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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

■ Biofuels

Ben Lake: [17807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 184534 on Biofuels and Carbon Capture and Storage, how many times did (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department meet with representatives of (i) Drax Power Ltd and (ii) environmental NGOs to discuss biomass; and what plans he has for future discussions with environmental NGOs on that topic.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Sustainable biomass is making an important contribution in our efforts to decarbonise the economy. Ministerial colleagues and I have met with a number of organisations to discuss biomass, on a number of occasions during the period in question, and we will continue to engage on this issue. This is a broad and wide ranging area which may also have featured in other ministerial meetings.

The Department regularly publishes a list of ministerial meetings which can be accessed here, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings> .

■ Construction: Materials

Alan Brown: [17769]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the extent of the shortage of supply of cement and building materials for the construction industry; what discussions he has had with industry bodies to tackle shortages; and if he will make a statement.

Alan Brown: [17770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the levels of export of timber while domestic demand outstrips supplies for the construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is aware that some building materials are in short supply nationally. At present, supply of these products is not keeping pace with demand, and strong demand during 2020 reduced existing stocks. Within this, the Government is aware of particular concerns about the supply of timber, which is of critical importance to the construction sector. However, the UK exports a very limited amount of timber or timber-based products, and supply constraints in the UK are created by a shortage of supply on global markets.

The Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force has established a Product Availability Working Group, comprised of product manufacturers, builders' merchants and suppliers, contractors of all sizes, and housebuilders. The Task Force continues to monitor the supply and demand of products, and identify those in short supply. The Task Force also issues regular statements on product availability. The statements include detailed updates on the availability of specific products in affected material areas in order to keep the market informed. They can be accessed at:

<https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/>.

■ **Dental Services: Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures**

Jim Shannon:

[16850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that teeth whitening products that could have the potential to contain harmful products are carefully regulated.

Paul Scully:

Cosmetic products such as teeth whitening kits sold in the UK must meet some of the strictest safety requirements in the world and may only be placed on the market if they meet those strict safety requirements.

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

■ **Drax Power**

Ben Lake:

[16932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 184534 on Biofuels and Carbon Capture and Storage, on how many occasions did (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department meet with representatives of Drax during (i) October, (ii) November and (iii) December 2021: and if he will publish details of what was (A) discussed at each meeting and (B) who attended.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Sustainable biomass is making an important contribution in our efforts to decarbonise the economy. There are currently no plans to meet with Drax in October, November or December 2021.

The Department regularly publishes a list of ministerial meetings which can be accessed here, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>

Ben Lake:

[16933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 184534 on Biofuels and Carbon Capture and

Storage, whether biomass with carbon capture and storage was discussed during his meetings with representatives of Drax Power Ltd in 2020.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Sustainable biomass is making an important contribution in our efforts to decarbonise the economy. Ministerial colleagues and I have met with a number of organisations to discuss biomass, and biomass with carbon capture and storage on a number of occasions during the period in question. This is a broad and wide ranging area which may also have featured in other ministerial meetings.

The Department regularly publishes a list of ministerial meetings which can be accessed here, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings> .

Ben Lake:

[17806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 184534 on Biofuels and Carbon Capture and Storage, on how many occasions (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department met representatives of Drax Power Ltd in (i) July, (ii) August and (iii) September 2020; and (A) what was discussed and (B) who attended each of those meetings.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Ministerial colleagues and I have met with a number of organisations to discuss biomass, on a number of occasions during the period in question. This is a broad and wide ranging area which may also have featured in other ministerial meetings.

The Department regularly publishes a list of ministerial meetings which can be accessed here, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>

■ **Electricity Generation: Fees and Charges**

Alan Brown:

[17766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of Ofgem's proposals to reform network charging on the development of renewable energy in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Network charging is a matter for Ofgem as the independent regulator. Ofgem is leading two major charging reforms: the Targeted Charging Review (TCR), where final decisions were announced in December 2019; and the Access and Forward Looking Charges Significant Code Review (Access SCR). Collectively, this programme of work seeks to ensure that regulatory and market arrangements reflect and enable the energy system transition, as we move towards net zero emissions, and that consumers benefit from the changes.

Ofgem's TCR reforms seek to ensure all parties connected to the electricity network make a fair contribution to its fixed costs, and it has published an analysis of the expected impacts at: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/electricity/transmission->

[networks/charging/targeted-charging-review-significant-code-review](#) . This analysis indicates that the reforms could affect the investment decisions of some renewable energy projects across Scotland and GB more widely, but also suggests that overall the combined impact of the TCR changes will reduce carbon emissions compared with no reforms.

Ofgem's Access SCR is seeking to ensure the electricity network is used efficiently and flexibly, allowing consumers to benefit from new technologies and services. Ofgem is currently developing proposals, and intends to consult on these shortly. It will publish an impact assessment alongside that consultation.

■ Energy: Disability

Mick Whitley:

[17847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has met representatives of energy providers to discuss the steps they are taking to guarantee the equitable treatment of customers with (a) learning and (b) physical disabilities.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Ministers in the Department regularly meet with energy providers to discuss a range of issues, including support for vulnerable energy consumers.

Government, and the energy Regulator Ofgem, has a duty to protect the interests of electricity and gas consumers and to have specific regard to the interests of vulnerable consumers, including individuals who are disabled or chronically sick.

Ofgem Supply Licence Conditions require energy companies to treat all customers fairly, including customers in a vulnerable situation. Ofgem also requires energy companies to maintain a Priority Services Register of vulnerable customers, including people with certain mental health conditions which impact their understanding of a bill. Customers on a Priority Service Register are offered a range of services relating to safety, access and communication free of charge. Full details of who is eligible and the support that can be accessed is available online at:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/extra-help-energy-services/priority-services-register>

Ofgem monitors energy company performance with their requirements through their Social Obligations Reporting. The latest report can be found online at:

https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/system/files/docs/2019/09/vulnerable_consumers_in_the_energy_market_2019_final.pdf.

Mick Whitley:

[17849]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that people with (a) physical and (b) learning disabilities are aware of their consumer rights when dealing with energy providers.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government, and the energy Regulator Ofgem, has a duty to protect the interests of electricity and gas consumers and to have specific regard to the interests of vulnerable consumers, including individuals who are disabled or chronically sick.

Ofgem Supply Licence Conditions require energy companies to treat all customers fairly, including customers in a vulnerable situation.

Ofgem also requires energy companies to maintain a Priority Services Register of vulnerable customers, including people with certain mental health conditions which impact their understanding of a bill. Customers on a Priority Service Register are offered a range of services relating to safety, access and communication free of charge. Full details of who is eligible and the support that can be accessed is available online at: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/extra-help-energy-services/priority-services-register>

Energy: Meters**Mick Whitley:****[17848]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has met representatives of energy providers to discuss the steps they are taking to ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place to allow people with limited mobility to access their gas and electricity meters.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The energy Regulator Ofgem, requires energy companies to maintain a Priority Services Register of vulnerable customers, including individuals who are disabled or unable to top up their prepayment meter due to injury. Customers on a Priority Service Register are offered a range of services relating to safety, access and communication free of charge. These services include arrangements to ensure it is safe and practical for customers to use a prepayment meter, such as moving a meter that cannot be safely accessed to top up and meter reading services if a customer is unable to read their meter. Full details of who is eligible and the support that can be accessed is available online at: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/extra-help-energy-services/priority-services-register>

Smart meters are benefitting people with limited mobility by ending the need for manual meter reads, delivering accurate bills and enabling prepayment customers to conveniently track and top-up credit from home. The In-Home Display (IHD), which households are offered when they have smart meters installed, can be placed anywhere in the home and provides easily accessible, near-real time information about energy consumption, credit and costs.

Fuel Poverty: Ilford South**Sam Tarry:****[16990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how the funding that replaces the Green Homes Grant allocation for local authorities will tackle

fuel poverty in Ilford South constituency; and what assessment he has made of the sufficiency of resources available to make the Ilford South housing stock energy-efficient in the next ten years.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The 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 Redbridge has already been allocated £2.2 million 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 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 ECO, to accelerate our efforts to improve homes to meet fuel poverty targets. ECO will continue to be an obligation on suppliers.

■ **Glass: Manufacturing Industries**

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [19590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase recruitment in the glass manufacturing industry in South Yorkshire.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: The Government is committed to supporting jobs and growth as we begin the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through our Plan for Growth and our Lifetime Skills Guarantee, we will back business and people to unleash their full potential. Our Plan for Jobs will also support new opportunities in every part of the country.

Last year, the government also launched the Kickstart Scheme which provides full government funding to business to create new jobs for 16-24 year olds currently on Universal Credit.

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Standards

Sam Tarry: [\[16988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to set legally binding targets to 2030 to align with the timeframe for the UK's nationally determined contribution targets and (b) set interim targets for 2025.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government has legislative targets already in place covering the period 2023-2027 (carbon budget 4) and 2028-32 (carbon budget 5). In April, the Government laid legislation for the UK's sixth carbon budget, proposing a world-leading target which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. This builds on the momentum of our Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement, to reduce emissions in 2030 by at least 68% compared to 1990 levels.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Glass

Dan Jarvis: [\[19589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what financial support he is making available to the glass manufacturing industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has acted with unprecedented speed to support UK manufacturing companies, including businesses in the glass sector.

To safeguard jobs we introduced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which continues until 30 September 2021.

We also introduced the government backed Coronavirus Business Interruption Scheme (CBILS), Bounce Back Loan, Recovery Loan schemes.

We have also provided Local Authorities with additional funds to support businesses through the Local Restrictions Support Grant, Restart Grant and the Additional Restrictions Grant.

■ Ofgem

Alan Brown: [\[17765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the forthcoming Strategy and Policy Statement for Ofgem is planned to ensure that regulator

supports the delivery of the UK Government's and Scottish Government's legislative net zero targets.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Ofgem Strategy and Policy Statement will require Ofgem and the Secretary of State to carry out their regulatory functions in a manner which is consistent with securing the strategic priorities and policy outcomes of the Government's energy policy. Subject to Parliamentary approval, this will include the UK's legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050, noting the separate targets in Scotland and Wales.

Alan Brown:

[\[17767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many organisations have made representations to him in the last six months on reforming Ofgem's remit to include a formal reference to delivering the Government's legislated net zero target.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State regularly meets with organisations to discuss how the industry, government, and the regulator (Ofgem) will need to work together to deliver our net-zero targets.

Ofgem's existing statutory duty to protect consumers' interests includes their interests in the reduction of emissions of targeted greenhouse gases – which means the updated Climate Change Act target of 100%.

Additionally, the Energy White Paper committed the Government to consulting on an energy sector strategy and policy statement (SPS) for Ofgem during 2021. The SPS will set out the strategic priorities and policy outcomes of the Government's energy policy and, subject to Parliamentary approval, net-zero will be a driving theme in the SPS. The SPS will impose a legal obligation on Ofgem to have regard to those strategic priorities and policy outcomes when exercising its regulatory functions and Ofgem will be required to report at the outset and annually on its progress and plans for implementation.

