnerability to viruses and most recently the roll-out of the vaccination programme.

HSE will continue to monitor the potential impact of new variants alongside the effectiveness of the vaccination programme, workplace transmission and health outcomes.

■ **Jobcentre Plus: Staff**

David Linden:

[16202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what awareness training for autism is provided to work coaches and JobCentre Plus staff.

Mims Davies:

The Department is committed to providing the best possible support for all claimants to meet their individual circumstances.

Jobcentre staff undergo a comprehensive learning journey which includes self-paced and facilitated classroom based learning, incorporating complex needs of individuals, to equip staff when engaging with claimants on the autistic spectrum.

Supporting information is also available in Guidance which incorporates all complex needs of different vulnerable groups, together with a short bitesized learning product which was launched as part of Autism Awareness Week in April 2019. All of which is available at the point of need for each individual personal requirement.

Support is also provided by Disability Employment Advisers and Work Psychologists. Work Coaches can refer individuals to personalised provision and support, such as the Work and Health Programme (available in England and Wales) or Fair Start Scotland (devolved programme available Scotland).

■ **Kickstart Scheme**

Feryal Clark:

[16247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will provide an estimate of the number of current placements on the Kickstart scheme that will result in permanent employment in (a) England, (b) Greater London and (c) Enfield North constituency.

Mims Davies:

The aim of the Kickstart scheme is to fund the creation of additional jobs which will provide young people with experience that will make it more likely that they are able to secure permanent employment. This may be with the employer they have undertaken their Kickstart job with or may be with another employer.

The Department for Work and Pensions will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart scheme throughout its implementation, and will continue to evaluate the longer term outcomes for Kickstart participants after they have completed their six-month job placements. We do not currently have an estimate of how many Kickstart participants will secure long term employment.

Abena Oppong-Asare:[\[16981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) men and (b) women have begun Kickstart scheme placements.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: An initial assessment of a sample of the first 20,000 claimants who started a Kickstart job placement from the commencement of the scheme up to 6th May 2021, found that 51% were male and 49% were female. The Department for Work and Pensions will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart scheme throughout its implementation, and will continue to evaluate the longer term outcomes for Kickstart participants after they have completed their six-month job placements. This will include an examination of the demographic make-up of participants, including gender.

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.

■ Labour Market: Devolved Matters**Alison McGovern:**[\[17735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with political leaders in devolved administrations in regions across the UK on improving labour market outcomes in their areas.

Mims Davies:

The Department is supporting people across Great Britain who are most in need wherever they live. The Secretary of State, Ministers and Officials meet regularly with stakeholders to discuss a range of policy issues.

The Department engages regularly with local leaders, including the Mayoral Combined Authorities established in England, centrally and through the Work and

Health Service network which has a strong operational presence in all regions. Policy and operational teams in DWP value local leaders' insight and knowledge of their local labour markets. Local engagement has played an important role in our collaborative response to the pandemic and to support our economic recovery.

Policy teams frequently engage on a range of labour market initiatives, for example, on the Plan for Jobs. We have actively promoted the Kickstart Scheme and my officials have worked with local leaders to ensure the scheme can help as many young people as possible. Engagement with local leaders has also played a key part in the appointment of providers for the Restart employment scheme, which will start receiving referrals from 12th July. The Government will continue to engage local leaders as we develop the UKSPF's investment framework and in advance of its publication.

Officials continue to keep their Scottish and Welsh Government counterparts updated on key labour market developments. DWP does not operate in Northern Ireland, but my Department has regular and frequent discussions with the Department for Communities on both policy and operational matters.

■ Restart Programme

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[16845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department is on course to launch their Restart scheme on 28 June 2021 and commence referrals on 12 July 2021.

Mims Davies:

DWP is currently on course, with final readiness assurance taking place. DWP should begin Restart Scheme conversations with claimants from 28th June 2021, and referrals to providers starting from 12th July 2021.

