



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 15 July 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:44 P.M., 15 July 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Animal Experiments

Mike Amesbury:

[\[28309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of holding a public scientific hearing on animal experimentation.

Amanda Solloway:

The use of animals in research is carefully regulated and remains important in ensuring new medicines and treatments are safe. At the same time, the Government believes that animals should only be used when there is no practicable alternative and it actively supports and funds the development and dissemination of techniques that replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved primarily through funding for the National Centre for the 3Rs, which works nationally and internationally to drive the uptake of 3Rs technologies and ensure that advances in the 3Rs are reflected in policy, practice and regulations on animal research.

■ Consumer Goods: Electrical Safety

Jamie Stone:

[\[31520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of adopting as Government policy the recommendations of Electrical Safety First's campaign on (a) improving the regulation of electrical goods on online marketplaces and (b) bringing the regulation of those goods on online marketplaces into line with the regulation of those goods on the physical high street.

Paul Scully:

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

Existing laws require that all consumer products, including electrical goods sold online, must be safe before they can be placed on the UK market. The national product safety regulator, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), and Local Authority Trading Standards have powers to take action against manufacturers, importers or distributors who sell unsafe consumer products through online marketplaces.

The OPSS also actively identifies products available online that pose a serious risk, ensuring that non-compliant products being sold by third-party sellers are removed from sale. Between February and April 2021, OPSS interventions led to the

withdrawal and recall of more than 5,000 unsafe products previously listed and available in the UK via online marketplaces.

The OPSS is currently conducting a review of the UK's product safety framework, including in relation to e-commerce, to ensure it remains fit for purpose, protects consumers, and enables businesses to innovate and grow. Through the review, officials are engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure we have the broadest possible evidence base to inform future policy. This includes Electrical Safety First who participated in recent roundtable discussions on the review.

The Government issued a public Call for Evidence to support the review which closed on 17 June. Officials are currently reviewing the evidence received and we will publish a response in due course.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Scotland

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[31275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of the Scottish Government's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) reform proposals that aim to ensure that EPCs are an indicator of energy efficiency, heating emissions and cost; and whether his Department has made an assessment of the viability of implementing such reforms throughout the UK.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As we continue to deliver the commitments within the EPC Action Plan, and develop policies that rely on EPCs as a measure of energy performance, we will monitor and assess relevant material such as the Scottish Government's EPC proposals, to inform our decision-making in these areas.

■ Heating: Costs

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[31276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that the cost of heat pumps is reduced in the short and medium term.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We expect the upfront costs of heat pump installations to reduce significantly as the scale of the UK market grows in line with the Government's ambition for 600,000 heat pump installations per year from 2028.

We are taking a range of steps both to support the heat pump market to develop and to support consumers with the costs of installing a heat pump in the near term while the market builds. These include, for instance, the planned Clean Heat Grant and the Future Homes Standard, which will ensure that new homes are future-proofed with low-carbon heating from 2025.

We will set out further plans for developing the heat pump market in the Heat and Buildings Strategy.

■ Heating: Housing

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[31277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to support low income households with the higher running costs of air source heat pumps compared to traditional gas boilers.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is planning to publish a *Heat and Buildings Strategy* in due course. This will include information on the Government's approach to the transition to low carbon heating through a comprehensive policy package comprising targeted regulatory, market-based and public investment measures.

■ Heating: Manufacturing Industries

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[31278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the supply chain for the creation of air and ground source heat pumps is located in the UK, rather than abroad.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Our plans to scale up heat pump deployment provide a huge opportunity to expand the UK heat pump manufacturing base and exploit future export potential. Published last year, our Heat Pump Manufacturing Supply Chain Research Project indicated that the heat pump market could be worth £5.5 billion to the UK economy by 2035.

In order to help accelerate investment in UK heat pump manufacturing capability and capacity, we are setting clear long-term policy through our forthcoming Heat and Buildings Strategy. The Government is also providing cross-sector fiscal support, including expanded export finance facilities, funding to support training in low-carbon technologies and manufacturing through the National Skills Fund, and a 130 per cent super-deduction capital allowance on qualifying plant and machinery investments. In addition, officials in BEIS, together with colleagues from the Department for International Trade, are working closely with heating appliance manufacturers to provide business investment support.

UK-based heat pump manufacturers – like Mitsubishi Electric, Kensa, Clade Engineering Systems, Star Renewable Energy, Global Energy Systems, Big Magic International – are investing to meet growing demand in the UK and internationally, and Vaillant recently announced plans to expand their UK boiler manufacturing facility in Belper, Derbyshire, to produce heat pumps from 2022. This demonstrates that the UK is an attractive place to invest and to do business.

■ Innovation: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[31331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding from the public purse the Government plans to disburse in Northern Ireland through the Net Zero Innovation Portfolio in each of the next three years.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Net Zero Innovation Portfolio (NZIP) is open to all regions of the UK, including Northern Ireland. The Government's £1bn investment in innovation through the NZIP will support levelling-up and will support the best ideas and organisations, wherever they are based.

All grants through the programme will be awarded on the basis of fair and open competition. As a result, we cannot determine how much grant funding will go to any particular region.

■ Iron and Steel: Procurement

Jessica Morden:

[\[31360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that companies which receive Government support on the basis of procuring 40 per cent or more of their steel content from the UK meet those obligations.

Nadhim Zahawi:

It is important that suppliers continue to be treated equally and fairly through open competition. Keeping our procurement market open to international competition facilitates UK suppliers being offered reciprocal rights to participate in procurements abroad.

We have established a joint industry and BEIS Steel Procurement Taskforce (launched on 12 March) with the aim of working with the sector to promote the unique selling points of UK steel and explore how best to support and position the industry for success in forthcoming major public contracts.

■ Minimum Wage: Young People

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[31330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of young people who will benefit from the increase in the national minimum wage announced in April 2021.

Paul Scully:

Through the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage, the Government protects the lowest paid within our society. On 1 April 2021, the Government increased the minimum wage rates for all age groups. Young people and apprentices saw above inflation increases in the National Minimum Wage rates of between 1.5% and 3.6% on 1 April 2021. In addition, the reduction in the National Living Wage age

threshold from 25+ to 23+ gave an extra 71p per hour to those aged 23 and 24 – the largest individual increase for this group ever.

Our best estimates suggest that over 300,000 workers aged 16-24 benefitted from the rise in the National Minimum Wage. This consists of under 100,000 23-24 year olds, over 100,000 21-22 year olds, approximately 90,000 18-20 year olds and around 20,000 16-17 year olds. Furthermore, around 30,000 Apprentices of all ages also received a pay rise as a result of the April 2021 uprating.

Further details on the impact of the rate increases on young people are contained in the 2021 Impact Assessment [here](#).

■ Monopolies

Chi Onwurah: [\[31400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department has taken to put safeguards in place to ensure transparency and accountability with regard to competition in the Premier League and other monopoly-run sectors.

Paul Scully:

An Independent Fan Led Review of Football Governance chaired by my Hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford is underway with its work. It is a root-and-branch examination of football in this country, looking at the financial sustainability of the football pyramid, governance regulations, and the merits of an independent regulator. It will also consider the current Owners' and Directors' test, and the transparency and accountability of that process.

Under competition law, responsibility for investigating individual and market-wide competition issues falls to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the UK's competition authority. The Government has ensured that the CMA has significant powers and expertise to investigate and take action against businesses that abuse dominant positions in markets, for instance, by unfairly excluding competitors or exploiting consumers. In the regulated sectors, these competition powers are also exercisable by the relevant sector-specific regulators. The CMA may also carry out detailed examinations of why particular markets may not be working well and take remedial action to fix features of markets which restrict competition. Most sector-specific regulators in monopoly sectors have a legal duty to promote competition for the benefit of consumers (or equivalent).

■ Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries

Wera Hobhouse: [\[31509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will allow an extension of the use of CE markings for pyrotechnics to avoid any potential disruption to the UK automotive industry following the UK's departure from the EU.

Paul Scully:

We are working closely with the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ensure that a UK approved body is accredited as soon as possible. We are also aware that pyrotechnics bodies are currently engaging with UKAS and are in the process of getting accredited.

■ Natural Gas: Housing**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[31279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the Government's timeframe is for implementing a prohibition on the connection of new-build homes to the gas grid.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

When it is implemented in 2025, the Future Homes Standard will deliver new homes that are zero carbon ready, with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. In the 2020 Energy White Paper, we also committed to consulting on the feasibility of ending the connection of new build homes to the natural gas grid, in favour of clean energy alternatives. We expect to consult on this commitment later this year to gather further evidence before taking a decision.

■ Nuclear Power**Virginia Crosbie:**[\[31568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help develop advanced nuclear technology within the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Virginia Crosbie:[\[31569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his Department's policy paper entitled 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published on 18 November 2020, what progress he has made on delivering the programme for Advanced Modular Reactors within the timeframe as set out by the Government.

Virginia Crosbie:[\[31570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support his Department is giving to the UK's nuclear energy sector to help that sector deliver the Government's programme for advanced nuclear technology.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

This Government is committed to progressing new nuclear projects, including advanced nuclear technologies, to help decarbonise the UK energy system. In his Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced an up to £385 million Advanced Nuclear Fund to invest in the next generation of nuclear technologies. The Advanced Nuclear Fund includes up to £215 million to develop a domestic Small Modular Reactors (SMR) design and up to

£170 million for an Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) research and development programme, with an aim to build an AMR demonstrator by the early 2030s.

We are also committed to supporting the wider UK nuclear energy sector to help deliver advanced nuclear technologies to market. That is why, in addition to the Advanced Nuclear Fund, we have committed to invest in the nuclear regulatory frameworks and support UK supply chains.