COP26

■ Climate Change Convention

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[16870\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if he will publish his plans and objectives for the British stewardship of the COP process after COP26 in Glasgow.

Alok Sharma:

The UK will formally take up the presidency of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on 31 October 2021 in the opening plenary of the conference. The primary responsibility of the UK as the COP26 presidency is to preside over the

meetings of the conference and steward the formal negotiations to a successful conclusion.

Once confirmed as the COP26 President, I will remain President of the COP until late the following year, when the next presidency takes over at the commencement of the next conference. The UK will fulfil its formal mandate during this year in chairing the COP Bureau, and working with the incoming presidency to prepare for COP27. Specific details of plans and objectives for the UK's presidency year will be forthcoming after COP26, once the outcomes and agreements reached by the 197 Parties of the UNFCCC are known.

■ UN Climate Conference 2021: Disability

Douglas Chapman:

[\[16136\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps the Government is taking to ensure its COP26 presidency helps protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

Alok Sharma:

Climate action must be inclusive of people with disabilities and support their rights. We know that people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by climate change. The UK is committed to championing inclusivity throughout our COP presidency. Our dedicated civil society engagement team ensures we amplify and learn from the voices of those most affected by climate change to inspire governments to increase their ambition.

We are actively engaging the disability community to ensure that people with disabilities and their representative organisations can fully participate in the summit in November. We have set up an official-led COP26 disability-inclusive working group to guide our preparations for delivering an inclusive summit. This group comprises disabled persons' organisations and disability representatives organisations from around the world. The COP26 civil society engagement team also runs regular open-invite calls with civil society to ensure that the UK presidency is consulting the broadest range of groups in the run-up to COP26. These calls are attended by persons with disabilities and representative organisations.

Finally, the UK also ensured in the recent Climate and Development Ministerial Chair's Summary that the links between climate finance and advancing the inclusivity of persons with disabilities were highlighted.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband

John Nicolson:

[\[16874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with local authorities to raise awareness of the benefits of gigabit broadband.

Matt Warman:

Local authorities play a critical role in the deployment of gigabit broadband and my Department regularly engages with local stakeholders on the benefits that this infrastructure brings.

In addition to an online portal that we have already created to assist local authorities in rolling out gigabit broadband, DCMS is developing a 'Gigabit toolkit' to support local bodies in raising awareness and understanding of the benefits of gigabit connectivity among local residents and businesses. We will work closely with local bodies and other key sector stakeholders to help inform and shape the content.

My Department is also running several specialist programmes with local authorities on key issues, such as land access, planning and the Electronic Communications Code, and we continue to work closely with councils on issues relating to street works, 5G roll out and consumer take-up.

This engagement includes not only individual and combined authorities themselves, but also wider bodies such as the Local Government Association, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Joint Authorities Group.

■ Children's Play: Facilities**Julian Sturdy:**[\[17733\]](#)

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, whether his Department has made an estimate of the value of business that will be lost by the indoor play sector as a result of continued limits on capacity for that sector.

Nigel Huddleston:

We recognise the challenging times facing all sectors currently, and continue to support in line the prime minister's roadmap to the full reopening of the economy. The Department has been working closely with stakeholders across the indoor play sector throughout the pandemic to understand both the nature and scale of the impact that this sector has faced.

Since 17 May, indoor play sectors have been able to reopen, with COVID safety guidance in place. We are committed to helping the Indoor play sector reopen fully, and while we know that the loss of some business that may occur as a result of the delay to step 4, public health must remain the top priority. The roadmap sets out a cautious and gradual approach, led by data, not dates.

Throughout the pandemic, businesses have had access to an unprecedented £350 billion package of support including cash grants, government-backed loans, the extended furlough scheme and £5 billion for new Restart Grants.

To ensure that people and businesses have time to plan as the economy reopens in line with the easing of restrictions, schemes such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue

until September 2021. Support for businesses through grants and loans, business rates and VAT relief is also still available.

■ Voluntary Work

Rachael Maskell: [\[17778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment has he made of the effectiveness of local volunteer centres.

Matt Warman:

Local Volunteer Centres play an important role in many areas, providing support and expertise on volunteering within the local community.

DCMS has not conducted a specific assessment of local volunteer centres but the MoVE project, a collaboration between the Universities of Sheffield, Hull and Leeds (Lessons from Lockdown, October 2020) found that 'existing local infrastructure and community support networks have underpinned successful community responses.'

Rachael Maskell: [\[17779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has of the comparative effectiveness of volunteering opportunities organised through (a) local and (b) national schemes.

Matt Warman:

Volunteering opportunities organised both nationally and locally have been an integral part of the community response to COVID-19.

Out of the various ways that people stepped up to respond to the pandemic, the Talk Together report Our Chance to Reconnect (March 2020) estimates that 12.4 million people across the UK volunteered to support their communities ([Talk/Together: Our Chance to Reconnect](#), February 2021), with up to 4.6 million volunteering for the first time. Of these first time volunteers, 75% say they wish to continue volunteering. With reference to volunteering opportunities organised nationally, it is worth noting that NHS Volunteer Responders have now completed more than 1.9 million tasks to support over 171,000 people at risk from Covid-19. ([NHS Volunteer Responder Success Measures](#) (12 June 2020 - 16 May 2021)

In addition to volunteer responses organised through formal channels locally and nationally, the pandemic saw huge growth in informal volunteering. The DCMS Community Life Recontact Survey (December 2020) found that the proportion of the population offering informal help on a regular basis (at least once a month) increased from 28% to 47% ([DCMS, Community Life COVID-19 Recontact Survey](#), December 2020). We saw communities rapidly mobilising to help local people, who were particularly at risk or hardest hit by the effects of isolation. Pro Bono Economics' Civil Action report (December 2020) estimated that over 2.5 million people volunteered with over 4,000 mutual aid groups ([Pro Bono Economics, 'Civil Action: Exploring Civil Societies Potential in the 2020s'](#), December 2020), a unique grassroots movement

which has seen communities demonstrate their strength, resourcefulness and adaptability.

EDUCATION

■ Erasmus+ Programme

Rachael Maskell: [17783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students took part in the Erasmus Scheme in each of the last 10 years.

Rachael Maskell: [17785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students from York's universities and colleges have participated in the Erasmus Scheme during the last five years.

Michelle Donelan:

The UK National Agency for the Erasmus+ programme publishes official figures on UK Erasmus and Erasmus+ participation through their Statistics pages:

<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/statistics>.

Data relating to Higher Education Erasmus and Erasmus+ student mobilities at universities and colleges can be found by selecting "Project Mobilities & Outputs".

The file "2007-2014 Higher education mobility statistics" provides statistics for the Erasmus programme from academic years 2007/08 to 2013/14. The file "2014-2018 Higher education mobility statistics" provides statistics for the Erasmus+ programme from academic years 2014/15 to 2017/18. Table 2 of each file shows the number of outgoing students by sending institution. Data for subsequent academic years will be published by the National Agency in the coming months.

Data relating to Vocational Education and Training (VET) Erasmus and Erasmus+ learner mobilities at colleges is not published by the National Agency. The European Commission publishes data on overall [1] UK VET Erasmus and Erasmus+ mobility participants but this includes staff and the data cannot be disaggregated into learners only. It is also not available by sending institution.

[1] This summary data can be found in the statistical annexes of their Statistics page:

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en.

■ Higher Education: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown: [17711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the (a) financial and (b) academic effect on Higher Education students of the covid-19 outbreak in the 2020-21 academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

The government's expectations are, and have been, very clear: Universities should maintain the quality and quantity of tuition and seek to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the resources to study remotely.

The Office for Student (OfS), the higher education (HE) regulatory body, is taking the potential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on teaching and learning very seriously. It is actively monitoring providers to ensure that they maintain the quality of their provision, that students are supported and achieve good quality outcomes, that tuition is accessible to all and that HE providers have been clear in their communications with students about how arrangements for teaching and learning may change throughout the year.

The OfS is also following up directly with providers where they receive notifications from students, parents or others that raise concerns about the quality of teaching on offer and requiring providers to report to them when they are not able to deliver a course or award a qualification. If the OfS has any concerns, it will investigate further.

This government recognises that this academic year has been incredibly difficult for students. As a result of these exceptional circumstances, some students are facing financial hardship, with some incurring additional costs at their alternative address. Officials are working hard with the sector to continue to monitor the situation and explore potential approaches to supporting students, particularly from disadvantaged groups.

We have made an additional £85 million of student hardship funding available to HE providers in the 2020/21 academic year. Providers have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to their students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need. Support can include help for students, including international students and postgraduates, facing additional costs arising from having to maintain accommodation in more than one location or assistance to help students access teaching remotely.

This is in addition to the £256 million of government-funded student premium funding already available to HE providers to draw on for this academic year, 2020/21. We know that not all students will face financial hardship. The current measures aim to target support for students in greatest need. The government continues to monitor the situation to look at what impact this funding is having.

The OfS required HE providers to return information on disbursement of hardship funding as part of the monitoring of its use. I have been liaising with the OfS on the analysis of those returns.

■ Mathematics: Higher Education**Stephen Timms:****[19479]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to universities on promoting and protecting the (a) teaching and (b) research of pure mathematics.

Stephen Timms:

[\[19480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions his Department has had with Vice Chancellors on the promotion and protection of pure mathematics (a) teaching and (b) research at UK universities.

Michelle Donelan:

The department funds the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme (AMSP) which aims to increase participation and attainment in level 3 mathematics. The AMSP targets ensuring students in all 16-19 state-funded schools and colleges can access AS/A level mathematics and AS/A level further mathematics and helps them study these subjects to a higher level.

With AS and A level mathematics, 100% of the course is prescribed, but with AS and A level further mathematics, 50% of the content is a prescribed pure mathematics core. For the remaining 50% of the content, different options are available. These options vary between specifications and may include mechanics, statistics, discrete/decision mathematics and additional pure mathematics.

In May, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), published the research and development budget for financial year 2021/22, outlining how his department will allocate £11.35 billion.

BEIS is investing more money than ever before in core research, which will include pure mathematics. At the Spending Review in November 2020, BEIS announced that the government will increase investment in core UK Research and Innovation and National Academy funded research by more than £1 billion by 2023/24.

The government announced up to an additional £300 million for mathematical sciences in January 2020. This was new investment for research projects, fellowships and doctoral awards where the research focus is in mathematical sciences, as well as providing additional funding to the Heilbronn Institute to support PhD students and research, and to the Isaac Newton Institute and International Centre for Mathematical Sciences to enable increased participation.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake:

[\[19737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with Public Health England on determining the appropriate size of a bubble in schools during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will publish the scientific guidance he received ahead of making that decision.