■ Unemployment: West Midlands

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[16130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the change in the level of youth unemployment in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry and (c) the West Midlands in the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: The information that is available is in the table below. No assessment has been made of changes in levels in youth unemployment. Links to the data can be found below the table:

Alternative Claimant Count

	FEB 18	FEB 19	FEB 20	FEB 21
a (i) Coventry North East	3,161	3,255	3,654	7,361

	FEB 18	FEB 19	FEB 20	FEB 21
b (ii) Coventry	7,332	7,546	8,364	17,235
c (iii) West Midlands	137,592	141,923	149,959	273,241

Source: DWP Stat-Xplore

Here are the links to the Nomis data available for [Coventry](#) and for [West Midlands](#).

■ Unemployment: Young People

Alison McGovern:

[17734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of trends in the level of youth unemployment in each region across the UK.

Mims Davies:

The most reliable data on youth unemployment in each region / nation of the UK is drawn from the Annual Population Survey. This is publicly available from the nomis website, at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/aps170>

The ONS also produce experimental statistics on 'Regional labour market: Estimates of unemployment by age', which is available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/datasets/regionalunemploymentbyage02>

This latter source is less reliable, as it is based on the Labour Force Survey which has a smaller sample size. However, its results are more timely.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Florence Eshalomi:

[17894]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to provide universal credit claimants who have taken temporary trips overseas special dispensation when that trip has been extended as a result of travel bans or restrictions during the covid-19 pandemic.

Will Quince:

It is a general requirement that a claimant must be in Great Britain (GB) to be entitled to Universal Credit but there are circumstances when a person is still entitled to Universal Credit whilst temporarily being absent from GB.

Claimants generally should notify Universal Credit of the intention to go abroad. Claimants can go abroad on holiday for any reason for up to one month, but they must still satisfy their work related requirements on the claimant commitment. An

absence can be extended and in some specific circumstances work-related requirements may be 'switched-off'.

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.

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office 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.

■ Universal Credit: Wales

Jessica Morden:

[16055]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that universal credit claimants in Wales are able to receive their bonuses from both rounds of the Welsh Government's NHS and social care financial recognition scheme without deductions.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 June 2021]: Frontline health and social care workers make a valuable contribution to our society and we are so grateful for their continued work through this pandemic.

The Department does not deduct from a Universal Credit claimant's salary or bonus payment, however it may reduce the amount of Government support a claimant receives through Universal Credit if their earnings increase and they therefore have more money available to support themselves. It is a long-standing principle of means-tested benefits that as a person's earnings increase their government support decreases – Universal Credit is no different.

Bonus payments, including those paid to health and social care workers, are earnings and therefore are treated in the same way as any other earnings. Universal Credit rules align closely to tax legislation (Income Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003 (ITEPA)). Amounts that are taken into account for a Universal Credit award include those that are general earnings, as defined in section 7(3) of ITEPA. Amounts paid as expenses that are exempt from Income tax under Part 4 of ITEPA are not taken into account for a Universal Credit award.

To ensure consistency with the approach taken across different forms of earnings and Covid-19 financial support, the UK Government does not believe there is a case for disregarding these payments from benefit calculations. They are therefore subject to the Universal Credit taper rate of 63%, unless the earnings form part of the work allowance, which is the amount someone can earn before the taper is applied to their earnings.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Sale of Cabinet Office Stake in Axelos Limited

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove):

[\[HCWS112\]](#)

Introduction

I am pleased to announce that Cabinet Office has conditionally agreed to sell its 49% stake in AXELOS Limited to PeopleCert International Limited, a member of the PeopleCert group. This is part of a joint sale with Capita of the whole of AXELOS. Subject to the timely satisfaction of conditions the sale is expected to complete in July.

Sale of the Cabinet Office stake will generate cash proceeds of approximately £175 million. Cabinet Office has also received cash dividends of approximately £10.7 million this year making total cash receipts of some £185.7 million.