In May 2021, we published new guidance for Advanced Nuclear Technologies to apply to enter the Generic Design Assessment (GDA). GDA allows the UK's independent nuclear regulators to assess new reactor designs and provide the confidence that these new designs are capable of meeting the UK's statutory regulatory requirements.

■ Nuclear Power: Job Creation

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[31571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential opportunities for creating new, highly-skilled jobs in Wales through the development of advanced nuclear technology.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We recognise the highly skilled jobs Advanced Nuclear Technologies could create in local communities across the UK, in construction, manufacturing and support services.

We are also delighted by the recent announcement that the National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) will be opening its first formal base in North Wales at the Menai Science Park (M-Sparc) in Anglesey. This announcement demonstrates their commitment to driving nuclear innovation, investment and the employment of a skilled workforce in Wales.

■ Retail Trade: Visual Impairment

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[29096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that retailers are using payment card reader technology that is accessible to people who are blind or partially-sighted.

Paul Scully:

The disability provisions in the Equality Act 2010 require providers of services and facilities to the public to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that disabled people are not placed at a "substantial disadvantage" compared to non-disabled people.

The reasonable adjustment duty is an anticipatory duty because it is owed to disabled people in general. This means that people who provide goods, services and facilities to members of the public are expected to anticipate the requirements of disabled customers and the adjustments that may have to be made for them.

The Act has reinforced the legal responsibility for all businesses to cater for disabled customers—and this includes accepting a chip and signature card. Retailers who take card payments are obliged to accept chip and signature cards.

Anyone who feels that they may have suffered unlawful discrimination may wish to contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service, which offers free advice to people across, England, Scotland and Wales. The service can be contact by Freephone on 0808 800 0082 or via its website at <https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/>.

■ Service Industries: UK Trade with EU

Matt Western:

[902806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support trade in services with EU countries.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to supporting UK businesses to adjust to our new relationship with the European Union. We continue to signpost businesses and trade associations to information on how to best adapt to the changes through a variety of means.

We have published GOV.UK guidance to support businesses providing services to the EU, EEA and Switzerland. This includes enhanced guidance on Member States' immigration systems providing UK business travellers with a better understanding of visa and work permit requirements (www.gov.uk/government/collections/travelling-to-the-eu-switzerland-norway-iceland-or-liechtenstein-for-work) and a tool which UK businesses can use to check for relevant reservations as they sell services to customers in EU member states (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-eu-trade-and-cooperation-agreement-reservations>).

We will continue to work closely with businesses, including with the Professional Business Services sector, to gather insights and to ensure the Government continues to provide businesses with the support they need in our new trading relationship with the EU.

■ Vauxhall Motors: Iron and Steel

Jessica Morden:

[31359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of Vauxhall on the use of UK steel at its sites in Ellesmere Port and Luton.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Where the UK steel industry produces the relevant grade steel this is utilised in Stellantis/Vauxhall manufacturing plants. However the company uses multiple grades of steel, not all of which are available in the UK.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Cabinet Office: Contracts**

Angela Rayner: [\[31419\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to recommendations of the Review into the Development and Use of Supply Chain Finance (and associated schemes) in Government, whether his Department has created a (a) centralised contract register for the Department and (b) log of declarations of interest in relation to contracts; and how many of his Department's staff have completed data protection training for owners of declaration logs.

Julia Lopez:

The Cabinet Office is progressing work on creating a contract register and a log of declarations in relation to contracts. Both, along with the necessary data protection training, are expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS■ **Churches: Housing and Public Buildings**

Michael Fabricant: [\[31286\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, with reference to the article by the Revd Marcus Walker, Rector of the Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great, London, entitled, Is this the last chance to save the Church of England, published in the Spectator on 10 July 2021, what assessment the Church has made of the implications for its policies of the (a) findings of Revd Walker and (b) potential merits of proposals to create 10,000 new lay-led churches in the next 10 years in private homes and public halls.

Andrew Selous:

The Reverend Dave Male, Director of Evangelism and Discipleship for the Church of England, addressed the inaccuracies in The Spectator and subsequent articles, in a statement issued on 8th July: "I am very aware that some recent commentary in media and social media purporting to set out the future direction of Church of England has caused real anxiety, hurt and pain to many. Some of this has been based on a fundamental confusion between the Church of England's own emerging Vision and Strategy for the 2020s and beyond, which we will be discussing at the upcoming meeting of General Synod, and a separate initiative called Myriad to create 10,000 new lay-led churches - which is not a national Church of England project. It has been claimed in some places that there is a plan to dissolve the parish system, sideline or even replace trained clergy, especially paid clergy, or to get rid of our beautiful, historic church buildings. So I want to make it abundantly clear that the Church of England is committed, now as always, to the ministry of the whole people of God including to ordained ministry in our parishes." The full statement can be read

here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/news-releases/clergy-and-parishes-heart-church-england-now-and-future>

In his presidential address and in the subsequent debate on Vision and Strategy at the July General Synod, the Archbishop of York said that the Church needed more, not fewer vocations to ordination and that the limiting factor was the lack of vocations, not the valuable work of serving clergy across the country, of all forms of ministry.

The Archbishop of York's presidential address can be read at <https://www.archbishopofyork.org/news/latest-news/presidential-address-general-synod-july-2021> and his presentation on the Vision and Strategy is here: <https://www.archbishopofyork.org/news/latest-news/vision-and-strategy-address-general-synod-july-2021>

More information about Vision and Strategy itself can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/emerging-church-england/vision-church-england-2020s>

Parishes remain at the heart of the Church of England's mission and ministry to the nation and the Church is delighted that growing numbers of people are answering the call to the priesthood. This year 591 clergy have committed themselves to ordained ministry within the Church, the largest number in over thirteen years. More information about vocations can be found here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/news-releases/recommendations-stipendiary-ordained-ministry-training-highest>

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Private Education

Emily Thornberry:

[31358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 July 2021 to Question 23128 on Armed Forces: Private Education, how much funding his Department allocated to the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) to fund places at Millfield School in the financial year (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19 and (d) 2019-20; and how many places were funded through the CEA in each of those financial years.

Leo Docherty:

Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) assists Service personnel to achieve continuity of education for their children that would otherwise be denied in the state-maintained day school sector due to the mobility of their family. CEA is available to all Service personnel, irrespective of rank, subject to them satisfying the qualifying criteria. Service personnel may select from a wide variety of schools across the UK from within the independent and state-maintained sectors that meet set criteria. Each claimant is required to contribute at least 10 per cent of the fees at independent schools.

The cost to Defence of CEA funding places at Millfield School (Preparatory and Senior) and the number of places supported during Financial Years (FY) 2016-17 to 2019-20 was as follows:

	FY		MILLFIELD PREPARATORY		MILLFIELD SENIOR
	£million	Places	£million	Places	
2016-17	0.213		13	0.654	31
2017-18	0.208		19	0.617	28
2018-19	0.210		13	0.570	26
2019-20	0.143		9	0.617	26

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ BBC: Reform

Janet Daby:

[\[30412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the BBC's reporting on Sir Cliff Richard in 2014 and the BBC's rehiring of Martin Bashir, if he will make an assessment of the BBC's effectiveness in delivery of reforms under the Charter.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The BBC has a duty to deliver impartial and accurate news coverage and content under its Royal Charter.

It is for the BBC Board to ensure that BBC output meets the highest standards the public expects and for Ofcom to hold the BBC to account on its delivery against the Mission and Public Purposes set out in 2017.

However, in light of the findings of the Dyson Report, the Secretary of State has said that the BBC needs to improve its culture to ensure similar events never happen again which means a new emphasis on accuracy, impartiality and diversity of opinion.

The government will therefore reflect on Lord Dyson's thorough report and any changes made following the review being conducted. We will then consider whether further governance and regulatory reforms at the BBC are needed in the upcoming mid-term Charter review.

■ **Broadband: Voucher Schemes**

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[31361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason his Department has recently changed the value of vouchers on the Community Fibre Partnership from the value that was originally agreed.

Matt Warman:

Community Fibre Partnerships are an Openreach product that they use on our Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS). Openreach operates the Community Fibre Partnership (CFP) Scheme all over the UK and they use this as an aggregation platform to gather initial contact details and 'pledges' (Openreach term) for communities who want to improve their broadband. The particular costings of a CFP scheme are determined by Openreach, but since the launch of the GBVS, Openreach has encouraged communities to use the voucher funding provided by the government to pay for the cost of installing the network to rural communities.

We are investing up to £210 million in vouchers over the next three years. The new voucher's value matches that of our previous scheme, £1,500 for homes and £3,500 for businesses, which has already successfully transformed connectivity for communities across the country with 72,000 vouchers issued worth £137 million.

If you are referring to a particular project in your constituency my officials would be happy to investigate this for you, but in order to do so they would need a Pre-Registered Package (PRP) number associated with the voucher project.

■ **Newcastle United Football Club: Takeovers**

Chi Onwurah: [\[31395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions (a) he has and (b) officials of his Department have had with the Premier League on the process in respect of last year's takeover of Newcastle United; and whether he has taken steps to ensure transparency in that process.

Chi Onwurah: [\[31397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Premier League on the need for (a) transparency and (b) accountability in decision-making that impacts football fans.

Chi Onwurah: [\[31398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the absence of express reference to the arbitration of Premier League decisions from the terms of reference of the Fan Led Review of Football, whether processes for arbitration will be considered as part of that review; and whether it is his policy that the arbitration process should be transparent and accountable.