Nick Gibb:

At each stage of the Government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we have listened to the latest medical and scientific advice. The Department has provided regularly updated guidance to support schools, with input from education leaders, unions, and sector bodies and in consultation with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive.

Schools must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing, while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between pupils and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate in 'bubbles' and through maintaining distance between individuals. Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of pupils and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. Maintaining distinct groups or 'bubbles' that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and to keep that number as small as possible.

Schools should assess their circumstances and try to implement 'bubbles' of an appropriate size to achieve the greatest reduction in contact and mixing. They should make sure this will not affect the quality and breadth of teaching, or impact access for support and specialist staff and therapists.

Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible. Pupils should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups. Schools should try to limit interaction, sharing of rooms, and social spaces between groups as much as possible.

When using larger groups, the other measures from the system of controls are even more important to minimise transmission risks and the numbers of pupils and staff who need to self-isolate. Younger pupils and those with complex needs will not be able to maintain social distancing and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group. Using small groups can restrict the normal operation of education and present educational and logistical challenges.

■ Schools: Gender and Political Impartiality

Dr Julian Lewis:

[19474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the of the compatibility of recent advice issued to schools by a campaigning organisation not to refer to children as (a) boys and (b) girls and the prohibition on political indoctrination in schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Department trusts schools to make sensible and reasonable decisions to determine what is best for their pupils. It is important that schools take full responsibility for ensuring their teaching is age appropriate, suitable, and politically impartial, particularly when using materials produced by external organisations. The Department does not generally comment on external materials or advise schools on which specific resources to use. In September 2020, as part of the package of support for the implementation of Relationship, Sex and Health Education, the Department produced non-statutory guidance, which includes some general principles to help schools choose the right resources. This is available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-your-relationships-sex-and-health-curriculum>.

The law is clear that schools must remain politically impartial. Schools must not promote partisan political views and should ensure the balanced treatment of political issues. The Department is developing further guidance to support schools to understand and meet their duties in this area.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Air Pollution

Ruth Jones:

[\[16950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of public awareness of the sources of information on national and local pollution levels.

Rebecca Pow:

On 10 June 2021, Defra published its latest research on the needs for air quality data and information. The research found that the majority of the public do not actively seek air quality information, but those who do so are more likely to have health vulnerabilities. When prompted, the public identified a need for clear, actionable information to be available regularly and at a local level. A need for tailored health advice to help manage the effects of poor air quality on health was also identified. Those surveyed also expressed an interest in receiving information as part of a weather forecast and being able to access health advice online.

The findings from this research have already been used to influence the design and content of the Clean Air Hub website and as part of our continued work with media organisations to make air quality information more readily accessible.

The Government is committed to doing much more to improve public awareness of air pollution and in our response to the Coroners Prevention of Future Deaths report, following the inquest related to Ella Adoo Kissi-Debrah, we have set out the immediate actions we will take to improve the provision of air quality data and information. This includes a comprehensive review of the UK-Air website and the Daily Air Quality Index. We will be increasing the funding pot available to local authorities in this year's Local Authority Air Quality Grant by £6M. A large proportion of this additional funding will be targeted to support further action to improve public awareness in their communities.

Alongside this, we will continue to engage with broadcasters, social media companies, and other media outlets, to look at ways to improve communication on air quality. We will also continue to work with a range of stakeholders and partners, including Global Action Plan, the Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Partnership, and the British Heart Foundation to provide clear messages about the risks of air pollution and the actions people can take in response to high levels of air pollution.

Sam Tarry:

[\[16989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to set legally binding interim targets for particulate matter 2.5 at the WHO recommendation of 20 grams per cubic metre.

Rebecca Pow:

Our landmark Environment Bill, which is currently passing through Parliament, requires the government to set long-term, legally binding environmental targets in four priority areas, including air quality. In addition to this, there is a duty to set a new target for PM2.5 based on annual mean concentrations.

As part of the process for setting air quality targets, essential work is being carried out to ensure that we have an understanding of the action that will be required to reach the targets, to ensure that they are feasible and assess the associated costs and benefits. A summary of this analysis will be included in a public consultation before the targets are set through secondary legislation in October 2022. We have always been clear that we will consider WHO air quality guidelines as part of this process. We are also working with experts such as AQEG (Air Quality Expert Group) and COMEAP (Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants) to seek their advice, views and recommendations on key aspects of how the targets are developed.

In the meantime, we are continuing to drive forward the ambitious actions outlined in the Clean Air Strategy, such as phasing out the sale of house coal and small volumes of wet wood for domestic burning, which is a major source of PM2.5.

■ Air Pollution: Children

Ruth Jones:

[\[16951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the effect of air pollution on children's health.

Rebecca Pow:

My Rt Hon Friend the Environment Secretary and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care work closely together on issues related to air pollution, which poses the biggest environmental threat to public health. Children are particularly vulnerable to its effects.

Defra officials have also had extensive discussions with their counterparts at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) on the relationship between air quality and health, including child health.

Defra officials will continue to engage regularly with DHSC, PHE, the research community and others on this matter. The improvement of air quality remains a top priority for the government.

■ Air Pollution: EU Countries

Ruth Jones: [\[16952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his European counterparts on tackling toxic air.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is a Party to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and regularly engages with other parties, including the EU, on tackling air pollution.

■ Air Pollution: Pollution Control

Ruth Jones: [\[17836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Air Quality Grant scheme.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra's annual Air Quality Grant scheme provides funding to local authorities to carry out projects in local communities to tackle air pollution and reduce emissions affecting schools, businesses and residents. It has awarded nearly £70 million in funding to a variety of projects since it started in 1997, which has helped local authorities make air quality improvements. This year additional funding of £9 million has been allocated for the grant scheme.

Air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010 – emissions of nitrogen oxides have fallen by 32% and are at their lowest level since records began, and we know we must do more to continue this trend. Local authorities have a key role to play delivering targeted pollution reduction measures at a local level. They are best placed to understand the diverse needs of their local area so the grant is designed to enable flexibility. Applicants are required to demonstrate deliverability, policy alignment, value for money and have in place plans to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions; these elements are evaluated as part of the competitive award process.

The objectives of the grant are reviewed annually to encourage applications for measures that will be most effective in delivering air quality improvements or positive behaviour change. This autumn, applications will be encouraged for measures that deliver air quality improvements, measures that deal with particulate matter; the pollutant most harmful to human health, and measures that improve air quality information and public awareness and accessibility to sources of information.

■ Game: Animal Welfare

Zarah Sultana: [\[17861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ban cages for breeding (a) partridges, (b) pheasants and (c) other game birds.

Victoria Prentis:

We are committed to maintaining our position as world leaders in farm animal welfare and want to improve and build upon that record, working in partnership with farmers to support healthier, higher welfare animals. As referenced in the recently published Action Plan for Animal Welfare we are actively exploring options for strengthening the UK system moving forward and are examining the evidence around the use of cages in farming, including their use for breeding and rearing of gamebirds.

The welfare of gamebirds is protected by the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal. The Statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes offers additional protection and provides keepers with guidance on how to meet the welfare needs of their gamebirds as required by the 2006 Act. It recommends that barren cages for breeding pheasants and small barren cages for breeding partridges should not be used and that any system should be appropriately enriched.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carry out targeted inspections on gamebird farms. Appropriate action is taken against anyone who breaks the law.

■ Incinerators**Kate Osamor:**[\[16908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the use of incineration as a method of waste disposal.

Rebecca Pow:

In December 2018, the Government published its Resources and Waste Strategy which outlines how we will work towards our ambitions of doubling resource productivity and producing zero avoidable waste by 2050. Introducing the Collection and Packaging Reforms are a key part of the policy measures required to meet the targets set in the Strategy, by helping to recycle more material and increasing the quality of the material being collected for recycling. Due to the combined impacts of consistent recycling collections, Extended Producers Responsibility for packaging and a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers, we estimate that we will meet our commitment of a municipal waste recycling rate of 65% by 2035.

In addition, in October 2020 as part of the Circular Economy Package, we legislated through the Environmental (England and Wales) Permitting Regulations 2016 to include a permit condition for landfill and incineration operators, meaning they cannot accept separately collected paper, metal, glass or plastic for landfill or incineration unless it has gone through some form of treatment process first, and post treatment this is deemed to be the best environmental outcome. This is in addition to existing permit measures that already prevent the acceptance of recyclable material.

The above measures will reduce the levels of residual waste needing to be treated through incineration (including with energy recovery) or landfilled.

■ Incinerators: Edmonton

Kate Osamor: [\[16909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish communications he has had with the North London Waste Authority on its plans to increase the capacity of the Edmonton EcoPark waste incinerator.

Rebecca Pow:

I have no plans to publish this information. However, my Department would be happy to consider any request submitted under the statutory conditions set out in the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations.

Kate Osamor: [\[16910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of expanding the capacity of the Edmonton EcoPark waste incinerator on air pollution in that local area.

Rebecca Pow:

The new energy-from-waste plant will replace the existing facility at Edmonton and has been permitted and assessed based on an environmental impact assessment for a maximum of 700,000 tonnes per year, as opposed to 750,000 tonnes for the existing plant. The permitted capacity is not being increased.

All energy-from-waste plants in England must comply with strict emission limits under the Environmental Permitting Regulations and cannot operate unless issued with a permit by the Environment Agency (EA). The EA assesses the emissions from new plant as part of its permitting process and consults Public Health England on every application it receives.

In the future, if the operator wishes to increase the capacity of the plant, they will need to apply to the EA for a permit variation, including details on any changes to the impact on air quality. The EA would only grant a variation if it was satisfied that the proposed increase in capacity would not have a significant impact on the environment or human health.

Once the plant becomes operational, the EA will perform regular inspections and audits to ensure that the plant is complying with the requirement of its permit. That will include checks of the results of the continuous air emissions monitoring which all energy-from-waste plants must do.

Kate Osamor: [\[16911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of a pause and review on the expansion of the Edmonton EcoPark waste incinerator.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has not undertaken any such review.

Local authorities prepare local waste plans in which they consider their area's waste infrastructure needs. They will need to take account of the Resources and Waste

Strategy ambitions and measures in their assumptions around planning future waste infrastructure needs.

■ **Plastics: Packaging**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[17812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 June 2021 to Question 7904 on Plastics: Supermarkets, what steps he is taking to incentivise supermarkets and other companies to reduce their use of (a) single-use and (b) general plastics in each of the financial years (i) 2021-22, (ii) 2022-23, (iii) 2023-24 and (iv) 2024-25.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042, which encompasses single-use plastic waste. I would also refer to the Answer of 11 June 2021 to Question 7904, as many of the actions set out there will incentivise businesses. We are making great strides to tackle plastic pollution across the country. In December 2018, we published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which set out how we want to achieve this and move towards a circular economy which keeps resources in the system for as long as possible. The Resources and Waste Strategy also sets out a timeline for action, although in some instances the impact of Covid-19 has led to delays. In clearly laying out the Government's position and direction, we intend to provide industry with the confidence to take action to reduce their use of plastics.