As part of the sale Cabinet Office will also receive accelerated settlement of outstanding deferred consideration (currently worth some £24 million) owed to it by AXELOS dating from the formation of the joint venture.

The sale values the business at £380 million on a cash free, debt free basis.

AXELOS staff and senior management will be transferring with the business.

Rationale and Timing

The AXELOS joint venture was established with Capita in 2013 to commercialise certain best practice methodologies (principally ITIL and Prince2) previously developed by HM Government. The Cabinet Office chose to retain a 49% stake on the formation of the business with a view to delivering better value for money through a future sale.

The sale followed a strategic review triggered by Capita's desire to sell its majority stake. Cabinet Office concluded that a joint sale was likely to attract greater interest and generate a higher price per share than a separate sale of Cabinet Office's 49% stake; it also offered the opportunity to share in the premium typically available on the sale of a controlling stake.

The sale was conducted through a public auction process and the sale proceeds exceed Cabinet Office's retention value.

Contingent Liability

The sale terms include standard sale indemnities and an indemnity by Cabinet Office for 49% of AXELOS' share of the deficit in the Capita Group's defined benefit scheme, calculated on the basis set out in Section 75 Pensions Act 1995, to the extent that it exceeds the allowance already made for it. Any liability under the indemnity is not expected to exceed £300,000 and is expected to be settled during this financial year.

On this occasion, due to the sensitivities surrounding the commercial negotiation of this sale, it was not possible to notify Parliament of the particulars of the contingent liability in

advance of the sale announcement. Instead, the Cabinet Office notified the chairs of the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

More information on this contingent liability has been set out in a Departmental Minute that has been laid before the House alongside this statement.

Fiscal Impacts

The impact on the fiscal aggregates, in line with fiscal forecasting convention, are not discounted to present value. The net impact of the sale on a selection of fiscal metrics are summarised as follows:

METRIC	IMPACT
Sale proceeds	£175 million
Hold valuation	The price achieved is above retention value
Public Sector Net Borrowing	The sale reduces public sector debt. All else being equal, the sale will reduce future debt interest costs for government. The reduction in government's shareholding means it will not receive future dividend income that it would otherwise have been entitled to through these shares.
Public Sector Net Debt	Improved by £213.9 million
Public Sector Net Liabilities	Improved by £50.5 million
Public Sector Net Financial Liabilities	Improved by £50.5 million

DEFENCE

■ Report of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Leo Docherty):
[\[HCWS109\]](#)

The Ministry of Defence welcomes the Select Committee's report on the Armed Forces Bill (HC 1281). I am grateful for the Committee's support of the endeavours to improve the lives of our Service personnel, veterans and their families. I will address the Committee's recommendations in turn.

I look forward to engaging with Members across the House as the Bill makes progress.

Beginning with the Committee's recommendation that Select Committee scrutiny should continue to be the convention for Armed Forces Bills, I believe that the appointment of a Select Committee, with its ability to produce a report and to make recommendations,

ensures transparency and proper scrutiny of the Armed Forces Bill and the legislation in question. I therefore thank the Committee for their work and report and readily welcome the Committee's recommendation.

I note the Committee's recommendation that more time be allocated for the conduct of its business. The Government is committed to giving select committees adequate time to undertake their work, however, the timing available for primary legislation is ultimately a matter for the Business Managers. The primary purpose of Armed Forces Bills is for the quinquennial renewal of the legislation that governs the Armed Forces. Armed Forces Bills must reach Royal Assent before the Armed Forces Act 2006 would expire. Additional time for the Select Committee could compress the time available for other stages of the Bill, impact the wider Parliamentary programme and delay the Bill's passage, placing undue pressure on the deadline to renew the Armed Forces Act 2006. Furthermore, time is also given for further scrutiny of the Bill, as it is considered by a Committee of the whole House as well as by the Select Committee.