Chi Onwurah:[\[31399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he plans to take to ensure transparency and accountability to football fans on decisions relating to takeovers of football clubs.

Nigel Huddleston:

Football clubs are the heart of local communities, they have unique social value and many possess a great history. It is vital they are protected.

It has always been for the Premier League alone to make assessments of potential acquisitions of football clubs in its League, under its Owners' and Directors' Test.

The Terms of Reference for the Fan Led Review set out the scope of the review and the expectation for the Chair to liaise closely with fans to ensure their interests and experiences are at the heart of the review.

The review is well underway and it is a thorough examination of football in this country, looking at the financial sustainability of the football pyramid, governance regulations, and the merits of an independent regulator. It will also consider the current Owners' and Directors' test, and the transparency and accountability of that process.

The Secretary of State and I have recently met with the Premier League and EFL to discuss the future of the national game, including governance, and will continue to work with them as the review progresses.

■ Television: Streaming**Justin Madders:**[\[29819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of subtitles on catch up TV platforms.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises that as part of a digitally inclusive society, television content should be accessible for all UK audiences. The Digital Economy Act 2017 introduced new provisions to the Communications Act 2003 giving the Secretary of State the power to establish new accessibility requirements - including subtitling - for on-demand providers.

Ofcom published further recommendations on 9 July 2021, following a request made by this Government and a public consultation. We will give careful consideration to these and will set out next steps in due course.

■ Youth Services**Stuart Anderson:**[\[29138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of open-access youth services.

Matt Warman:

As part of the Youth Review, announced in the 2020 Spending Review, we are assessing the level of provision of youth services across England. Findings from the Youth Review will be published at the time of the 2021 Spending Review.

The Youth Investment Fund remains a Manifesto commitment, designed to achieve levelling up across the country over the course of this parliament. In the 2020 Spending Review, £30 million of this was committed to the fund as capital investment for 2021-22. This will provide investment in new and refurbished safe spaces for young people in left behind places, so that they can access youth workers, and enjoy beneficial activities outside of school, including sporting and cultural pursuits. Plans for the remainder of the Youth Investment Fund will be announced at the 2021 Spending Review, based on findings from the Youth Review.

EDUCATION■ **Children: Advocacy****Tulip Siddiq:**[\[31487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's announcement in March 2020 that the national standards for the provision of children's advocacy services would be revised, when he plans for the public consultation on those revisions to be launched.

Vicky Ford:

The government is committed to ensuring that advocacy services are improved for looked-after children and care leavers.

The commitment to consulting on a revised and fully updated version of the National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services is being taken forward and we intend to launch the consultation in due course.

■ **Free School Meals****Rachael Maskell:**[\[31456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he is taking steps to provide families access to food over the school summer holidays for children (a) currently in receipt of free school meals and (b) who become eligible for free school meals over the summer period.

Vicky Ford:

Schools provide free school meals for eligible pupils during term time. Beyond that, billions of pounds of welfare assistance is in place to support families, young people and children.

The COVID Local Support Grant, established by the Department for Work and Pensions and operated through local authorities in England, is there to support the hardest hit families and individuals with food and essential utility costs. This grant has

been extended for a final time, with a further investment of £160 million, to cover the period up to 30 September 2021.

This grant is further to the £269 million invested since the scheme (previously known as the COVID Winter Grant Scheme) launched in December 2020.

The funding remains ring-fenced, with at least 80% targeted to assist with food and bills, and at least 80% for families with children. Local authorities have discretion to decide how to allocate government funding in their areas, recognising that they are best placed to understand local needs. Local authorities have the flexibility within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility.

Further guidance on the COVID Local Support Grant is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-local-support-grant-guidance-for-local-councils/covid-local-support-grant-extension-21-june-to-30-september-2021-guidance>.

Further to this, the department announced the significant expansion of the holiday activities and food programme, which provides healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children. It will operate in every local authority across England this summer – backed by up to £220 million. It builds on previous programmes, including last summer's, which supported around 50,000 children across 17 local authorities.

■ **Holiday Activities and Food Programme: North East**

Mr Richard Holden:

[31562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding (a) Durham County Council and (b) each other council in the North East has received from the Holiday Activities and Food programme in 2021.

Vicky Ford:

The department-funded holiday activities and food (HAF) programme, which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children, has been expanded to every local authority across England this year and is backed by up to £220 million of funding. It builds on previous programmes, including last summer's, which supported around 50,000 children across 17 local authorities.

Durham County Council has been allocated a maximum of £2,532,180 to deliver HAF programmes over Easter, summer, and Christmas 2021.

The maximum allocations for the other councils in the North East are as follows:

Darlington - £519,040

Gateshead - £902,440

Hartlepool - £664,030

Middlesbrough - £1,143,010

Newcastle upon Tyne - £1,846,420

North Tyneside - £896,960

Northumberland - £1,128,130

Redcar and Cleveland - £743,920

South Tyneside - £831,630

Stockton-on-Tees - £980,900

Sunderland - £1,491,000

Further to this, the Department for Work and Pensions has extended the COVID Local Support Scheme (previously the COVID Winter Grant Scheme) for every English council, to the 30 September, with an additional £160 million.

■ Remote Education: Older People

Ed Davey:

[\[31285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to improve the quality of digital education for elderly people in the UK during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

For adults (19+) with low-level or no digital skills, we have introduced a legal entitlement to study new Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs) at entry level and level 1 for free. EDSQs are a new qualification type, based on new national standards for essential digital skills, which will provide adults with the digital skills needed for life and work. The new digital entitlement mirrors the existing legal entitlements for English and maths and sets digital skills on an equal footing in the adult education system to English and maths, as a third basic skill.

The government is committed to making essential digital skills provision more accessible and flexible by building on the innovation in online learning implemented during the COVID-19 outbreak, ensuring that all adults can gain essential digital skills at a time and place that suits them.

We also continue to support the provision of basic digital skills training in community learning settings through the Adult Education Budget. This provision has strong participation from older learners.

The Skills Toolkit was created in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, primarily to help give workers who had been furloughed or were at risk of redundancy an opportunity to retrain. However, the courses are accessible to all and include free, high quality digital and numeracy courses.

Courses on offer cover a range of levels, from everyday maths and tools for using email and social media more effectively at work, to basic digital skills offered by Lloyds Bank, the Open University and Microsoft.

As of 30 May 2021, there have been an estimated 219,000 course registrations via The Skills Toolkit.

■ Special Educational Needs: Reviews

Cat Smith: [\[31450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2021 to Question 23236 on Special Educational Needs: Reviews, whether the system experts referred to in that Answer are the Chair of the SEND System Leadership Board and its independent advisors; and if he will list those system experts.

Vicky Ford:

The special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Review is working with system experts and other government departments across education, health and care to ensure that there is balanced input and representation from across the SEND system. The system experts referred to in the answer to Question [23236](#) include Tony McArdle, the Chair of the SEND System Leadership Board and wider Board members.

It also includes those system experts which the review has most recently engaged with as part of its policy development, which include but are not limited to: Association of Directors of Childrens Services, Confederation of School Trusts, Council for Disabled Children, Local Government Association, National Network of Parent Carer Forums, National Multi-Academy Ttrust (MAT) CEO Network for Alternative Provision and SEND, Office of the Children's Commissioner, and Ofsted.

■ Universities: Remote Education

Bill Wiggin: [\[31332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that university students return to face-to-face learning when covid-19 restrictions are lifted on 19 July 2021.

Bill Wiggin: [\[31333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of remote learning during the covid-19 outbreak on university students' mental health.

Bill Wiggin: [\[31334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of students learning remotely during the covid-19 outbreak on educational outcomes for university students.

Bill Wiggin: [\[31335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he is taking steps to ensure that universities that continue to teach remotely after 19 July 2021 offer a reduction in fees to their students.

Bill Wiggin: [31336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of face-to-face learning in universities.

Bill Wiggin: [31337]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of universities who intend to continue teaching their students remotely after 19 July 2021.

Bill Wiggin: [31338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department plans to take to help support the return of face-to-face learning at universities in the context of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

In line with Step 4 of the government's roadmap, there will be no further restrictions on in-person provision in the autumn term. Higher education (HE) providers are therefore able to shape their courses without restrictions on face-to-face provision. The position will be kept under review considering the latest scientific evidence and public health advice. The latest advice can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

Furthermore, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to education leaders on 8 July 2021, setting out plans as we move towards Step 4. This included the government's expectation that HE providers offer students a full, enriching and enjoyable experience, whilst staying as safe as possible. The letter is available to read here: <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/08/a-letter-from-the-education-secretary-to-education-leaders/>.

HE providers should therefore not be planning to restrict teaching based on COVID-19 restrictions. However, as autonomous institutions it is for providers to determine their own provision, taking account of government guidance. We understand that a number of universities have announced plans on teaching in the next academic year: some will retain an element of blended learning. We know that the COVID-19 outbreak has enabled many providers to identify new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, and students will continue to benefit from these alongside in person provision. We expect all universities to act in the interest of students and provide them with a full experience and in accordance with Office for Students guidance, which can be found here:

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

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

HE providers are autonomous institutions and are responsible for setting their own fees within maximum fee limits set by the regulations, where applicable. The

government has already announced that maximum fees in the 2021/22 academic year will remain at £9,250 for a standard full-time course. We also intend to freeze the maximum tuition fee caps for the 2022/23 academic year to deliver better value for students and to keep the cost of higher education under control – the fifth year in succession that maximum fees have been frozen.

Whether an individual student is entitled to a refund of their tuition fees depends on the specific contractual arrangements between the provider and student. Students do have consumer rights, and it is for them to decide whether to seek to exercise these.