Indeed, industry is acting. The UK Plastics Pact was jointly founded by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and the Ellen McArthur Foundation and is supported by the Government. The Pact brings together organisations from across the plastics supply chain, with four key targets for 2025 that aim to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated. Members of the Pact account for two-thirds of consumer plastic packaging in the UK.

Alongside our support for voluntary action by industry, the Government is taking regulatory action. The single-use carrier bag charge, which has led to a 95% reduction in the use of single-use carrier bags by the main supermarkets, has been increased to 10p and extended to all retailers to encourage customers to bring their own bags to carry shopping and reduce the volumes of single-use plastic being used.

We have included a number of measures in the Environment Bill to enable us, through regulations, to tackle plastics and plastic waste. These include measures to impose charges on single-use plastic items; introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers; and make producers cover the costs of collecting and managing plastic packaging waste. As well as this, the Bill gives us powers to provide consistent recycling services for household and businesses; ensure all packaging is labelled either 'recyclable' or 'not recyclable'; set requirements regarding design and material usage for products; and allows for us to control the export of plastic waste better.

The Government is also reforming the packaging producer responsibility regulations and developing extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging. Our proposal is for the first phase of EPR to be established in 2023. EPR for packaging will see packaging producers paying for the waste management costs associated with the packaging that they place on the market. This will ensure producers are thinking about the necessity of any packaging they use. In developing EPR for packaging, we will also take consideration of how EPR for packaging could be used to encourage packaging reuse and refill systems. The Government consultation on EPR for packaging closed on 4 June 2021:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/extended-producer-responsibility/extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging/>.

■ Water: Consumption

Luke Pollard: [17830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his timetable is for publishing the results of his Department's consultation on measures to reduce personal water use that closed in October 2019.

Luke Pollard: [17831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a mandatory water efficiency label for all water-using products.

Luke Pollard: [17832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will lift the restrictions on universal metering outside water stressed areas.

Rebecca Pow:

While good progress has been made in water efficiency policy development, we had to delay publication of the response to the 2019 public consultation on Water conservation: measures to reduce personal water use to prioritise work on the response to covid-19. Defra plans to publish the consultation response, which will set out our ambition and a package of policies to reduce household water consumption, in summer 2021.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Africa: Coronavirus

Imran Ahmad Khan: [17884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to governments in Africa to ensure they have access to an adequate supply of oxygen to help tackle covid-19.

James Duddridge:

The UK is one of the largest donors to the international pandemic response. We have committed up to £1.3 billion of UK aid to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to help end the pandemic as quickly as possible. We are one of the major funders of the Access to COVID-19 Tools or ACT Accelerator, which is a global collaboration mobilising technical and financial support to increase equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines, including oxygen. FCDO is also supporting regional bodies like Africa Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Africa Regional Office that are directly working with the governments on oxygen supplies in African countries.

For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the UK has provided nearly £15 million support to the COVID-19 response that includes supporting the health facilities in Kinshasa. We provided 80 oxygen concentrators in the city and supported the installation of solar energy in five health facilities to ensure a reliable and green electricity supply for these oxygen concentrators.

Cameroon: Politics and Government**Tracey Crouch:**[\[16830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the situation in Cameroon; and whether he has had discussions with his UN Security Council counterparts on (a) bringing an end to the violence in that country and (b) allowing transparent investigation into serious accusations of human rights abuses.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the crisis in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon, including the disturbing reports of human rights abuses and violations by both armed separatists and the security forces. In a visit to Cameroon in March, I met President Biya, Prime Minister Ngute and Foreign Minister Mbella Mbella, where I set out the UK's commitment to supporting a peaceful resolution. We work in conjunction with international partners, such as France and the United States, to raise the crisis in multilateral fora. At the UN Security Council briefing on UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) on 7 June, the UK reiterated the UN Secretary General's call for an end to violence and for all actors to refrain from attacks against civilians.

We continue to call on the Government of Cameroon to investigate all reports of human rights violations and abuses. As the UK's International Ambassador for Human Rights set out at the UN Human Rights Council on 26 February, the violence must end and urgent, impartial investigations must hold the perpetrators to account. We urge the Government of Cameroon to engage fully with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights for all. We continue to call for inclusive dialogue that addresses the root causes of the crisis, and for all parties to remain engaged in Swiss-led efforts to facilitate talks.

■ Civilians: Protection

Alyn Smith: [\[16955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Minister in his Department is responsible for the implementation of the UK Government's Protection of Civilians policy; and whether that postholder has a counterpart in the Ministry of Defence.

Alyn Smith: [\[16956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence on the UK Government's Protection of Civilians policy.

James Cleverly:

Ministerial responsibility for the Protection of Civilians (PoC) agenda is shared across Government departments. HMG's approach paper, published in August 2020, was drafted in collaboration between the former Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the former Department for International Development and the Ministry of Defence. In line with the breadth and complexity of PoC issues, ranging from humanitarian access to urban warfare, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Ministry of Defence continue to work closely on this agenda.

■ Cyprus: Politics and Government

Feryal Clark: [\[17881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to leaders of both communities in Cyprus to help ensure a sustainable, bi-zonal and bi-communal federal political settlement.

Wendy Morton:

The UK remains committed to supporting the UN process to reach a Cyprus Settlement, which will be good for Cyprus, regional stability and UK interests. On 27-29 April, in support of the efforts led by the UN Secretary General to find common ground on a way forward to resolve the Cyprus Issue, the Foreign Secretary represented the UK as a Guarantor Power at informal UN talks in Geneva.

At the meeting, the Foreign Secretary continued to urge all sides to demonstrate flexibility and compromise to find a solution to the Cyprus Issue within the UN Security Council parameters of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation which we believe are broad enough to meet the objectives of all sides. This followed UK messaging to the parties ahead of the talks, including the Foreign Secretary's visit to the island on 4 February where he met President Anastasiades, Turkish Cypriot leader Tatar and the UN. Ahead of the talks, during my visit to Cyprus (7-9 April), I reiterated this message and the UK's support for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus issue.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Aid Workers and Diplomatic Service

Chris Law: [\[17754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the safety of aid workers and diplomats in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

James Duddridge:

All FCDO staff undertake specialist safety training before deployment and are provided with regular security briefs at post on common threats, risks areas, and how to stay safe. The British Embassy has a highly professional and trained guard force based at the Embassy 24/7; a dedicated security provider who acts as first responders to incidents; and a communications alert system. It also security assesses all staff accommodation. A rigorous risk assessment is carried out prior to any field visits for staff and they travel in armoured vehicles where necessary.

We conduct thorough due diligence assessments of our implementing partners including their risk mitigation capabilities. We share urgent security information and best practice, and provide training sessions to ensure they have risk mitigations in place to safeguard their staff.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Nutrition

Chris Law: [\[17753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect child nutrition services in the immediate and long-term in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

James Duddridge:

The UK remains a committed development partner of the Democratic Republic of Congo, including on child nutrition services. Through our humanitarian and health programmes, UK aid has supported better nutrition for over 4 million children from April 2019 - December 2020. Preventing and treating severe acute malnutrition in children remains a priority for our current and future humanitarian and health programmes.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Overseas Aid

Chris Law: [\[17752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed reduction in Official Development Assistance on ongoing and planned UK aid programmes in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

James Duddridge:

The UK remains a committed development partner of the Democratic Republic of Congo. As one of the largest bilateral donors to the Democratic Republic of Congo, we are providing life-saving assistance to 3 million people, as well as supporting

basic health and education services, improving the environment for business, increasing people's incomes, and strengthening stability and governance.

The seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy has forced us to take tough but necessary decisions, including temporarily reducing the overall amount we spend on aid to 0.5% of GNI. We will remain a world-leading Official Development Assistance donor and still spend more than £10 billion this year to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Security

Chris Law:

[\[17751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure long-term stability and security in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned about violence, instability and the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially in the east. Protecting communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo from violence is an immediate priority, which is why the UK, alongside other UN Security Council members, has ensured that the protection of civilians remains central to the mandate of the UN peace keeping Mission, MONUSCO. Since 2017, the UK's humanitarian programme has helped over three million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with cash, emergency nutrition, water and healthcare. Longer term, the UK's peace and stability programme is providing access to livelihoods, helping secure land access and supporting inclusive dialogue to address the drivers of conflict in conflict-affected communities, and we are working towards the eradication of poverty through the provision of enhanced access to basic services, increased economic opportunities, and by strengthening governance. The Minister for Africa discussed the importance of tackling these issues with President Tshisekedi during his visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo in November 2020 and again during a telephone call in March this year.

■ Education: Females

Marion Fellows:

[\[17756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference Government's commitment to education at the G7 in June 2021, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that its goal of increasing the number of girls who have access to 12 years of education will still be achieved following the reduction in aid spending from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent of GNI.

Wendy Morton:

2021 is a year of UK leadership on the world stage, including on girls' education. Meeting under the UK Presidency, G7 Foreign and Development Ministers endorsed two new, global, SDG 4 milestone targets on girls' education on 5 May, which we are

calling on the world to help deliver, working in partnership with developing country partners, multilateral institutions, civil society, girl-led groups, and youth leaders. At the G7 Summit the Prime Minister announced a UK pledge of £430 million to the Global Partnership for Education, this is our largest ever pledge to GPE and an uplift of 15% from our current position as top bilateral donor. This significant pledge meant we were able to secure commitment from G7 partners of at least \$2.7 billion to GPE contributing to GPE's rolling target of \$5 billion over the next 5 years.

The FCDO will also spend £400 million of bilateral ODA on girls' education this year. This is separate from our pledge to GPE. This very substantial sustained investment of UK ODA is only one of our tools in achieving our ambitions.

■ India: Religious Freedom

Feryal Clark: [\[17878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Indian counterpart on protecting the religious freedoms and freedom of belief of (a) Christians, (b) all minority religious groups and (c) people with no religion in India; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

Human rights form a regular part of our dialogue with India. Most recently, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister of State for South Asia, discussed the situation for Christians in India with India's Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kishan Reddy, on 15 March. Our then Acting High Commissioner in New Delhi also discussed UK Parliamentary interest on this in India with officials from India's Ministry of External Affairs on 5 January. A senior FCDO official discussed the situation for India's religious minorities with the Indian High Commissioner on 29 December 2020.

The British High Commission in New Delhi regularly meets religious representatives and has run projects promoting minority rights. This year, they supported an interfaith leadership programme for a cohort of emerging Indian faith leaders, including Christians, creating an opportunity to exchange expertise on leading modern, inclusive faith communities, and promoting values of tolerance and multi-culturalism.