The Committee's keen interest in the Armed Forces Covenant reflects members' universal support for our Service personnel both regulars and reserves, veterans and their families. While there remains a difference of view on some issues, I welcome the Committee's assertion that questions in the annual Continuous Attitude Surveys would help to ascertain whether the Covenant has had a positive or negative impact on the defence community. For that reason the Armed Forces, and Families Continuous Attitude Surveys already include a Covenant-related question on whether the Service person or Service family feels advantaged or disadvantaged compared to the general public in specific areas, such as housing, education and healthcare. This provides a measure of whether Service life is having a positive or negative impact and is therefore of use as a measure of the Covenant.

I acknowledge the Select Committee's concern over how the duty to have 'due regard' would function in practical terms and its recommendation that the Government should conduct a review of this after 24 months of operation. We recognise the importance of understanding the impact of the new duty and how that can be measured will form an important part of our ongoing work in helping our Covenant stakeholders as they begin to implement the new Covenant duty. We are always happy to work with the House of Commons Defence Committee, and the Government will of course continue to report on the progress of the Armed Forces Covenant, including the new duty, annually to Parliament. As part of the Armed Forces Act, the new Covenant duty would also be subject to the quinquennial parliamentary renewal process.

Further, I thank and appreciate the Committee's conclusions on our efforts to reform the Service Justice System. The Bill addresses a small part of that work and we are implementing a number of recommendations following the Service Justice System Review that will ensure the Service Justice System is more effective, efficient and provides a better service to those who use it, in particular victims and witnesses. A key means of underpinning that assurance will be the establishment of a Defence Serious Crime Capability. We are making progress to build a stronger, more effective and collaborative approach to policing across Defence, building a means of maintaining the

capability and skills of the Service Police along with further joint working with the civilian police forces.

On another note, I thank the Committee for welcoming Defence's efforts to speed up the Service Complaints process, though the Committee still has concerns as to possible delays to appeals and has suggested that priority should be given to implementing all the recommendations of the Wigston review within 6 months. However, let me reassure the Committee that Service Complaints Reform aims to tackle the main areas of delay in the Service Complaints system, through increased efficiency and other measures aimed to increase confidence in the system.

The ability to set a reduced appeal timeframe where it is appropriate to do so will further align the SC system with other public sector and MOD's civilian grievance system timeframes. Regulations will continue to ensure that those who need extra time due to the unique elements of service life will continue to have access to the system, by allowing extra time where it is just and equitable to do so. We will work closely with the Service Complaints Ombudsman on the detail of the regulations that will be brought forward.

Defence is committed to delivering the Wigston recommendations. As set out in the Gray review, out of the 36 Wigston recommendations, 34 had either been implemented or were in progress. The remaining are in progress and being prioritised, with some linked to the reform of the Service Complaints system and implementation dependent on the AF Bill being passed.

I welcome the Committee's finding that the experience of people in the Armed Forces with protected characteristics has improved. I also recognise there is more to be done. While the Committee recommends that a metric be added to the Annual Report on the Armed Forces Covenant to report on the experience of those with protected characteristics, we report on this in other ways. I wish to assure the Committee that we continue to explore how better to identify the issues affecting our people and this remains a central issue for Defence. The recent Defence Command Paper set out our intent to tangibly, rapidly and significantly improve the lived experience of all those working in Defence, including those with protected characteristics. The MOD already reports progress against this intent through departmental Performance and Risk Reporting processes, as well as mainstream Defence feedback mechanisms and regular localised Climate Assessments, all of which is subject to regular review by the Chief of Defence Staff and the Permanent Secretary. Diversity is a source of strength for the Armed Forces and we welcome and encourage absolutely a more diverse Armed Forces.