We recognised early on the impact the COVID-19 outbreak could have on students' mental health and wellbeing, and we asked universities to prioritise support for this. Universities responded positively and have transformed mental health and wellbeing services. There are many examples of good practice in this area. Many universities have been actively reaching out to vulnerable students to proactively offer additional support.

We have worked closely with the OfS, to provide up to £3 million to fund the mental health platform Student Space. We have asked the OfS to allocate an additional £15 million towards student mental health, through proposed reforms to strategic priorities grant funding.

Going forward, HE providers should continue to be innovative in how they identify issues and support their students. This includes identifying appropriate technology to flag potential issues and enable students to engage in a variety of ways. As a government, we will continue to review the situation and our support in this area.

■ Universities: Sexual Offences

Rachael Maskell: [\[31460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle levels of sexual violence and misconduct among the student population.

Rachael Maskell: [\[31461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support he is providing to universities to help ensure that they have effective policies and practices to (a) prevent and (b) tackle incidences of sexual violence and misconduct among students or staff.

Rachael Maskell: [\[31462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to make funding available for additional welfare services for universities to support students or staff who have been subjected to sexual violence or misconduct.

Rachael Maskell: [\[32450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional support to universities to help prevent and tackle incidences of sexual violence and misconduct in university settings.

Michelle Donelan:

Any form of harassment, violence or sexual assault is abhorrent and unacceptable anywhere in society, including in our universities which should be safe and inclusive environments. I have been clear that sexual harassment is in no way tolerable on our campuses and online environments. The government urges university leaders to ensure a zero-tolerance approach to all harassment and sexual misconduct and to ensure they have robust systems in place for reporting incidents where they do occur.

The Office for Students (OfS) statement of expectations on harassment and sexual misconduct was published on 19 April and is a useful tool for providers. As part of its next steps on harassment and hate crime, the OfS will now be considering options for connecting the statement of expectations to its conditions of registration. The OfS wrote to providers on 10 June, asking them to review and update their systems, policies and procedures in line with the statement of expectations on harassment and sexual misconduct by the beginning of the next academic year. I have made it clear that the government sees the OfS statement as the minimum that providers should be doing to keep students safe from sexual harassment and misconduct, and to handle reported incidents appropriately when they do occur.

I also wrote to the sector on 2 July reasserting the government's firm expectations that providers take a zero-tolerance attitude towards sexual harassment and that they have robust policies and procedures in place to address it when it does occur. This includes giving urgent consideration to the OfS request to update their systems and procedures before the beginning of next academic year. I detailed the way in which the government will legislatively tackle the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in relation to workers and employers. I also outlined that I have asked my officials to explore options for going further in this area in higher education (HE). The use of NDAs in relation to sexual violence, harassment and misconduct is wholly inappropriate.

I was extremely concerned that many of the deeply disturbing testimonies that continue to be posted on the 'Everyone's Invited' website reference experiences within HE settings. I met with the founder of Everyone's Invited in June, to discuss tackling sexual harassment in HE. I also met with Universities UK (UUK) to discuss this issue, including their existing guidance for providers in this area. I understand they are preparing guidance on staff to student sexual misconduct, which they will publish in the coming months.

On 10 June Ofsted published its review into sexual abuse in schools and colleges. Whilst HE was not part of the Ofsted review, many of its findings can inform our work. One of the most important findings of the review is the prevalence of sexual harassment and online sexual abuse. As such, Ofsted recommends that schools act as though sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports. I have been clear that I want to see HE providers taking the same approach – the issue needs urgent action to ensure it is appropriately addressed.

I know that sexual harassment and misconduct is an area that for several years HE providers, the OfS and sector bodies have been working together on. In 2015, UUK set up a taskforce on harassment at the request of government. Since 2016, a total investment of £4.7 million, match funded by HE providers, has been invested by the OfS and its predecessor, funding 119 safeguarding projects. £2.45 million of this was given to 63 projects specifically focused on tackling sexual and gender-based violence in HE. In my recent letter to the sector, I highlighted that it may also be timely to revisit the resources produced by these OfS-funded projects relating to this area, available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/student-safeguarding-evaluation-and-resources/>.

All HE providers should discharge their responsibilities fully and have robust policies and procedures in place to address harassment, making sure that HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone. We expect providers to ensure that students continue to have access to support services, and complaints processes, during the COVID-19 outbreak, to ensure they are able to report any issues. I will continue to work across government to ensure that sexual harassment is stamped out of our world leading HE sector.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Flood Control: Shrewsbury

Daniel Kawczynski:

[31365]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what further flood defences his Department plans to provide to Shrewsbury in the long term to avoid a repetition of flooding experienced in that area.

Rebecca Pow:

From April 2021, the Government is investing a record £5.2 billion in a new six-year capital investment programme to deliver around 2,000 flood schemes, benefitting every region of England, and will better protect 336,000 properties from flooding.

The details of the new six-year Capital Investment Programme for the River Severn Catchment are currently being developed by the Environment Agency in partnership with all other Flood Risk Management Authorities, including Shropshire Council.

The Environment Agency has recently completed an initial assessment of which further flood risk management measures for Shrewsbury may meet the cost benefit requirements for the programme. This includes the initial steps for a project to reduce flood risk in the Coleham area of Shrewsbury.

Last July, the Government announced it was investing £5.4 million of economic recovery funding in a large-scale carbon offsetting and natural flood risk management scheme that will include tree planting and habitat creation to reduce flood risk and capture carbon throughout the Severn Valley.

Across the wider Severn catchment, the Environment Agency continues to progress a pilot for a long-term investment pathway / Adaptation Pathway, thanks to £1.5 million of additional Government funding allocated as part of our Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme. This project will look ahead at least 50 years, to work out what flood defences are necessary in the long-term and when they should be built to avoid unnecessary further investment costs in future and missed opportunities.

■ Forests: Private Sector

Ian Byrne:

[R] [\[31565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) private forestry sector's current stocking density levels and (b) ability of private sector operators to fulfil public contracts without increasing reliance on imported trees.

Rebecca Pow:

We do not keep track of the private sector's current stocking density levels. However, through the England Trees Action Plan, we have set out measures to expand our data on trees, woodlands and forests. This includes establishing a Nursery Notification Scheme which will provide information on supply and demand of different kinds of tree, which will support nurseries and seed suppliers to produce the right stock at the right time.

We do not hold information or make assessments on the ability of private sector operators to fulfil public contracts. However, we are working to increase tree production in our domestic nursery sector through targeted activities supported by the Nature for Climate Fund. This will include capital investment in nurseries to improve the quantity, quality, diversity and biosecurity of domestic tree production. This is necessary to create a resilient, healthy, and genetically diverse planting stock, which is ready for our future climate and grown in the UK. This should encourage further reliance on domestically grown trees.

We know that collaborative engagement with both the public and private forest nursery sector is crucial to enhance nursery production. Through the England Trees Action Plan, we are setting out a roadmap for future engagement, building on what we already have in place. This will allow us to develop collaborative, committed and transparent relationships with the nursery sector that delivers better strategic alignment and enhances plant and seed production further.

Ian Byrne:

[R] [\[31566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the risk of private sector forestry operators bringing foreign plant pathogens to the UK via imported trees.

Rebecca Pow:

From January 2021, trees entering Great Britain from the EU have been subject to third country import requirements and controls on the highest risk products have been

applied. This includes requirements to pre-notify, the need for a phytosanitary certificate to accompany regulated consignments and physical inspections on imports once they have arrived in Great Britain. It was already the case that imported trees from non-EU countries were subject to import controls and risk-based checks at the border. All forestry operators and businesses supplying such operators, including those from the private sector, must comply with these requirements when importing trees or other regulated material.

Plant health risks are continually identified, assessed, and managed by the UK Plant Health Risk Group which includes key experts from within Defra, the Forestry Commission, and across the Devolved Administrations. This analysis, and the underpinning biological and economic data and evidence, is captured by the UK's publicly available Plant Health Risk Register, including how the pest has been or could be introduced into the UK. Over 1200 pests are currently recorded on the Risk Register, and the numbers are increasing. Through this screening process, we are able to identify significant threats and to prioritise our actions and resources accordingly, making evidence-based decisions on whether to regulate the pest and the control measures necessary to protect our crops, trees, gardens and countryside. It is through this mechanism that a number of tree genera are already prohibited from being imported from non-EU sources, with stringent requirements in place for other genera, which must be met before they can be imported.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[31563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what enforcement measures are available to local authority officers to tackle vehicle idling in (a) Air Quality Management Areas and (b) non-Air Quality Management Areas; and whether the Government has plans to review those enforcement powers.

Rebecca Pow:

Under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002, local authorities already have powers to enforce anti-idling laws and issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to drivers leaving engines running unnecessarily.

The enforcement powers available to tackle vehicle idling are available to all local authorities, regardless of whether or not they have an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). It is vital that these powers are used to help deal with local air quality issues where necessary and there are no plans to review these powers.

Within AQMAs, designated local authorities also have powers to carry out roadside testing of vehicle emissions to reduce pollution from road traffic. They can do this where any part of the area is designated as an AQMA in accordance with the legislation. The local authority must apply to the Secretary of State for Transport to be a designated local authority.

Since these powers became available, vehicle technology has moved on significantly. Newer technologies can play a part in addressing idling emissions, such as stop-start technology and low- or -zero-emission vehicles.

■ Tree Planting

Ian Byrne:

[R] [\[31564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of the Wykeham Nursery site in North Yorkshire on Forestry England's ability to fulfil planting targets without increasing reliance on the import of trees to the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

Forestry England manages two nursery sites, one at Delamere in Cheshire and the other at Wykeham in Yorkshire. Following a detailed review of future tree seedling supply needs, Forestry England plan to close Wykeham nursery and to concentrate production at its Delamere facilities. Forestry England is strengthening the resilience of tree supply by investing to adapt to the impacts of climate change and biosecurity challenges.