■ Israel: Foreign Relations

Ruth Jones: [\[17837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to meet with the Prime Minister of Israel; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

We are proud to enjoy an excellent bilateral relationship with Israel. We welcome the formation of a new government, and look forward to working together closely to ensure the relationship goes from strength to strength. We engage frequently with the Government of Israel, and will continue to do so.

■ **LGBT People: Discrimination**

Feryal Clark:

[\[16985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to governments across the world, including Commonwealth nations, that are marginalising and criminalising the LGBTIQ+ community.

Nigel Adams:

The UK plays an active role globally in the support of LGBT+ rights. We regularly raise this issue with governments around the world, including in the Commonwealth. We work through our diplomatic missions and through international organisations, including the UN, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Commonwealth, to promote non-discrimination towards LGBT+ people, and to address discriminatory laws. We remain deeply concerned about the criminalisation and treatment of LGBT+ people in many countries, and recognise that there is a long way to go before all LGBT+ people are able to live free and equal lives.

■ **Nepal: Coronavirus**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[16978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support in terms of (a) vaccinations and (b) general medical assistance the Government has provided to Nepal since the outbreak of covid-19 in that country.

Nigel Adams:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the British Embassy in Kathmandu has reprioritised over £40 million of its development budget including: the construction of an oxygen plant in a Kathmandu hospital; technical advice to local government on managing the impact of COVID-19; water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to support around 400,000 people; safe spaces for women in isolation centres; cash and voucher assistance for the most vulnerable; and nutrition support for pregnant and lactating women. In response to the second wave of COVID-19 the UK has also donated 260 ventilators and various pieces of personal protective equipment as well as constructing an oxygen plant in Kathmandu.

With regards to vaccines, the UK is a leading donor to COVAX, having committed £548 million to the scheme. COVAX has delivered 348,000 doses to Nepal so far and another tranche is expected in the coming months. As G7 chair this year the UK has also secured a commitment to donate 1 billion vaccine doses to the developing world by June 2022, including 100 million donated by the UK. The majority of these doses will be donated to COVAX. As shareholders and contributors to both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, the UK has also pushed hard for multilateral organisations to provide finance to countries for vaccine procurement, including Nepal. The World Bank has now made at least \$75 million available to the

Government of Nepal for that purpose; a further \$165 million will soon be proposed to the board of the Asian Development Bank, which the UK will also support.

■ Rainforests: Conservation

Jim Shannon:

[\[17740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his (a) Brazilian and (b) UN counterparts on UK Government support for the protection of rainforests.

Wendy Morton:

We continue to be concerned by the rising rates of deforestation in the Amazon and by the detrimental impact this is having on global climate goals. Through the International Climate Finance Programme and as part of a long-established partnership with Brazil, we have committed £259 million to help protect the Amazon. We welcome Brazil's commitment to reach zero illegal deforestation by 2030, announced at the Earth Day Summit hosted by President Biden earlier this year. We look forward to seeing the robust implementation plans needed to deliver on this commitment.

The Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State for International Trade have regular discussions with Brazilian counterparts. They raised the crucial importance of combating illegal deforestation at the UK-Brazil Strategic Dialogue (October 2020) and the Joint Economic and Trade Committee (November 2020). The Foreign Secretary most recently discussed climate and environment matters with the Brazilian Foreign Minister in June 2021.

■ Russia and Ukraine: Diplomatic Relations and Security

Mark Logan:

[\[17875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the diplomatic and security situation of (a) Ukraine and (b) Russia; and what steps his Department is taking to work with (i) NATO and (ii) western Governments to maintain oversight of the situation in those countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is one of Ukraine's few international partners offering a full range of military, security, economic, political and governance support. We operate at the heart of the international community's engagement in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which includes shaping international sanctions against Russia; deepening NATO's partnership with Ukraine; and leading efforts in the UN and OSCE to hold Russia to account for its destabilising behaviour.

The Integrated Review makes clear that Russia's actions pose an acute and direct threat to the national security of UK and its allies. The Russian State's record of unprovoked, reckless and destabilising activity is a stain on Russia's reputation, damages its international standing and undermines the Russian Government's claims to be a responsible global actor. The UK takes the threat from the Russian State

extremely seriously and will respond and call out Russian aggression wherever it occurs.

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have held recent discussions with their Ukrainian counterparts, on 14 June and 2 April respectively. We maintain functional channels of engagement with the Russian Government. The FS spoke with Russian FM Lavrov on 17 June. As fellow Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and other multilateral organisations, we will continue to engage with the Russian Government on matters of international peace, security and to address global challenges facing the world today, including climate change, biodiversity loss and the Coronavirus pandemic. The Prime Minister attended the NATO Summit on 14 June where NATO leaders discussed Russia and issued a communiqué, affirming NATO support for Ukraine and its commitment to continue to respond to the deteriorating security environment by enhancing NATO's deterrence and defence posture, including by a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. The Prime Minister also hosted the G7 Leaders' Summit on 11-13 June, where leaders called on Russia to stop its destabilising behaviour and malign activities, which followed G7 Foreign Minister statements regarding Ukraine on 18 March and 12 April.

■ South Asia: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas:

[\[16784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the progress made on the covid-19 vaccine roll-out in (a) India, (b) Sri Lanka and (c) Nepal to date; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

According to the World Health Organization, as of 17 June 2021: 238,840,635 vaccine doses have been administered in India; 2,377,211 in Sri Lanka; and 2,861,314 in Nepal, which includes doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. I refer the Honourable Member to my answer to PQ 16785 for information on support the UK has provided to the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[16785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the covid-19 vaccine roll-out in (a) India, (b) Sri Lanka and (c) Nepal; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK has championed the importance of rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are among the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), committing £548 million, which through match-funding leveraged \$1 billion from other donors in 2020. This support has been critical to COVAX's distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to over 130 countries and economies, including India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and support for countries to assess vaccine introduction readiness, develop detailed national deployment and vaccination plans, and strengthen delivery systems. The UK has

also committed to sharing 100 million vaccine doses by June 2022, with the majority going to COVAX.

In India, the Foreign Secretary launched the UK-India Vaccines Hub in December 2020, which has expanded collaboration between our two countries on vaccine trials, regulation, and vaccination strategies. Our two vaccine task forces are in regular contact, discussing the acceleration of the vaccine programme, target groups, dose intervals, and the best strategies to increase vaccine confidence.

In Nepal, we have provided expert support to the Ministry of Health and Population's COVID Rapid Response Plan, including by designing warehouses in all seven provinces suitable for vaccine storage. UK funded experts have also supported the government of Nepal with its vaccine deployment plan, budgeting, and vaccine roll out information management.

■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Overseas Aid

Ruth Jones:

[\[17838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the allocation of UK aid to sub-Saharan Southern Africa.

James Duddridge:

All UK aid spend is closely monitored and evaluated, with published annual reviews to assess programme performance. Final 2020-21 spend will be published in Statistics on International Development in the autumn this year and will contain detailed breakdowns of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend for that period. The former Department for International Development's 2019-20 departmental report sets out the effectiveness of UK aid for that period, including in Africa. The Independent Commission for Aid Impact also exists to scrutinise aid spending.

In 2021-22 we have prioritised our aid to be more strategic and remain a force for good across the world. Following a thorough review, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate of COVID-19. FCDO will spend around half its bilateral ODA budget in Africa, where need is most acute, continuing to provide essential humanitarian assistance, including to those worst affected by conflict and COVID-19. We will support African countries to tackle climate change, deliver improvements to education, promote economic development, undertake conflict resolution and stabilisation, and develop more open, inclusive societies.

■ Tigray: Armed Conflict

Alyn Smith:

[\[16957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the relevance of (a) the Responsibility to Protect doctrine

and (b) the UK Government's Protection of Civilians policy to the ongoing situation in Tigray.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government has been at the forefront of the international response throughout the conflict in Tigray, engaging directly with the Government of Ethiopia, and that of Eritrea, to press for protection of civilians, unfettered humanitarian access and an end to the conflict, in line with our approach to protection of civilians and commitment to Responsibility to Protect. We have continued to engage core international partners and raise concerns in international fora, most recently through the G7 leaders' communique of 13 June. We have also raised the issue in UN Security Council open discussions on conflict and famine, the annual Open Debate on Protection of Civilians, in five 'AOB' items on the UNSC agenda, and the Interactive Dialogue of the UNSC of 16 June. The UK's longstanding position is that any determination of genocide is an issue for competent courts, rather than governments. Our focus is always on securing an end to violence and protecting civilians.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Brain: Tumours

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[19608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on funding for brain tumour research.

Edward Argar:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) programmes, studies and trials were paused. However, the NIHR's funding competitions remained open throughout, including for brain tumour research. Funding continues to be invested through the NIHR to support a wide range of research from early translation or experimental medicine, through clinical, and applied health and care research.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Emma Hardy:

[\[18560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to allow patients to choose which type of the covid-19 vaccination they receive.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There are no plans to do so.

Theresa Villiers: [\[19514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will commission research to establish whether covid-19 vaccinations work effectively for people who have received kidney transplants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: As part of the COVID-19 Immunity National Core Study, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is providing initial funding of £1.8 million for 12 months towards the OCTAVE study. The OCTAVE study will examine the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in clinically at-risk groups, including patients with certain immunosuppressed conditions, including renal transplant patients.

Public Health England has been monitoring the effectiveness of vaccinations in clinical risk groups including those with immunosuppression.

From the evaluation of the vaccine programme, the data shows that completion of the two dose schedule correlates well with protection from both disease and severe outcomes.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Training

Philip Davies: [\[19545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Written Statement of 15 December 2020, HCWS652, on Unconscious bias training, what steps he has taken to phase out unconscious bias training in his Department.

Edward Argar:

The Civil Service is committed to maintaining a strong focus on diversity and inclusion. This includes deploying a range of evidence-based interventions but where the evidence does not support its continued use, as is the case with unconscious bias training, we have removed from our mandatory training.

In line with advice and guidance from Civil Service Human Resources, we provide training that focuses on inclusion.

■ Edgware Community Hospital: Mental Health Services

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[16087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of the adequacy of the services provided to young people using mental health services at the Beacon Centre at Edgware Community Hospital.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Following a quality review by Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust, in October 2020 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out an unannounced inspection of its Beacon Centre. As a result of this inspection, the CQC's overall rating of the Beacon Centre changed from 'good' to 'requires improvement'. The CQC's report is available at the following link:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RRP/report>

The Trust's improvement plan, already in place prior to the CQC's visit, has since been strengthened following the recommendations made in their report. The unit has remained in internal mandated support by the Trust since July 2020. In May 2021, the CQC undertook a further unannounced visit to the unit in to assess progress made against its recommendations and the CQC intends to publish their report in mid-July.

■ **Medical Records: Data Protection**

Emma Hardy: [\[18558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of of adapting the NHS opt-out system to allow patients to consent to data being shared within the NHS but not with third-parties.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Data Opt Out in its current form was established in 2018 on the recommendation of the National Data Guardian and following development by the National Data Opt Out Implementation Board, which included user-testing. This concluded that a single opt out question was preferable.