I welcome the Committee's recommendation that the Government urgently sets out how it plans to meet targets for the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service, Complex Treatment Services and Improving Access to Psychological Therapy. The Government remains wholly committed to its ambitions set out in the NHS Long Term Plan to expand and transform mental health services in England and to investing an additional £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023-24. This will give 380,000 more adults access to psychological therapies by 2023-24. All but one of the four regional areas are meeting or exceeding targets for the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service, and activity is already in hand to further improve performance in those few areas where

targets are not yet being met. The number of days that a patient waits from initial referral to being offered an assessment for referral in 2020-21 (up to the end of January 2021) was on average 12 days, which falls within the 14-day target. All four regional areas are meeting this target and it is an improvement from the waiting times in 2019-20. Following an assessment, a patient is offered an initial clinical appointment, if the outcome of the assessment is to be seen within the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service. The target for this is also 14 days and in England on average so far in 2020-21 this target is being met. Only one regional area is not currently meeting the target but has seen a reduction in average wait of 11 days since 2019-20.

Launched in 2017, the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service and the Complex Treatment Services, and more recently the High Intensity Service, has been offering support to Serving personnel, veterans, and their families, dealing with complex mental health issues. These services have now been brought together under the collective name Op COURAGE, providing a single point of entry for veterans looking to access support for their mental health needs.

We are doing our utmost to ensure that our mental health services are there for everyone who needs them during the pandemic. Talking therapies are being made available remotely so people can access help safely from home. And the NHS is working to ensure the option of face-to-face support is provided to people with serious mental health illnesses across all ages where it is clinically safe to do so.

This leads me on to the Committee's next recommendation that further work must be done to ensure that the principle of "priority treatment" is better understood by both veterans and service providers. In 2018, the MOD/UK Department of Health's Partnership Board established the Priority Treatment Working Group. The group's membership is made up of both patient and clinical representatives from all four nations, MOD, Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Service Charities sector. The group continues to meet to share best practice of priority treatment and will discuss the action from the Committee – to address the lack of clarity and understanding amongst veterans, family members, and service providers and develop methods to improve understanding.

Within its report the Committee has recommended that work be undertaken to minimise variation in the level of services across the UK, with specific reference to Northern Ireland to deal with the challenges faced by veterans attempting to access mental health services there. We believe that by improving awareness and understanding of the Covenant among public bodies, our proposed legislation, will help to reduce disadvantage to the Armed Forces Community and minimise variation in service across UK.

The unique circumstances in Northern Ireland mean delivery is approached in a different way from the rest of the UK. The Government is making good progress in delivering the Covenant in Northern Ireland. For example, the first Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner has been appointed and will jointly chair (with the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Reserve Forces & Cadets Association) a Mental Health Committee, bringing together key statutory and third-sector providers of mental health services and support. The Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office, which has been provided with additional funding by Her Majesty's Government to assist in delivery of the Covenant,

continues to work directly with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to ensure that all funding programmes in support of Veterans' mental health are fully promoted and accessible to the widest range of eligible, trusted organisations, in order to enhance those services available statutorily.

The Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish (Home Service) Aftercare Service includes provision of mental health support. The Government has committed, as set out in the New Decade New Approach agreement, that the MOD will consider whether this should be widened to cover all Veterans living in Northern Ireland. In addition, projects that benefit the Armed Forces Community in Northern Ireland received over £1.6 million last year from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

I turn to the recommendation of the Committee that work should be undertaken to improve data collection with regard to the numbers of serving personnel and veterans requiring treatment for addiction and other mental health illnesses. I wish to reassure the Committee that the MOD is committed to the mental health and wellbeing of its Service personnel and provides dedicated and comprehensive services, including support for alcohol, drugs and gambling related disorders. Serving personnel requiring any form of healthcare, including treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, are cared for within the Defence Medical Services establishment.

For those accessing Defence Medical Services care, we already collate and publish statistics on those accessing specialist mental healthcare for substance abuse (alcohol and drugs). These figures are published annually in the mental health official statistics where we make specific reference to those assessed with alcohol-related substance abuse.