The nurseries exist primarily to supply trees for Forestry England; the closure at Wykeham will not impact upon current or future tree planting ambitions nationally or by Forestry England. In support of their biosecurity assurance protocols Forestry England only plant trees grown in Britain with Plant Healthy certification.

Forestry England has been proactive in strengthening biosecurity across their operations and were the first locations in which the Plant Healthy audit protocols were tested. Forestry England are working closely with industry partners in encouraging the development of robust biosecurity assurance across the whole tree nursery sector.

Ian Byrne:

[R] [\[31567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that the England Tree Strategy maximises the use of domestically grown British trees and minimise reliance on imports.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to increasing tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this parliament. We published our ambitious England Trees Action Plan on the 18th May which sets out our plans to at least treble tree planting rates in England in support of this, using more than £500 million from the Nature for Climate Fund.

Planting and establishing more domestic trees will play an important role in supporting the green economy, levelling up rural areas and creating thousands of new jobs. Using UK grown timber can reduce our carbon footprint from imports and reduce emissions by replacing carbon-intensive materials.

We committed in the Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan to increase the use of timber in construction, identifying it as key measure in encouraging commercial forestry. Our England Trees Action Plan includes measures to encourage both supply and demand for UK grown timber, including a new Forestry Innovation Fund which will provide financial support to develop innovative timber products, the use of procurement policies to increase public demand for sustainably sourced timber and increase the safe use of timber in construction.

Through the England Trees Action Plan, we are also working to increase tree production in our domestic nursery sector through targeted activities supported by the Nature for Climate Fund. This will build on current facilities and explore innovative ideas and technologies to improve production capacity. This is necessary to create a resilient, healthy, and genetically diverse planting stock, which is ready for our future climate in the UK. This should encourage further development of domestically grown trees and minimise the reliance on tree imports.

■ Waste Disposal: Drivers

Catherine West:

[\[31494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support the Government is providing to local authorities to assist with the appointment of more waste collection vehicle drivers during the shortage of people in that profession.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is in regular contact with the waste sector and local authorities to ensure we have up to date information about current waste collection vehicle staffing levels. We are aware of some current impacts that HGV driver shortages are having on recycling collections and continue to work with the Department for Transport and the other departments involved to consider all the available options.

The Government has already taken action on heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driver shortages, including ramping up vocational test capacity so 3,000 practical tests are available each week. The Government has also confirmed funding of up to £7,000 per apprenticeships for people training to be a lorry driver.

There are also increased incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice across the economy as we recover from the pandemic. Employers will receive £3,000 for new apprentices of any age who join their organisation from 1 April to 30 September 2021.

The Government is also working with industry and supporting job seekers to take roles in the profession.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Andrei Aliaksandrau and Irina Zlobina****Catherine West:**[\[31495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the Belarusian Authorities on the case of Andrei Aliaksandrau and Irina Zlobina following the filing of the charge of treason by the Belarusian prosecuting authorities.

Wendy Morton:

The Government remains deeply concerned by the continuing attacks on media freedom in Belarus. There have been more than 500 reported incidents of persecution of media figures in Belarus since the start of last year's election campaign. The crackdown on regional media outlets in Belarus over the last week highlights the lengths that the regime will go to in order to silence critical voices. The Government has repeatedly called on Belarus to release journalists who have been arbitrarily detained, such as Mr Aliaksandrau and Ms Zlobina, and to hold to account those responsible for attacks on journalists. The Government has increased financial support to independent media organisations in Belarus and has regularly condemned the actions of the Belarusian authorities in international fora. The UK has imposed sanctions in response to the fraudulent election and subsequent human rights violations. As co-chair of the Media Freedom Coalition, the UK continues to raise our voice against the actions taken by the Belarusian authorities against journalists in Belarus, most recently through a Coalition statement on 28 May.

■ Armed Conflict: Children**Wayne David:**[\[31324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in Official Development Assistance spending on the UK's funding for projects to help protect and rehabilitate vulnerable children from armed conflict.

James Cleverly:

The UK is firmly committed to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to protecting all children affected by armed conflict. We demonstrate continued UK diplomatic leadership through our active participation in the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The UK aims to embed the reintegration of children in armed conflict into longer-term development and peacebuilding strategies. The UK also supports a set of instruments that contribute to safeguarding the rights of children in armed conflict, including the Safe Schools Declaration to protect education from attack.

■ Bilateral Aid

Lisa Nandy: [\[31388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much country-specific bilateral Official Development Assistance has been received by each recipient country in each of the last 5 years.

Nigel Adams:

The Statistics on International Development (SID) National Statistics, published on GOV.UK, provides an overview of all UK spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA).

UK ODA figures for 2020 will be published in Autumn 2021, via Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020.

Lisa Nandy: [\[31390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which countries will receive UK bilateral Official Development Assistance in 2021-22; and how much UK bilateral Official Development Assistance has been allocated to each of those countries.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO will publish 2021/22 financial budgets in our Annual Report and Accounts, which are due to be published later this year.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[31362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2012 to Question 25763 on the British Indian Ocean Territory, what the reason and justification is for his policy of ceding the British Indian Ocean Territory to a country (a) without a historic governance relationship and (b) that is not the closest geographical option for governance; and what recent assessment he has made of the options for ceding the British Indian Ocean Territory including (a) not ceding, (b) ceding to Mauritius and (c) ceding to the Maldives.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the territory and we do not recognise its claim. However, the United Kingdom has a long-standing commitment, first made in 1965, to cede sovereignty of BIOT to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. We stand by that commitment, which has been found to be legally binding. Thus no recent assessment has been made of other options for ceding the territory.

■ Developing Countries: Equality

Sarah Champion:

[\[29052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of reductions in the overseas development budget on his ability to fulfil his responsibilities in complying with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014.

Wendy Morton:

Promoting gender equality and advancing women and girls' rights around the world is a priority for the UK Government, and the UK's Gender Equality Act 2014 requires Ministers to have regard to the need to provide assistance in a way which reduces gender inequality before providing overseas development funding and this continues to apply. This is evidenced by our co-hosting of the Global Partnership for Education replenishment, a focus on gender at COP26 and the UK's G7 Presidency, which places gender equality at the centre of our COVID-19 response and recovery.

During the 2021/22 ODA allocation process, the FCDO considered risks and impacts to inform advice to Ministers and an overarching Equalities Impact Assessment analysed impacts across bilateral country spend. The FCDO will continue to champion gender equality and women's rights because that's the only way we will create a fairer, safer and more prosperous world.

■ Hassan Mushaima

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[31474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Bahraini counterpart on the continued detention and wellbeing of Hasan Mushaima.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor and raise the case of Hassan Mushaima and others, as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the Oversight bodies.

■ Jerusalem and Occupied Territories: Israel

Patrick Grady:

[\[30372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the (a) provision of covid-19 vaccines to the entire resident population of the Occupied Territories, (b) demolition orders on houses in the Al-Bustan area of East Jerusalem and (c) restoration of occupied land at Evyatar.

James Cleverly:

The British Embassy Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General Jerusalem are in regular contact with the parties on vaccine access. The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions with the Government of Israel. The Foreign Secretary did so during his visit to the region on 26 May. We are clear that Israeli outposts in the West Bank,

illegal under international law and Israeli law, should be removed entirely. The advancement of settlements across the West Bank should also be suspended immediately.

■ Jovenel Moïse

Catherine West:

[\[31496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse on Haiti and its wider region; and whether the UK Government has offered any resources to assist with the investigation of that assassination or the Haitian security services.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is shocked and saddened at the death of President Moïse. This was an abhorrent act and we continue to call for the perpetrators of this crime to be brought to justice. We are closely monitoring the impact of President Moïse's death on Haiti and the wider region and call for calm and restraint from all sides in order to avoid further instability. The UK has not offered any direct resources to assist with the investigation, nor has the Haitian government requested our aid in doing so. We are working with the UN and international community to support a peaceful, democratic solution for the Haitian people as shown by the UK joining the UN Security Council in a statement on 7 July.

■ Libya: Elections

Wayne David:

[\[31325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential for foreign interference in the process towards free and fair elections being held in Libya in December 2021.

James Cleverly:

Free, fair and inclusive national elections on 24 December 2021, including women's full, equal and meaningful participation, and the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya are top priorities for the UK in Libya. They are captured in UN Security Council Resolution 2570, drafted by the UK as penholder, and unanimously adopted by the UNSC, and in the communiqué agreed by the Berlin II Conference on 24 June at which I represented the UK. The UK is working with international and Libyan partners, including the interim Government of National Unity, to pursue these priorities, restoring Libya's sovereignty and putting the country on a path to sustained security and prosperity.

■ Myanmar: Diplomatic Service

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[31422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has sought accreditation for the new UK Ambassador to Myanmar from the military dictatorship in that country.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is committed to maintaining an Embassy in Yangon which is delivering vital work to deliver our aid programme and support our political objectives. We are only engaging with the military regime where necessary, including on issues connected to enabling the functioning of the Embassy, and on the welfare of British nationals. We do not discuss the details of accreditation requests in specific cases.