■ **Mental Health Services: Young People**

Zarah Sultana: [\[18607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of funding a network of early support hubs for young people to access mental health support.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is investigating the early access model of support, but there are no present plans to create a network of early support hubs across the country. There are currently around 60 'hubs' in England which feature early intervention and prevention services. They are locally designed and funded and often provide several services such as sexual health clinics or careers advice. Clinical commissioning groups and local authorities work with local partners to understand local needs and commission services on that basis.

■ **NHS Trusts: Finance**

Rachael Maskell: [\[19624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason Trusts that do not reach nationally set activity level thresholds are not able to access the Elective Recovery Fund.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: For the first half of 2021/22, all systems are funded for a baseline value of activity. The Elective Recovery Fund provides systems with access to additional funding to deliver activity beyond that which is already funded.

The thresholds allow for the impact of the pandemic and are set against a baseline of activity in 2019/20. Systems delivering activity below the lower thresholds will not see a negative adjustment to their core funding.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the continuity of covid-19 public health restrictions, if will he make an adjustment to the activity level thresholds that NHS Trusts must reach in order to access the Elective Recovery Fund.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: We are monitoring the activity level thresholds for access to the Elective Recovery Fund and will review and adjust where necessary.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Finance

Alex Sobel:

[\[19665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the consistency across the UK of the provision of emergency cash payments by accommodation providers to asylum seekers during the transition of the Aspen card contract.

Alex Sobel:

[\[19666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people who were entitled to receive asylum support that did not have a functioning Aspen card on (a) Monday 24 May, (b) Friday 28 May and (c) Friday 4 June 2021.

Alex Sobel:

[\[19667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the resources available to the Migrant Help service to meet demand (a) during and (b) after the transition of the Aspen card contract.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: Emergency cash payments (ECPs) are a longstanding operational contingency provision in place for several years.

ECPs have been used to support service users who had issues with their Aspen card over the transition period. All accommodation providers have been instructed to ensure ECPs are provided to those in critical need of support during this period. Their use has been further adapted to meet the demand and remove barriers to authorisation which allow swift deployment.

Those who have issues or are unsure how they can activate their cards are able to contact the 24/7 Migrant Help helpline. There was an initial spike in relation to the volume of calls during the first week after going live, however the number of calls to

Migrant Help has since reduced. Migrant Help also maintained the availability of their webchat and the Raise and Issue communication channels.

Migrant Help increased staffing numbers to support service users in the weeks ahead of the new service going live and thereafter during the transition. Additionally, during the transition to the new payment provider, there was an out of hours operational team working alongside Migrant Help to ensure ECPs could be provided to those who required a payment. Migrant Help continue to be the first point of contact to support service users in relation to any issues faced regarding asylum support.

Fully functioning Aspen cards, including translated instructions on how to activate them, were distributed to all service users via first class post prior to the transition date of 24 May. The majority of eligible card holders had completed this activation process by 24 May and have had access to funds via their card.

However, some card holders had yet to successfully activate their card by this date. As part of the transition of services we are working with our new card service supplier PFS to enhance data and understand the reasons behind the residual cards which are yet to be activated.

In addition, our accommodation and advice service providers are working closely to target support to all such service users to encourage and assist with those who are still yet to activate their cards. This includes ensuring subsistence support remains available through access to Emergency Cash Payments where appropriate and replacement cards are issued where delivery problems are reported to us.

It is not currently possible therefore to provide an accurate breakdown of the reasons some cards have not been activated or what proportion of this is due to a delivery issue.

Our latest available management information suggests the following approximations for the activation of cards:

- As of 28/05 – approximately 73% of service users has activated their card
- As of 04/06 – this figure rose to approximately 83%
- As of 22/06 –over 93% of service users had activated their new Aspen card

It should be noted these figures have been taken from a live operational database and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard.

We continue to work with strategic delivery partners to ensure all cards are successfully received and activated with the appropriate service users being targeted for assistance.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals**Bambos Charalambous:** **[16928]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to provide local authorities with reliable demographic data to support their efforts in relation to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) in the '[EU Settlement Scheme statistics](#)'.

Data on the number of applications and concluded applications by UK local authority are published in Tables EUSS_LA_01, EUSS_LA_02 and EUSS_LA_03 of the quarterly EUSS statistics local authority tables ([EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

This data is broken down by the applicants nationality, age and type of decision for each UK local authority.

Additionally, the Home Office has conducted surveys of Local Authorities in England, Wales and Scotland and of Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland to provide a more accurate estimate of the number of looked after children and care leavers eligible to apply to the EUSS.

The results from the latest survey with figures up to 23 April 2021 can be found at:

[EU Settlement Scheme – Home Office looked-after children and care leavers survey 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Drew Hendry: **[19621]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the statutory parenting duties and responsibilities the Government has in respect of looked after children and care leavers and the vulnerabilities and challenges they may face, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that (a) looked after children and (b) legally recognised care leavers (i) have completed applications to the EU Settlement Scheme and (ii) are not affected by (A) late and (B) missed applications.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: The Home Office is committed to continuing to engage with local authorities as they undertake their responsibilities to ensure all eligible looked after children and care leavers are supported to make an application to the EUSS. The Home Office will ensure caseworkers liaise with and support applicants to get the status they deserve.

The Home Office remains focused on ensuring all eligible children in care apply in time. It's recognised however, this vulnerable cohort can change over time, with new children coming into care. We are committed to working with Local Authorities to ensure this work continues after the deadline.

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreement, there remains scope, indefinitely, for a person eligible for status under the EUSS to make a late application to the scheme where there are reasonable grounds for their failure to meet the deadline applicable to them.

Where a Local Authority has failed by the relevant deadline to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme on behalf of a child under the age of 18, this would constitute reasonable grounds for the child – including where they are now an adult – to make a late application to the scheme when they become aware of this, for example when they first need to demonstrate their right to work in the UK.

■ Immigration: Hong Kong

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[16920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to offer a route to settlement for Hong Kong people, who, primarily through having been born after the 1997 handover, are not British National (Overseas) (BNO) status holders and are ineligible for the BNO visa.

Kevin Foster:

The Hong Kong BN(O) route is for those with BN(O) status and their eligible family members including adult children who were born after 1 July 1997 and who live with their parents. We do not currently have any plans to change these requirements.

Those not eligible for the BN(O) route can consider other UK immigration routes. For instance, individuals from Hong Kong can apply under the terms of the UK's new Points Based System, which will enable them to come to the UK in a wider range of professions than in the past.

There is also the existing youth mobility scheme which is open to those aged between 18 and 30 and offers a two-year grant of leave in the UK. There are 1,000 places currently available each year for people from Hong Kong.

■ Manual Workers: Vacancies

Ben Bradley:

[\[16942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that unskilled labour vacancies are being filled since the UK left the EU.

Kevin Foster:

The Department for Work and Pensions should be the first port of call for employers seeking to fill vacancies, rather than the Home Office.

We do not view any job as "unskilled", the difference is how long it takes to train for or gain the necessary qualifications for it. Where a job needs only a short period of training or time to acquire the qualifications necessary the focus should be on recruiting from the domestic labour market, especially given the economic impact of the global pandemic means many may be looking for new employment or to change careers.

Immigration policy cannot be seen as an alternative to improving training and career pathways or tackling issues such as unattractive pay and working conditions. Given this we will not be introducing a general migration route allowing employers to recruit at or near the minimum wage, with no work-based training requirements.

More broadly, the Government's Plan for Jobs is helping people across the country retrain, build new skills and getting back into work as part of the UK's recovery from COVID-19, with the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy leading work on the overall UK labour market and skills.

■ Visas: Innovation

Sir Graham Brady: [\[16789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any further Endorsing Body Status applications will be granted by her Department while the review into the Innovator Route is being conducted.

Kevin Foster:

We are currently considering whether to continue accepting applications from prospective endorsing bodies whilst the review is ongoing and will publish details on Gov.uk shortly.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Free Zones

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[17016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made in establishing freeports in England.

Luke Hall:

The Government is actively working with the eight successful Freeport locations announced at Budget to support delivery of the policy. Subject to confirming their governance arrangements and business case approval, the first are planned to open for business in late 2021.

■ Levelling Up Fund: Scotland

Alyn Smith: [\[17841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much and what proportion of funding under the Levelling Up Fund his Department has allocated to Scotland.

Luke Hall:

The Levelling Up Fund is a competitive fund, with funding distributed to places across the UK on the basis of successful project 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 the Fund, at least 9% of total UK allocations will set aside for Scotland, as well as 5% for Wales, and 3% for Northern Ireland.

Further detail on future rounds of the Fund will operate from 2022-23 onward will be set out later this year. For these future rounds, the parameters of the Fund as set out in the prospectus will be kept under review, and updated where appropriate to reflect operational feedback and wider changes in Government policy.

■ Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission

Jackie Doyle-Price: [\[16843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the planned lifespan is of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission; and what its budget is per annum.

Luke Hall:

The Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission was announced at Budget 2016. The Growth Commission was tasked with developing a vision and delivery plan for the Thames Estuary up to 2050. With this task complete, the Commission has disbanded.

Government has backed the Growth Commission's recommendation to reform governance in the Estuary, and has supported the establishment of the Thames Estuary Growth Board. The first Estuary Envoy, Kate Willard, was appointed on 30 October 2019 to chair this Board. The Thames Estuary Growth Board formally launched on 21 July 2020

The Thames Estuary Growth Board's overall budget was £1.4 million in 2020/21. The Growth Board's operating budget for 2021/22 is subject to business case approval.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Alyn Smith: [\[17840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the Government's policy is on ensuring that funding under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is comparable to the funding provided under EU Structural Funds.

Luke Hall:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK.

Funding for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will at least match receipts from EU structural funds, on average reaching around £1.5 billion per year. Its funding profile will be set out at the next Spending Review.

To help local areas prepare over 2021-22 for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, we are providing additional funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: North East

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[16800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to deploy UK Shared Prosperity Fund funding in the North East.

Luke Hall:

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

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

In addition, to help local areas prepare over 21/22 for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, we are providing additional UK funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund to support our communities to pilot programmes and new approaches.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: China

Peter Dowd: [\[16873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many of her Department's staff are based in the UK's consulates and embassy in China.

Greg Hands:

Based on the department's staffing data at 30th April 2021, the Department for International Trade has 188 staff based in China (including Hong Kong). This figure includes one member of staff working for UK Export Finance (UKEF).

■ Import Controls: China

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: [\[16783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 16 June 2021, Official Report, what progress her Department has made on implementing import controls on goods from China to the UK which are believed to be the product of forced labour including in the supply chain.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

On 12th January, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary announced a series of measures to help make sure that British businesses and the public sector are in no way complicit in violations of rights and responsibilities in Xinjiang.