In the Strategy for our Veterans, the Government committed to improve the collection and analysis of data on veterans' needs and experiences to inform future policy and services. The Government is developing a veterans' data strategy which will achieve this across a wide range of topics, such as veterans' health and wellbeing, mental health, employment, housing and relationships.

Wherever they live in the UK, all Veterans are able to receive specialist support if they need it. Each Devolved Administration provides support in a way that best suits their region. The majority of Veterans access the same healthcare support as the general population through NHS services.

In England, each part of the country now has specialist mental health services designed for Service leavers, ex-Service personnel, Reservists and their families through the recently launched Op COURAGE - the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service. This is the new overarching name for the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service, Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service and Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service. Op COURAGE provides a single front door to dedicated services for Veterans and make it easier for Veterans and their families to get help.

Further, I observe the Committee touched upon the area of Service housing and in its conclusions felt that the Government may wish to consider adding Service

accommodation to the list of functions to which the duty of due regard under the Armed Forces Covenant applies. Whilst I thank the Committee for its well-intended suggestion, we feel this is unnecessary. The purpose of the Covenant duty is to raise awareness among providers of public services relating to housing, education and healthcare of how Service life can disadvantage the Armed Forces Community in accessing those key public services. MOD is fully aware of the issues impacting the Armed Forces Community and works with other Departments and Devolved Administrations to raise awareness across all service providers. Accommodation forms part of the Secretary of State's annual statutory report to Parliament on the Covenant and is included in the Armed Forces, Reserves and Families Continuous Attitude Surveys conducted each year.

The provision of high-quality subsidised accommodation remains a fundamental part of the overall MOD offer to Service personnel and their families and is supported by annual improvement programmes and 24/7 repair and maintenance services. Over the last decade, £1.2 billion has been invested on construction and upgrades of MOD Service accommodation. There is continued investment in a range of new-build and renovation projects. All accommodation at the point of occupancy meets the Decent Homes Standard as a minimum with the vast majority exceeding this. In addition, we are developing the Future Accommodation Model to give Service personnel more choice over where, with whom and how they can live, reflecting modern family life, with entitlement based on need not rank. This model is currently being piloted at three sites. We recognise that many service personnel seek stability for their families. A key part of this is helping personnel buy their own home. The Forces Help to Buy Scheme, first launched in 1 April 2014, is open to new applicants until 31 December 2022.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Indemnity for the Independent Review into the issues raised at the West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Minister of State for Health (Edward Argar):

[[HCWS110](#)]

It is normal practice, when a government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a departmental Minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until fourteen parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the Minute, except in cases of special urgency.

I have today laid a departmental Minute proposing the provision by NHS England and NHS Improvement of an indemnity that is necessary in respect of an NHS England and Improvement non-statutory, independent review into whistleblowing at West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. This review follows widely reported events arising from an anonymous letter that was sent in October 2018 to the relative of a patient who had died at the Trust. The purpose of the review is:

- to consider the appropriateness and impact of the actions taken in response to the issues raised by/connected with the October letter by the Trust and other relevant bodies; and
- to produce advisory recommendations and learnings.

The indemnity will cover any sums (including any legal or other associated costs) that members of the review team are liable to pay in relation to legal action brought against them by a third party in respect of liabilities arising from any act done, or omission made, honestly and in good faith, when carrying out activities for the purposes of the review. The indemnity will apply to any work carried out from the commencement of the review to its completion in 2021, in accordance with the review Terms of Reference. The indemnity will cover the contingent liability of any legal action in the run up to and following the publication of the review report, and for two years after that date. If the liability is called, provision for any payment will be sought through the normal Supply procedure.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this Minute was laid before Parliament, a member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or by otherwise raising the matter in Parliament, final approval to proceed with incurring the liability will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

I attach a copy of the departmental Minute.