■ Nigeria: Human Rights

Hilary Benn:

[\[28965\]](#)

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

James Duddridge:

The UK Government follows developments on human rights in Nigeria closely. We are particularly concerned by the increase in criminal and terrorist violence across Nigeria, which is having an impact on the human rights of those affected, including the right to life. We are also concerned by allegations of serious human rights violations committed by the police and military, including those currently under investigation by the judicial panels of inquiry established following last year's #EndSARS protests. The Nigerian Government's recent decision to ban Twitter is also a troubling development, with an impact on Nigerians' freedom of expression.

Our position on human rights is firm: they are universal and must apply equally to all people. We regularly raise human rights with the Nigerian Government. I [Minister Duddridge] raised issues with the President's Chief of Staff, the Foreign Minister and the Governor of Lagos during my visit to Nigeria in April. We discussed rising insecurity and the importance of ensuring accountability for any human rights violations, including those being investigated by the #EndSARS judicial panels of inquiry. I [Minister Duddridge] have publicly expressed my concern about the recent Twitter ban. We will continue to stress the importance of protecting human rights for all Nigerians, and will continue to support efforts to improve human rights compliance and conditions in Nigeria.

■ Overseas Aid

Damien Moore:

[\[28319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to increase the UK's Official Development Assistance budget to 0.7 per cent of GNI when the UK's fiscal situation allows.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is committed to returning to spending 0.7 per cent of GNI on official development assistance when the fiscal situation allows, and has provided a clear measure for this. The two key tests are (1) When we are not borrowing to support day-to-day spending. That means when the current budget is in surplus. (2) When underlying debt is falling. This is measured by Public Sector Net Debt (excluding the Bank of England) as a percentage of GDP. When these tests are met then the UK Government will increase ODA spending above 0.5 per cent of GNI to 0.7 per cent of GNI. On 13 July, the UK Government provided Members of Parliament the opportunity to debate its proposed course of action and pathway back to 0.7 per cent. The House voted clearly with a majority of 35 votes to approve the approach set out in the Treasury's 12 July Written Ministerial Statement.

Overseas Aid: Education**Layla Moran:**[\[31524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the £15.8 million he announced on 12 July 2021 for education for children is part of the £430 million announced by the Prime Minister at the G7 summit for the Global Partnership for Education.

Wendy Morton:

No, the £15.8 million announced on 12 July for research to support education for children in conflict and crisis settings is not part of the £430 million announced by the Prime Minister at the G7 summit for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

The funding is a separate £15.8 million from FCDO's research budget specifically for research on education in conflict and crisis.

Overseas Aid: Education and Nutrition**Alyn Smith:**[\[29908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what impact assessment his Department has undertaken on reductions in nutrition aid funding on (a) international malnutrition and (b) the Government's aims for girls' education globally.

Wendy Morton:

The FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities as set out in the Strategic Framework for ODA. Officials considered any impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities and people from other protected groups, when developing advice to Ministers on ODA allocations for this financial year.

■ Overseas Aid: Nutrition

Alyn Smith: [\[29905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what meetings he has held with international nutrition aid organisations on changes to the level of funding for international development in 2021 to date.

Wendy Morton:

Due to the seismic impact of the pandemic on the UK economy, the government has had to take tough but necessary decisions, including the temporary reduction in the aid budget from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of national income.

The Foreign Secretary and Ministers have met with a range of organisations, including those that work on nutrition, to discuss funding for international development at a strategic level. Officials have been in touch with FCDO partners to let them know the detail of revised budget allocations for this financial year and will continue to work with them to deliver on our shared objectives.

Alyn Smith: [\[29906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will provide details of the reduction in funding to nutrition based aid programmes, including the Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) Programme.

Wendy Morton:

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

As agreed by the Foreign Secretary, FCDO will focus its ODA investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money.

Alyn Smith: [\[29907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his priorities are for nutrition in the context of the Department's seven priority areas for international development set out in his oral contribution of 26 November 2020, Official report, column 1018.

Wendy Morton:

Addressing malnutrition is important for wider UK objectives to alleviate poverty and to improve health and education in the poorest regions of the world. Our funding in areas such as health and humanitarian response will contribute to this effort. By shifting our focus to empowering partner governments and maximising how multilaterals support nutrition, we will strengthen the health and food systems needed to ensure people are well-nourished now and into the future.

Malnourished people are likely to be more severely affected by COVID-19 and the indirect impacts of COVID-19 are expected to increase malnutrition across Africa and Asia in particular. Prevention and treatment of malnutrition is part of FCDO's

response to address the indirect impacts of COVID-19 in countries such as Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

■ Saudi Arabia: Human Rights

Wayne David: [\[31326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Saudi counterpart on establishing an independent investigation into allegations of sexual assault and torture of human rights activists and other political prisoners in that Kingdom.

James Cleverly:

HMG have consistently raised- both publicly and privately- concern over the allegations of torture. In 2019 and 2020, the UK signed two joint statements at the UN Human Rights Council setting out these concerns. The Foreign Secretary, Minister Cleverly and Lord Ahmad raised the cases of the women's rights defenders in their latest engagements with the Saudi authorities.

■ Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

Tony Lloyd: [\[30316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to reinstate the visit by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, following its deferment from 12 May 2021.

Wendy Morton:

As my Rt Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear during his 2 June phone call with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, he looks forward to meeting her in London soon. FCDO officials are in contact with Ms Tsikhanouskaya's office to agree a mutually convenient date.

■ Yemen: Armed Conflict

Wayne David: [\[31323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the Saudi and Emirati led coalition on ensuring the protection of children during the conflict in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

We regularly raise the importance of complying with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) with the Saudi Arabian Government and other members of the Coalition, including requesting investigations into alleged incidents of concern. The Foreign Secretary raised IHL with Saudi National Security Advisor al-Aiban on 7 June. The UK is committed to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers and protecting all children in armed conflict. We condemn in the strongest terms all grave violations and abuses committed against children in Yemen and urge all parties to the conflict to immediately cease all violations of applicable international law, respect human rights

and exercise restraint. We continue to press all parties to engage constructively with UN-led peace efforts, which is the only way to end the cycle of violence.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Chronic Illnesses: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[27189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings and recommendations of the paper entitled, Moving forward stronger: Addressing deterioration in people with long-term conditions during the pandemic, by the Alzheimer's Society et al, published in June 2021.

Helen Whately:

The Government welcomes the Alzheimer's Society paper Moving forward stronger, and will consider the findings and recommendations carefully.

■ Coronavirus: Contracts

Fleur Anderson: [\[28386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the comments of the second permanent secretary in the departmental minutes of December 2020, what a sub approval is in connection with Government covid-19 contracts.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 12 July 2021]: A reference to a 'sub approval' in this context is referring to Ministerial decisions which take into account advice from officials presented to them in the form of a written submission for approval.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Emma Hardy: [\[25123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the effectiveness of the (a) Pfizer, (b) AstraZeneca and (c) Moderna covid-19 vaccinations at reducing transmission of covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England (PHE) publishes weekly COVID-19 vaccine surveillance reports which include the latest evidence on vaccine effectiveness against different outcomes. The following table shows the latest summary of evidence on vaccine effectiveness against different outcomes, including transmission, for Pfizer/BioNTech and University of Oxford/AstraZeneca as of 1 July.

	OUTCOME		VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS	
Pfizer/BioNTech			Oxford/AstraZeneca	
1 dose	2 doses	1 dose	2 doses	

	OUTCOME	VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS		
Symptomatic disease	55-70%*	85-95%*	55-70%*	70-85%**
Hospitalisation	75-85%*	90-99%**	75-85%*	80-99%** *
Mortality	70-80%**	95-99%**	75-85%**	75-99%** *
Infection	55-70%**	70-90%***	60-70%***	No data
Transmission (secondary cases)^	45-50%***	No data	35-50%***	No data

Source: Table 3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report>

Notes:

1. *High Confidence - Evidence from multiple studies which is consistent and comprehensive
2. **Medium Confidence - Evidence is emerging from a limited number of studies or with a moderately level of uncertainty
3. ***Low Confidence - Little evidence is available at present and results are inconclusive
4. ^effectiveness in reducing symptomatic secondary cases in households of a symptomatic index case

PHE plans to publish vaccine effectiveness data for Moderna when more evidence becomes available.

Anne Marie Morris:

[26109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2021 to Question 6412 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, when his Department plans to publish the vaccine strategy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 7 July 2021]: We are currently reviewing the proposed timetable for publication and we will provide more information in due course.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[28055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of staff employed in care homes in England who have not been vaccinated against covid-19 for (a) clinical reasons and (b) reasons of personal choice including religion, belief and conscience; and if he will make it the Government's policy to compensate people who are dismissed from their employment as a result of regulations requiring those deployed to work in care homes to be fully vaccinated against covid-19.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[28056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his estimate he has made of the number of employees in care homes in England who will face dismissal from their employment as a result of the enactment of regulations prohibiting the deployment of staff in care homes who have not been fully vaccinated against covid-19; whether those staff will be eligible for compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 12 July 2021]: The Department is developing an impact assessment and operational guidance in support of the proposed regulations which will be published in due course. We have no plans to offer compensation.

As of 8 July, 86.2% of staff working in older adult care homes and 82.8% working in younger adult care homes have had their first dose of a vaccination against COVID-19. As of 8 July, 75.1% of staff working in older adult care homes and 71.9% working in younger adult care homes have had their second dose. The Department does not collect data on individuals on the reason they have not been vaccinated.

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[29037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of how British nationals studying abroad may add their inoculation records to the NHS App for when they return to the UK after having been vaccinated against covid-19 in the foreign country where they reside.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The NHS App can only display vaccinations delivered in England. Once a British national returns from abroad, they will need to contact their general practitioner who will have guidance about what can be used to verify that a person has received a vaccine dose and ensure this is represented on their vaccination history.