This included a review of export controls to make sure we are doing all we can to prevent the export of goods that may contribute to such violations. This review is ongoing and we will report its outcome to Parliament in due course.

Import controls and export controls are governed by different processes and legislation. HM Government has only announced plans to review export controls. We do not have plans to place import controls on goods from China at present.

Trade Agreements: Australia**Zarah Sultana:**[\[17867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department has taken to remove investor-state dispute settlement from the UK-Australia Free Trade Deal.

Greg Hands:

The UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement Investment chapter will not include Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). In light of the UK-Australia investment relationship, the UK and Australia decided that it was not necessary to include ISDS.

JUSTICE**Abortion: Drugs****Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[16902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress has been made by the Midlands Coroner investigating the case of abortion pills being used at home at 28 weeks gestation in May 2020.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice has responsibility for coroner law and policy but individual local authorities have operational responsibility for coroner services. Progress in the investigation of the case is a matter for the Senior Coroner concerned.

Civil Proceedings**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[16842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to amend English common and tort law to ensure that the *ex turpi causa non oritur actio* doctrine is applied against plaintiffs in all cases.

Alex Chalk:

The *ex turpi causa non oritur actio* doctrine operates in English law so that a claimant will be unable to benefit through the courts for a legal action should it arise from their own illegal act, or an act contrary to public policy. The doctrine is often applied by

courts in tort cases to bar recovery by a claimant on public policy grounds – it is an important common law principle that prevents illegality or acts contrary to public policy from being used for personal gain.

There is a separate common law doctrine of illegality, which is subject to its own rules, and may operate to deny or limit recovery. Most claimants will not, however, have committed an illegal act. In such cases, the *ex turpi causa* doctrine is available to the defence or can be raised by the court of its own motion.

The principle is working in practice and as such, there are no current plans to reform the law.

■ Ministry of Justice: Tribunals

Rachael Maskell:

[\[16892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what is the average time taken between a claimant (a) submitting a tribunal case to appeal a decision made by his Department, (b) having a hearing and (c) receiving an outcome in (i) York and (ii) England in the latest period for which that data is available.

Chris Philp:

Information about the average time from submitting an appeal to hearing is not held centrally.

Waiting times are calculated from receipt of an appeal to its final disposal. An appeal is not necessarily disposed of at its first hearing. The final disposal decision on the appeal may be reached after an earlier hearing had been adjourned (which may be directed by the judge for a variety of reasons, such as to seek further evidence), or after an earlier hearing date had been postponed (again, for a variety of reasons, often at the request of the appellant). An appeal may also have been decided at an earlier date by the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS), only for the case to have gone on to the Upper Tribunal, to be returned once again to the First-tier, for its final disposal.

The data requested at c) (i) and (ii) are available up until March 2020 and are published at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics

The latest period for which data about SSCS are available is January to March 2021. However, they do not include SSCS venue level data due to issues previously identified as the Tribunal was being migrated to a new operational system. The issues are now resolved, and the more granular level data will be made available as soon as they have received further quality assurance.

■ Prison and Probation Service: Digital Technology

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[17712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data and Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021,

what estimate he has made of the cost of implementing the 2024 vision set out in that strategy.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data and Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the cost of implementing the 2024 vision set out in that strategy.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data and Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021, which nine prisons will have in-cell technology implemented in 2021-2.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data & Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021, what estimate he has made of the revenue cost savings for HMPPS of implementing the (a) 2021-2 commitments and (b) 2024 vision.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data & Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021, how many additional closed prisons are planned to complete their roll-out of in-cell telephony in 2021-2.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data & Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021, by what date all youth custody estates will have implemented in-cell technology.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data & Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021, what the timescale is for the reprocurement of (a) prison video calling software and (b) video conferencing in probation.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Digital, Data and Technology Strategy, published on 15 June 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on re-offending of implementing the (a) 2021-2 commitments and (b) 2024 vision set out in that strategy.

Alex Chalk:

The work being undertaken in 21/22 has been funded from within our SR20 settlement. Future funding will be subject to the upcoming Spending Review.

The work being undertaken in 21/22 has been agreed within current funding. Future funding will be subject to the upcoming Spending Review.

Within 2021-22, In Cell Technology will be implemented at 11 Adult prisons; Lindholme, Ranby, Stokeheath Styal, new Hall, Garth, The Mount, Swaleside, Erlestoke, and refreshed at Berwyn and Wayland.

Part of the work being carried out in 21/22 is the measuring the impact of the implementation of the work, in particular in relation to in-cell technology and digital services. This will inform our understanding of any savings for future years.

We will install in-cell telephony in additional 16 closed prisons by the end of March 2022.

By Mar-22, all YCS sites will have implemented In Cell Technology (Cookham Wood, Feltham, Wetherby and Werrington).

The reprourement process for the Prison Video Calling software (which will allow families to contact prisoners with video calling software) completed last week (w/c 14 June). A preferred supplier has been identified and all bidders have been informed. We expect to sign the contract with the preferred supplier on week commencing 28 June 2021 and for the decision communicated publicly after this point.

The current contract under which video conferencing for Probation is provided will continue for another two years. During this time, the provision for future video conferencing will be competed and we will be publishing a procurement pipeline in July 2021 which describes our plan for this.

It's our intention to continue to provide tools and services that are simpler, clearer and faster to use, which we anticipate will free front line staff up to spend more time with those on custodial sentences and under supervision in the community. We continue to work on how to best evaluate the impact of the strategy and the digital and technology implementation in prison and probation.

■ Prisoners' Release: Females

Sarah Champion:

[\[16854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of appointing designated prison officers to act as brokers for housing in women's prisons.

Alex Chalk:

We are committed to doing all we can to address the issues around female offending. It is vital that we do so to better protect the public and deliver more effective rehabilitation. This includes supporting women when they are leaving prison.

As part of our commitment to eliminate rough sleeping, we are working across Government with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Welsh Government and Other Government Departments, to address the barriers offenders face in securing suitable accommodation.

In January, we announced a £70 million investment in accommodation and wider support for prison leavers to cut crime. An integral aspect of that announcement related to the appointment of specialist housing advisor role in up to twenty prisons, four of which are female prisons: HMPs New Hall, Peterborough, Bronzefield and Styal. These specialists will act as brokers for prisoners so that they can get quicker access to accommodation services as they are released.

These specialists will seek to improve accommodation outcomes for those being released from prison by strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders to identify and unlock any barriers which prevent access to related services or accommodation on release. In addition, they will work with both prison and probation staff to raise understanding and knowledge of housing legislation and issues, including any specific challenges female offenders face accessing accommodation.

We are investing more than £20m in supporting prison leavers at risk of homelessness into temporary accommodation. Individuals released from prison will be provided up to 12 weeks of temporary accommodation and will be supported into long-term settled accommodation before the end of that 12-week period. Initially launching in five national probation regions, the service will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year and will be commencing in Summer. It will be in operation during the next financial year 2021-22, with a view to scaling up and rolling out nationally, though the Spending Review 2021 will set out the approach for future years.

The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) scheme was launched in the women's estate on 30th April 2021. The bespoke model recognises the different challenges and opportunities of working with women where self-harm and complex needs are of significant concern. Both key work and case management time will be allocated to women based on their level of need in addition to their risk of harm. Women with the most need will receive an enhanced offender management service, with additional engagement time between Prison Offender Manager (POM) and prisoner taking place.

■ Prisoners' Release: Housing

Sarah Champion:

[\[16853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support will be provided for vulnerable women housed as part of his Department's new temporary accommodation service for prison leavers.

Alex Chalk:

We are investing more than £20m in supporting prison leavers at risk of homelessness into temporary accommodation. Individuals released from prison will be provided up to 12 weeks of temporary accommodation and will be supported to secure long-term settled accommodation before the end of that 12-week period. Initially launching in five probation regions, the service will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year and will be commencing later this Summer. This service will

be in operation during this financial year 2021-22, with a view to scaling up and rolling out nationally, though the Spending Review 2021 will set out the approach for future years.

The service will take account of the needs of women, including those with complex needs and accommodation provision will be dedicated to single gender usage as required. Community Probation Practitioners, working together with local partners, will be responsible for ensuring that vulnerable female prison leavers receive appropriate support and are provided with housing beyond the 12 weeks emergency accommodation.

Commissioned Rehabilitation Services are due to start delivery on 26 June 2021 which includes services to assist in accommodation; employment training and education; financial benefit and debt; and personal well-being. These provide a holistic service for all women leaving prison by providers based in the community they are released to. The accommodation service and mentoring service both start pre-release. The mentoring service aims to support those who lack social support make the transition from prison to community and assist in building social networks.

■ Prisoners: Females

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what is the length of the (a) median and (b) mean prison stay in days for inmates at each women's prison in the last three years.

Alex Chalk:

The table below shows the total number of prisoner releases, mean and median time served in prison in days, by releasing prison establishment, for all female prisons in England and Wales, 2018 to 2020.

Prison	2018			2019			2020		
	Total releases	Mean time served (days)	Median time served (days)	Total releases	Mean time served (days)	Median time served (days)	Total releases	Mean time served (days)	Median time served (days)
Askham Grange	119	490	382	100	523	425	94	765	601
Bronzefield	1,091	91	41	973	94	47	662	128	61
Downview	291	394	259	195	534	410	166	603	450
Drake Hall	332	403	279	318	402	240	282	464	323
East Sutton Park	120	457	321	97	633	538	76	701	550

	2018			2019			2020		
Eastwood Park	965	107	55	877	124	61	590	148	69
Foston Hall	518	121	44	393	135	45	333	193	63
Low Newton	480	180	76	405	244	90	273	210	90
New Hall	627	203	67	680	181	64	510	200	81
Peterborough (Female)	776	101	51	661	125	50	471	142	62
Send	133	580	413	126	618	454	95	754	507
Styal	907	149	58	760	146	61	536	190	75

Source: Prison NOMIS System, PQ 17706 (Ministry of Justice; DASD-DES)

Notes:

1. The information in this table shows the mean and median time served in days across all prisoner releases from each releasing prison. It includes times spent on remand. It is important to note that prisoners may not have spent the bulk of their sentence in the releasing prison and may have been transferred between prisons during their sentence.
2. The figures in this table has been drawn from administrative IT systems which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

■ Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[17707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement, Lord chancellor takes immediate action to move children from Rainsbrook published on 16 June 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of converting the Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre site to a secure 16 to 19 academy.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[17708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement Lord chancellor takes immediate action to move children from Rainsbrook published on 16 June 2021, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of permanently closing the Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre site.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement Lord chancellor takes immediate action to move children from Rainsbrook published on 16 June 2021, what plans he has for the future of Oakhill Secure Training Centre.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement Lord chancellor takes immediate action to move children from Rainsbrook published on 16 June 2021, what his timetable is for making a decision on the future of the Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre site.