Attachments:

1. Departmental Minute West Suffolk NHS FT [\[Departmental Minute-Indemnity for the Independent Review into the issues raised at the West Suffolk NHS FT.pdf\]](#)

■ Publication of the draft Health and Care Data Strategy

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): [\[HCWS111\]](#)

I would like to inform the House that the draft strategy '*Data Saves Lives: Reshaping health and social care with data*' has been published today by NHSX and builds on the ground-breaking use of data during the pandemic.

Over the last 18 months, when facing this country's greatest public health emergency for generations, one of the most powerful tools at our disposal has been the power of data. Data helped us to identify those who are most vulnerable to Coronavirus and ask them to shield; the NHS COVID-19 data store we set up was pivotal to our day-to-day response; and it powered vital research that helped us discover new treatments that saved lives across the world.

Under these proposals to deliver truly patient-centred care, everyone in England will be given better access to their own healthcare records and detailed information about exactly how they are used. Patients will be able to access test results, medications, procedures and care plans from across all parts of the health system. They will be able to have confidence that health and care staff have up-to-date information, regardless of the care setting, so they will no longer have to repeat details unnecessarily. By improving their access to data, people will also be able to manage appointments, refill medications and speak remotely, not just face to face, with health and care staff when needed.

This strategy not only seeks to bring people closer to their data, it will also support the NHS in creating a modernised system. The public need to be confident to share their data with the NHS, which will hold it securely on their behalf. These protections reflect the strict parameters for the use of data and security standards set out by the National Data Guardian for Health and Care. Today's new strategy commits the NHS to going even further with a commitment to publish the first transparency statement setting out how health and care data has been used across the sector by 2022. Modern use of patient data saves lives and maintains the highest levels of privacy. The two goals are complimentary, not contradictory.

We are publishing this today in draft form so that we have the opportunity to engage with the public and right across the health and care system. The learning from this will be included in a final version to be published in the early Autumn.

I will deposit a copy of the draft strategy in both Libraries.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Launch of negotiations for accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): [\[HCWS108\]](#)

The UK will today launch negotiations with 11 countries belonging to a free trade area, in a landmark moment for the UK as an independent trading nation. Joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) hitches the UK to some of the world's biggest current and future economies populated by half a billion people and with a joint GDP of £9 trillion.

It would secure our businesses and British exports superior access to these dynamic markets, with 65% of the world's 5.4 billion middle class consumers expected to be in Asia by 2030. UK exports to CPTPP nations would increase by 65% (£37bn) until 2030 and, in addition to this growth, comparative static analysis shows an additional increase in trade by £3.3bn as a result of UK accession.

Membership of CPTPP would build on the FTAs we have now signed with 67 countries plus the EU, and opens new markets for our services sectors, lowers tariffs on goods like cars and whisky, and creates new opportunities for UK farmers. The historic trade deal agreed in principle with Australia on 15 June will mean iconic British products will be cheaper to sell into Australia, boosting UK industries that employ 3.5 million across the country. This agreement, and others with CPTPP members including Japan, Singapore and Mexico, is a gateway into the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region and will boost our bid to join CPTPP.

CPTPP members represent 13% of global GDP, growing to 16% if the UK joins. Joining CPTPP would put the UK at the heart of this dynamic group of countries, deepening our ties with some of the world's biggest and fastest-growing countries, as the world economy increasingly centres on the Pacific region.

Joining CPTPP is expected to boost this growth even further, and that means supporting even more UK jobs. It is an advanced and ambitious agreement which goes deep in areas of UK interest such as services and digital trade.

The Indo-Pacific is the world's growth engine: home to half the world's people; 40% of global GDP; and some of the fastest-growing economies that are at the forefront of new global trade arrangements. By entering into a free trade agreement with these countries, the UK can benefit from this growth. Acceding to the CPTPP would help the UK engage more deeply with the region, and help us secure increased trade and investment opportunities, diversify our trading links and supply chains, and embed open trade.