There are a large variety of COVID-19 vaccines being administered worldwide. Work is ongoing, including with international partners, to determine which non-United Kingdom vaccines can be recognised.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[29082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the proportion of the population yet to be vaccinated who are (a) parents, (b) people working in the hospitality sector and (c) people in other groups potentially exposed to higher contact levels with people infected with covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No specific assessment has been made.

Neale Hanvey:**[31553]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his most recent estimate is of the number of people who have received (a) one and (b) two doses of a covid-19 vaccine in (i) England, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland by (A) health authority, (B) age and (C) sex.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Data regarding the number of people who have received one and two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are available at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations>

As health is devolved, vaccination is managed by the health services in each nation and vaccination data is published in their respective dashboards. The Government is working closely with the devolved administrations to ensure an aligned approach to vaccine deployment across the UK.

Data on the number of vaccinations provided in England by one and two doses; age; sex; and health geographies is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Contracts**Fleur Anderson:****[31558]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department centrally records a single point of contact for every contract awarded under the emergency covid-19 procurement process.

Edward Argar:

A commercial and an operational lead are assigned to every contract awarded and this is recorded on the Department's central contracts register.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Information**Dr Matthew Offord:****[29016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mechanisms are in place to audit information provided to his Department by (a) regulatory bodies and (b) non-departmental public bodies.

Edward Argar:

The Department's relationships with its arm's length bodies and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) are established through a Framework Document. The Department follows the Government's best practice on auditing its arm's length bodies and NDPBs through risk assessment, governance arrangements and formal accountability mechanisms. NDPBs are required to produce their Annual Report and

Accounts which contain published information about their financial and non-financial performance.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Ministerial Policy Advisers**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[22201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department takes to ensure the fairness, and transparency in its recruitment and appointment processes for officials and advisers.

Edward Argar:

It is a requirement of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 that selection for recruitment to the Civil Service must be on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. This requirement is assured by an independent body, the Civil Service Commission. All Departmental recruitment and appointment policies and processes are underpinned by the requirements set out in the Act.

Special advisers, who are temporary civil servants, are appointed pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 and the Department complies with these provisions. The Cabinet Office oversees any special adviser appointment process.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Staff**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[22196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has a policy governing personal relationships at work.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 30 June 2021]: All civil servants are expected to abide by the Civil Service Code, which is the overarching framework that requires staff to carry out their role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service and its core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. The requirement to abide by the code is set out in contracts of employment and as such the Department does not have a specific additional policy governing personal relationships at work.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[22198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's guidance is on (a) personal relationships in the workplace (b) relationships between Ministers and officials and (c) ensuring equitable treatment of staff; and what steps his Department takes to enforce that guidance.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 30 June 2021]: All civil servants are expected to abide by the Civil Service Code, which is the overarching framework that requires staff to carry out their role with dedication and a commitment to the Civil Service and its core values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. The requirement to abide by the code is set out in contracts of employment and as such the Department does not have a

specific additional policy governing personal relationships at work and relationships between Ministers and officials. The Department's guidance on ensuring equitable treatment of staff is contained in the internal anti-bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination policies.

The obligations of Civil Servants under the Code are set out in individual contracts and recommunicated on a regular basis. If it is believed that appropriate standards of behaviour have not been maintained, these would be dealt with under the Department's Conduct policy. In addition, the Department's Raising a Concern policy outlines routes available to staff to raise concerns about the behaviours of others and/or if they wish to raise a concern under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[22199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's policy is on officials declaring personal relationships with business interests of relevance to the Department; and what steps his Department takes to enforce that guidance.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 30 June 2021]: The Department's staff are expected to adhere to the Civil Service Code, as well as the Departmental human resources policy on business interests, which states:

"Staff must not be involved in taking any decision as part of their employment, which could affect the value of their private investments, or the value of those on which they give advice to others; or use information acquired in the course of their work to advance their private financial interests or those of others. Staff must use the declarations of interest, hospitality and gifts database to record any business interest (including consultancies) or shareholdings (including directorships) which they, *their partners or members of their immediate family or close relatives hold* (to the extent they are aware of them), from which they might be able to benefit through their official position. They must comply with any subsequent advice from the Department regarding the retention, disposal or management of such interests."

Declaration of interest returns should be updated as interests cease or arise and staff are reminded of the twice-yearly review process via the intranet and other staff communications. Nil returns are required. Failure to declare interests as required could result in a conduct and discipline investigation.

■ Dermatology

Peter Dowd: [\[30367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timetable is for publishing the Getting It Right First Time dermatology national specialty report.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 14 July 2021]: The Getting It Right First Time national report on dermatology was completed in 2020 and will be published later this year, following

NHS England and NHS Improvement's review of the recommendations. This publication will be timed to support the NHS recovery programme after COVID-19.

■ Doctors: Part-time Employment

Peter Dowd:

[\[27185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the survey by the Royal College of Physicians in July 2021 that reported that 56 per cent of medical trainees were considering working part-time in the future, if he will make an assessment of the effect of trends in the number of doctors working less than full-time hours on his Department's policies for increasing the size of the health and care workforce.

Helen Whately:

The average Hospital and Community Health Service doctor works 93.9% of a full-time working pattern, an increase from 93.2% in 2010. We consider the historical and potential future working patterns of doctors as one of many factors that inform workforce planning.

We are committed to providing greater flexibility for doctors. For example, the Enhancing Junior Doctors' Working Lives programme, led by Health Education England (HEE), is supporting doctors who wish to undertake less than full time specialty training. Trainees are employed by the National Health Service and work in the service. Through this programme, HEE is monitoring the numbers of junior doctors training less than full time to ensure that this does not reduce the overall numbers of doctors in the workforce.

■ Health Services: Shropshire

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[31363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to release an initial tranche of funding out of the NHS capital budget to allow foundation works to be commenced in the Future Fit programme to improve hospital services in Shropshire.

Edward Argar:

The scheme has an allocation of £312 million, which includes any early funding. A sum of £6 million has already been approved in principle in November 2020 and a request for £370,000 of this amount is being currently reviewed. NHS England and NHS Improvement are continuing to work with the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust to ensure they maximise the impact of funding available. Any subsequent early funding requests will be subject to the usual approval processes.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

Rachael Maskell:

[\[30395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he made of the potential effect of increased covid-19 infections on hospital waiting lists for (a) surgery and (b) appointments after restrictions are lifted on 19 July 2021.

Edward Argar:

We have made no formal assessment. However, individual National Health Service trusts and integrated care systems are carrying out local assessments.

The Department continues to support the NHS to increase elective activity and tackle waiting lists, including procedures, surgery and outpatient appointments. This includes £1 billion funding to increase activity levels, while maintaining patient and staff safety.

Members: Correspondence**Robert Largan:**[\[29165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry of 1 April 2021 from the hon. Member for High Peak, referenced RL21530.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 12 July 2021.

Nurses: Recruitment**Lee Anderson:**[\[31541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of nurses in the NHS.

Helen Whately:

We are on target to deliver 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament which will be achieved through increased domestic recruitment, increased international recruitment and improved retention.

Patient Recruitment Centres**Alex Norris:**[\[25117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the progress of the five National Patient Recruitment Centres against their objectives in their first year of operation.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 5 July 2021]: The five national Patient Recruitment Centres (PRCs) were launched by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in May 2020 following an open competitive process. The progress of each PRC is monitored through defined contractual management arrangements in place through the NIHR. The PRCs are currently submitting their annual reports which will include their activities, performance and progress against their objectives in the last year.

■ Pharmacy: Career Development

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[29922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to encourage people to take up careers in (a) the pharmaceutical sector and (b) high street pharmacies.

Jo Churchill:

Reforms to pharmacist initial education and training will ensure that all new pharmacists entering the profession, regardless of where they choose to practice, will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to take on greater clinical roles including qualifying as prescribers. There are also a range of post-graduate programmes available to strengthen their skillset and progress within the profession.

Health Education England is also encouraging students to apply to study pharmacy at university and career information is available from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. There are also a range of funded apprenticeships schemes provided by pharmacy employers for a variety of roles in pharmacy teams.

■ Social Services: Finance

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[27254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to make extra support available to (a) local authorities and (b) disabled people who hire social care support directly following the UK's departure from the EU.

Helen Whately:

Local authorities and individuals hiring social care support directly can continue to recruit staff domestically and we are supporting recruitment into the sector such as our recent national recruitment campaign highlighting the vital work care workers do. People who hire social care support directly can also access information and support from third parties such as Skills for Care and Think Local Act Personal.

HOME OFFICE

■ Crimes of Violence: Yorkshire and the Humber

Mr David Davis:

[\[28943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the level of serious violence in (a) Haltemprice and Howden, (b) East Riding of Yorkshire and (c) Humberside.

Kit Malthouse:

We have invested £105.5m over three years into the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) programme, establishing and developing 18 VRUs in the areas worst affected by serious violence. The minimum allocation any one VRU receives each financial year is £880,000. VRUs do not operate in a single form, therefore costs associated with their operations vary significantly; however, funding made available through the

programme has been sufficient to allow for the establishment and sustainment of a range of VRU operating models.

These 18 areas have been selected for funding based on their volumes of hospital admissions relating to injury with a sharp object, which represents the most consistent and reliable data source for serious violence. Collectively, these areas have accounted for 80% of total relevant admissions, allowing VRU funding to focus on a significant majority of the serious violence problem across England and Wales.