Alex Chalk:

Following ongoing concerns relating to staffing, safety and on-site operational grip, we have taken the decision to transfer all children at Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre (STC) to alternative secure accommodation as soon as possible. Work is underway to transfer all children in the coming weeks. We have taken this action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children at Rainsbrook STC, which remains our priority.

In addition to these immediate actions, we are also considering the future of the centre. A further announcement will be made in due course, once ongoing discussions with the provider have concluded. Whilst the long-term ambition of the department is to replace Young Offender Institutions and STCs with secure schools, the decision to transfer children from Rainsbrook has no bearing on future plans for Oakhill STC.

TRANSPORT

■ Railways: Season Tickets

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[17019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department has made in introducing flexible rail season tickets.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As announced on 20 May alongside the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, the Government is introducing new flexible season tickets across England this year, with the new tickets going on-sale on 21 June, and becoming available for use on 28 June. A new season ticket calculator is available for passengers to check the best value option for their travel plan.

■ Railways: Speed Limits

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[17811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to increase running capacity on train lines in the South East to above 100mph.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Currently no infrastructure plans exist to increase line speeds beyond 100mph on the Southeastern network.

■ **Roads: Standards****Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[17023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve the condition of England's roads.

Rachel Maclean:

In addition to investing £1.7 billion in 21/22 into local roads plus an unprecedented £27 billion into the strategic road network through to 2025, the Department is working towards the creation of a common data standard for the monitoring of road condition. This will aim to drive innovation and flexibility in monitoring local roads and enable authorities to target defects in their networks more quickly. Further information, including a Departmental position paper, will be published shortly.

■ **Transport: Planning****Simon Fell:**[\[17846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to work with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to identify opportunities for combined transport and planning policies, including the potential merits of the 20-minute walkable neighbourhood, to encourage walking, cycling and public transport use.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

My Department is working closely with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government on the forthcoming planning reforms to deliver on our commitments in Gear Change and Bus Back Better to ensure that walking, cycling and public transport are the first choice for journeys.

■ **Transport: Standards****Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[17024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve cross-UK transport links.

Rachel Maclean:

Sir Peter Hendy is carrying out the independent Union Connectivity Review, which will report later this year.

■ **Walking: Finance****Selaine Saxby:**[\[17892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Written Statement of 25 March 2021, HCWS891 on Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2 (CWIS2) and the target on walking stages set in the first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy having

been met, whether he plans to set a new strengthened target to support walking in the CWIS2.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS 2) will be published after the Government has agreed its long-term spending plans for active travel at the Spending Review later this year. It will reflect and build on the vision and commitments outlined in the Prime Minister's "Gear Change" Cycling and Walking Plan of July 2020, as well as setting out the financial resources available for cycling and walking and the other matters required by the Infrastructure Act 2015. The Department will consult with relevant stakeholders to develop objectives for both walking and cycling as required by the Act, and will ensure that these objectives are consistent with the Gear Change vision that half of all journeys in towns and cities should be walked or cycled by 2030.

TREASURY

■ Business: Infrastructure

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[17012\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to incentivise businesses to invest in new equipment or infrastructure.

Kemi Badenoch:

Stimulating business investment will be key for our economic recovery.

Under the super-deduction we announced at Budget 2021, for every pound a company invests in qualifying plant and machinery, their taxes are cut by up to 25p.

We have also just launched the new UK Infrastructure Bank, which will partner with the private sector and local government, supporting more than £40bn of infrastructure investment overall.

■ Motor Vehicles: Taxation

Darren Henry:

[\[17869\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has plans to reconsider the taxation of historic cars so that the date the law is calculated from is the registration date on the V5 document rather than the date the car was manufactured.

Kemi Badenoch:

In recognition of the important role that historic vehicles play in the country's heritage, the Government announced at Budget 2014 that it would introduce a rolling 40-year Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) exemption. This means that from 1 April each year, vehicles constructed 40 years before the 1 January of that year are automatically exempt from paying VED.

The Government uses the construction date of the vehicle as the main eligibility criteria for this VED exemption as it is most suited for determining the age of the

vehicle. However, where a vehicle's construction date is not provided on the vehicle's record, the date of first registration is used to determine the vehicle's eligibility for the exemption. There are no current plans to amend the basis of this VED exemption from vehicle construction date to vehicle registration date, but as with all taxes, VED is kept under review.

■ Treasury: Correspondence

Rachael Maskell: [\[16898\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how long on average his Department has taken to respond to letters from (a) Labour hon. Members and (b) hon. Members of other political parties in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Kemi Badenoch:

The information is not available in the form requested.

Between 1 June 2020 and 15 June 2021, Treasury Ministers answered 11,949 of the 21,220 MP Correspondence (56.31%) sent to the Department within the Cabinet Office 20 working day deadline.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Females: Equality

Marsha De Cordova: [\[14209\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to implement the recommendations for G7 GEAC in the UK, specifically with reference to (a) targeted pandemic response and recovery plans that take account of the needs of women and girls, (b) strengthened public investment in social care infrastructure, including childcare to tackle gender imbalances in paid and unpaid care work and (c) steps to end violence against women and girls through increased investment in prevention and response and the ratification of relevant conventions.

Elizabeth Truss:

The UK is using our Presidency of the G7 this year to champion women's and girls' rights at home and around the world, with the independent Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) bringing solutions, expertise and new voices to the heart of G7 discussions.

The GEAC presented its recommendations to G7 Leaders at the G7 Leaders' Summit this month, with a strong call to action so women can build back better. In the coming months, the GEAC will produce a report setting out their recommendations in further detail.

We have rolled out unprecedented levels of economic support to protect jobs for both women and men, including the Self Employment Income Support Scheme which has received nearly 2.1 million claims from self-employed women, as of January 31 2021.

As we look to build back better, we can see that COVID-19 has given us an opportunity to reform our approach to work, and we are committed to further encourage flexible working and consult on making it the default.

We recognise the pressures faced by those balancing work with caring responsibilities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we know that often the majority of these pressures fall on women. This Government continues to support families with their childcare costs and we have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on early years entitlements, and last November the Chancellor announced a £44 million investment in 2021-22 for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers. At the election last year, we pledged a new £1 billion fund to create more high-quality affordable childcare, including before and after school and during the school holidays. We will be publishing a new Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls strategy in 2021 to better target perpetrators and support victims of these crimes, and appointed Nimco Ali OBE as the Independent Government Adviser on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls.

I will shortly be saying more about the action the Government is taking to ensure women can build back better in the recovery.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Emma Hardy:

[\[19660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average timeframe is for Access to Work applications to (a) be allocated an advisor, (b) have evidence gathered and (c) reach a resolution.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested about average timeframes for Access to Work applications for allocations, evidence gathering and reaching resolutions for people who have applied for support from Access to Work is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Training

Philip Davies:

[\[19544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Written Statement of 15 December 2020, HCWS652, on Unconscious bias training, what steps she has taken to phase out unconscious bias training in her Department.

Guy Opperman:

Standalone unconscious bias training ceased within the Department at the end of December 2020.

■ National Insurance

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[17703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce the time between a British passport holder (a) applying for and (b) receiving a National Insurance number.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has recently developed a digital service which enables employment inspired National Insurance Number (NINo) applications to be made on-line, removing the need for the majority of applicants to attend a face to face appointment.

Due to the suspension last year of the employment inspired NINo service, because of Covid 19 restrictions, demand for the NINo service is extremely high. The average time taken to process applications, including British Passport holders, is around 10/12 weeks. The Department is currently recruiting and training additional staff to reduce these waiting times.

■ Pension Credit

Feryal Clark: [\[17876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to increase the uptake of pension credit.

Feryal Clark: [\[17877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to ease the application process for pension credit and make the service accessible.

Guy Opperman:

The Government wants to make sure that all eligible pensioners claim the Pension Credit to which they are rightly entitled. DWP continues to use multiple ways to reach those who can claim. Amongst other things, on 16 June, DWP joined forces with Age UK, Len Goodman, Rustie Lee and the BBC to help reach those who may be reticent about claiming Pension Credit. The aim was to renew our efforts to raise awareness of Pension Credit, encouraging people to check their eligibility and make a claim.

On 17 May, DWP Ministers hosted a roundtable event attended by a range of stakeholders who have an interest in pensioners' financial wellbeing, to explore opportunities on getting information about Pension Credit to pensioners and their family members.

We have recently updated our online toolkit which provides a range of ideas and support which stakeholders can use with their customers to encourage take-up of Pension Credit. Two new videos specifically target key messages aimed at pensioners as well as their family members and friends.

Our Pension Credit pages on gov.uk have recently been updated, drawing attention to how Pension Credit can provide extra money as well as a range of other help for

pensioners who get it. The online claim facility we introduced last year, further enables family, friends and organisations to help pensioners make a claim.

This year, over 11 million pensioners in Great Britain received messaging about Pension Credit with their annual State Pension up-rating letter which also highlighted that an award of Pension Credit can mean being eligible for other benefits such as Housing Benefit or a free over-75 TV licence.

■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Rachael Maskell: [\[16890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what is the average time taken between people (a) submitting a mandatory reconsideration and (b) receiving an outcome in (i) York and (ii) England in the latest period for which that data is available.

Rachael Maskell: [\[16891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of mandatory reconsiderations have overturned the initial decision for each eligible benefit in (a) York and (b) England in each of the last 12 months.

Justin Tomlinson:

Information on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessment (WCA) Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) clearances are available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/personal-independence-payment-statistics>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-and-support-allowance-outcomes-of-work-capability-assessment>

Additional breakdowns of the figures, including by Region, Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency, are available on Stat-Xplore for PIP MR outcomes and ESA WCA MR outcomes and clearance times:

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

Guidance for users is available at:

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

PIP MR clearance times for financial year 2020-21 are shown in the table below. Additional figures by Region, Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency, are available in the tables released with the PIP publication referenced above, specifically Tables 4B(i) and 4B(ii).

	PIP MR CLEARANCE TIME (MEDIAN CALENDAR DAYS)
England	40
York Local Authority	43
York Central Parliamentary Constituency	41

Source: PIP Computer System claimant records

Notes:

- Each PIP claim can have more than one MR registered against it.
- Includes MRs against claims classified as 'normal rules' at point of registration
- Based on clearance times from point of registration to the date the MR was cleared

To provide information across all other DWP administered benefits would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Social Security Benefits: British Nationals Abroad

Ruth Jones:

[19678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps her Department has taken to support UK citizens overseas through the welfare system.

Justin Tomlinson:

Certain UK benefits can be paid overseas, some for temporary periods and others for longer depending on whether the UK has a social security agreement with a country. Generally, benefit abroad rules apply regardless of nationality, with some exceptions as in the case of the common travel area. For more information see:

<https://www.gov.uk/claim-benefits-abroad>

Updated guidance for UK nationals in the EEA and Switzerland can be found at the following page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/benefits-and-pensions-for-uk-nationals-in-the-eea-or-switzerland>

Country specific advice can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/overseas-living-in-guides>