As part of CPTPP, our analysis shows that every nation and region of the UK is expected to benefit. Each region of the UK already exported over £1 billion worth of goods to CPTPP members in 2019, including £3.1 billion from the East Midlands, £2.4 billion from Scotland, and £2 billion from the North West. Membership could deliver a £1.8bn boost to UK GDP in the long run and to increase take-home pay for British workers by £800 million.

Accession could see 99.9% of UK exports being eligible for tariff-free trade with CPTPP members. Joining would secure lower tariffs for exports such as whisky and cars, which are in high demand in the Pacific region; 65% of the world's 5.4 billion middle class consumers are expected to be in Asia by 2030.

CPTPP also greatly benefits the UK as the world's second-largest services exporter. It makes travel easier for business-people moving between CPTPP countries, and goes further in areas of key UK interest, with advanced provisions that facilitate digital trade, modern rules on data that would help the UK's cutting-edge tech sector go global and enable more financial and professional services markets to be opened up.

CPTPP also sets modern rules for digital trade across all sectors of the economy, supporting UK businesses seeking new opportunities in member markets. Digitally delivered services from the UK to CPTPP, such as making online international bank transfers, selling an e-book from an online marketplace or giving legal advice over Zoom, were worth £18.7 billion in 2019.

The more CPTPP expands, the greater the benefits to the UK. Economies including the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, and Republic of Korea have all expressed interest in joining. By having a seat at the table as the first new member, the UK can help shape CPTPP's future development as it grows.

Today, the Department for International Trade has published four documents, copies of which have been placed in the House library:

1. Our outline approach to negotiations, setting out our objectives for the negotiations
2. A response to the public consultation on membership of CPTPP, setting out how it has informed our policy
3. Our geostrategic vision for trade with the region

4. A scoping assessment, providing a preliminary economic assessment of the impact of membership

On Wednesday 2nd June, CPTPP nations agreed to the UK's bid to begin the accession process to join CPTPP. The UK will continue to work closely with Japan, as this year's chair of the CPTPP commission, alongside the other CPTPP nations to progress negotiations as quickly as possible. As in all negotiations, we are committed to upholding our high environmental, labour, product and food safety, and animal welfare standards in our negotiations with CPTPP member states, as well as protecting the National Health Service (NHS).

CPTPP has high standards in areas including the environment and labour. Its rules commit members, for example, to protecting the minimum wage, freedom of association, the elimination of forced and child labour and, crucially, enforcing their own laws in these areas. CPTPP also affirms the UK's right to regulate in our national self-interest, rather than forcing harmonisation on its members, complementing the UK's system of strong rule of law coupled with the freedom to set our own regulations.

This government is committed to transparency and will ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses have access to information on our trade negotiations. The Written Ministerial Statement of 7 December 2020 set out our transparency and scrutiny commitments, including regular updates to parliament and engagement with Select Committees, which will apply to the UK's process of accession to CPTPP.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Extending COVID Local Support Measures

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

[\[HCWS107\]](#)

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, this Government has provided an unprecedented package of support for individuals, families, communities and businesses who need financial help at this critical time.

The Covid Local Support Grant (previously known as the Covid Winter Grant Scheme) has enabled Local Authorities in England to support families across the country who are struggling with the cost of food and utility bills as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. The scheme has run from 1st December, with a total investment of over £269m so far. Between 1st December and 16th April, Local Authorities had made almost 6.3m awards under the scheme.

The Covid Local Support Grant arrangements will be extended for a final time, with a further investment of £160m, to cover the period up to 30th September. This temporary support is being extended beyond the planned ending of restrictions, to help families get back on their feet as the economy recovers and the vaccine rollout continues. Well-paid work is the best route out of poverty and that is why we have a Plan for Jobs.

The Covid Local Support Grant is in addition to the £220m Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, which has been scaled up to cover the whole of England across the major school holidays in 2021 – including this summer. The HAF will provide disadvantaged children across the country with healthy meals and enriching activities.