A review of this data informed the most recent decisions about VRU funding made in February 2021. At this point, the available data demonstrated that the Humberside police force area, which includes the constituency of Haltemprice and Howden and county of East Riding of Yorkshire, did not feature in the ranked list of areas experiencing the greatest volume of hospital admissions for injury with a sharp object that collectively accounts for 80% of said admissions (i.e. the top 18 force areas, of which Humberside was not one, collectively accounted for 80% of relevant admissions). On this occasion, Ministers determined not to provide funding from the Serious Violence fund for Humberside.

Future VRU funding for currently eligible and ineligible areas, and any potential allocation models, will be carefully considered in the context of Departmental priorities through the upcoming Spending Review process.

Further information on the levels of police recorded crime within Haltemprice and Howden and/or East Riding of Yorkshire can be found in the Open Data Tables, available here: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/police-recorded-crime-and-outcomes-open-data-tables). The Home Office collects and publishes this information at the CSP level; information on offences involving firearms or knives are available at the Police Force Area level from the same link.

■ **Drugs: Misuse**

Kenny MacAskill:

[31549]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has received representations seeking a review of (a) drug policy and (b) Drug Consumption Rooms from the Scottish Government's new (i) Justice Secretary and (ii) Lord Advocate.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office has not received any representations from the Scottish Government's Justice Secretary nor the Lord Advocate seeking a review of drug policy or of drug consumption rooms.

We are committed to working across the UK and have regular contact with the Scottish Government at ministerial and official level on tackling drug misuse and reducing the harms it causes.

■ Gangs: Young People

Mark Jenkinson:

[R] [\[29913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential effect of fatherlessness on gang membership by young men.

Kit Malthouse:

We recognise the impact that family structure can have on children and young people, with research showing that a lack of support from parents can be a risk factor related to involvement in serious violence. This is why we are committed to investing in programmes of work focussed on early intervention and targeted towards young people at risk.

In March of this year, the Home Office announced its £130.5 million investment in tackling serious violent crime, with £23 million being invested in new early intervention programmes to help stop young people being drawn into violence. This includes programmes which use significant moments in a young person's life, such as when they enter police custody or Accident and Emergency, as opportunities for trained professionals to engage and divert young people away from crime and violence.

Over the three years from 2018-2021, we have also invested a total of £105.5 million, in multi-agency Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) in the 18 areas most affected by serious violence, bringing together local partners to deliver an effective, joined up approach to tackling violent crime and its drivers.

We have also made clear that the Government is determined to crack down on the county line gangs, by funding specialist support for those affected by county lines exploitation, providing one-to-one support to under 25s and their families in the three largest county lines exporting force areas (London, West Midlands and Merseyside) to help them safely reduce and end their involvement.

In addition, we are funding Missing People's SafeCall service which provides confidential, specialist advice and support to young people and their families/carers who are affected by county lines exploitation.

■ Immigration

Neil Coyle:

[\[31425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to publish all the responses it has received to its New Plan for Immigration, including those from (a) the UNHCR and (b) representatives of civil society groups via Britain Thinks.

Chris Philp:

The findings from the consultation have been carefully considered and the Government will respond in due course

■ Immigration Controls: EU Nationals

Afzal Khan: [\[31527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking in response to reports that people traveling into the UK on an EU Settlement Scheme Family Permit are being refused entry since 1 July 2021.

Afzal Khan: [\[31528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure people travelling on an EU Settlement Scheme Family Permit are able to enter the UK following the expiration of EEA Family Permits on 1 July 2021.

Afzal Khan: [\[31529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people with an EU Settlement Scheme Family Permit have been wrongly detained while travelling into the UK since 1 July 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Individuals who are eligible for an EU Settlement Scheme family permit may continue to apply for such a permit after 1 July 2021.

Where an EU Settlement Scheme family permit is issued, it will be valid for the 'relevant period' (as defined in Annex 1 to Appendix EU (Family Permit)). This will be either:

- a period of 6 months from the date of decision on the application, or
- a period of 4 months from their intended date of arrival in the UK, where the applicant indicates in their application form they intend to arrive in the UK on or after 1 April 2021, and their intended date of arrival in the UK is more than 3 months from the date of decision.

The holder can enter the UK as many times as they wish within this period.

EU Settlement Scheme family permit holders will be subject to identity and security checks on arrival, as well as checks required for health measures purposes relating to the pandemic, just as all other arriving passengers are. The requirements of the Border Health regulations, set by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, work in addition to the requirements of the immigration rules, those holding EU Settlement Scheme Permits are not exempt from them.

Any passenger who is required to submit to further examination at port may be temporarily detained whilst such an examination is conducted. An EU Settlement Scheme family permit holder may be refused entry to the UK where their leave falls to be cancelled under Annex 3 to Appendix EU (Family Permit).

The Home Office is not aware of any instances of EU Settlement Scheme family permit holders either being detained for longer than necessary to confirm their ongoing entitlement to their status or compliance with health measures requirements, or in an Immigration Removal Centre since 1 July 2021.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[31353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28133 on Immigration: EU Nationals, and with reference to page 31-33 of her Department's guidance entitled EU Settlement Scheme: EU, other EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members, published on 21 May 2021, if she will publish a list of examples of what would not be deemed by her Department to be reasonable grounds for a child or young person who had been in the care of a local authority missing the deadline to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme applicable to them under the EU Settlement Scheme; and what effect not having those reasonable grounds would have on the right to reside of those children or young people.

Kevin Foster:

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

We would consider it reasonable grounds for a late application to be made where a local authority failed in its duty to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme on behalf of a child in its care or where a parent or guardian failed to make an application on behalf of someone aged under 18 on deadline day.

The guidance published on 1 April is not exhaustive and we will take a pragmatic and flexible approach to cases in light of the particular circumstances of each application.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[31354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28132 on Immigration: EU Nationals, when her Department will have more up to date figures on how many children and young people there were in the care of local authorities and who were eligible to apply for the EU Settled Status Scheme who had not applied to that Scheme by the deadline of 30 June 2021.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[31355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department took to support children and young people who were in the care of local authorities and eligible for the EU settlement scheme to apply to that scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is continuing to work closely with local authorities to ensure applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) are made in respect of eligible looked after children and care leavers.

This has included running webinars for local authority staff making or supporting EUSS applications, providing support seven days a week via the EU Settlement Resolution Centre and making available £22 million in grant funding, through to 30 September 2021, for a network of 72 organisations across the UK, including several

local authorities and local government associations, to help vulnerable groups apply to the EUSS.

Using the data from the most recent survey, we have also delivered further workshops and targeted engagement with local authorities. We are now considering options for further progress monitoring in relation to this cohort.

■ **Migrant Workers: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers**

Kerry McCarthy: [\[31343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of (a) adding heavy goods vehicle drivers to the shortage occupation list and (b) issuing increased numbers of temporary visas to heavy goods vehicle drivers.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[31344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues and (b) representations she has received from businesses and trade organisations on the potential (i) merits of adding heavy goods vehicle (HGV) drivers to the shortage occupation list and (ii) effect on HGV driver shortages of so adding HGV drivers to the shortage occupation list.

Kevin Foster:

Heavy Goods Vehicle drivers do not qualify for Skilled Worker visas therefore cannot be added to the Shortage Occupation List.

There is no plan to introduce a new temporary visa for this sector to address recruitment problems. Some Trade Unions have recently agreed the issues affecting the haulage sector would not be solved by offering temporary visas and should focus on making pay and conditions more attractive for the domestic labour market.

While the Home Office regularly engages with other Government Departments and stakeholders on departmental business, the Department for Transport is leading the Government's work on what can be done to support the sector.

■ **Nitrous Oxide: Misuse**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[29151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking help tackle nitrous oxide use among young people.

Kit Malthouse:

THE GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLISHED GUIDANCE ON GOV.UK FOR RETAILERS TO SATISFY THEMSELVES THAT THEY COMPLY WITH THE LAW. THE GUIDANCE RECOMMENDS THAT RETAILERS, INCLUDING THOSE OPERATING ONLINE, SHOULD PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE POTENTIAL FOR ABUSE OF NITROUS OXIDE, ESPECIALLY WHERE CUSTOMERS SEEK TO BUY IN BULK OR LARGE VOLUMES, AND SUGGESTS THAT RETAILERS MAY WISH TO CARRY OUT AGE CHECKS TO PREVENT THOSE AT HIGHEST RISK FROM GAINING ACCESS TO PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES. THE ONLINE RESOURCE, TALK TO FRANK, PROVIDES INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT NITROUS OXIDE AND OUTLINES THE RISKS AND DANGERS OF INHALING THE GAS. WE ARE AWARE OF THE ROLE THAT ONLINE SALE OF NITROUS OXIDE CAN PLAY IN CAUSING HARM TO YOUNG PEOPLE. WE HAVE PUBLISHED THE DRAFT ONLINE SAFETY BILL, WHICH GIVES EFFECT TO THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OUTLINED IN THE FULL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE ONLINE HARMS WHITE PAPER, PUBLISHED IN DECEMBER 2020. WE WANT THE INTERNET TO BE A SAFE SPACE FOR ALL USERS AND ARE CLEAR THAT WHAT IS UNACCEPTABLE OFFLINE SHOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE ONLINE. FOR THE FIRST TIME, TECH COMPANIES ARE GOING TO BE ACCOUNTABLE TO AN INDEPENDENT REGULATOR TO KEEP THEIR USERS SAFE. UNDER A NEW LEGAL DUTY OF CARE, IN-SCOPE COMPANIES WILL NEED TO REMOVE AND LIMIT THE SPREAD OF ILLEGAL CONTENT AND ACTIVITY ONLINE. THE DRAFT ONLINE SAFETY BILL WILL BE SUBJECT TO PRE-LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY IN THIS SESSION.

■ **Police: Misconduct**

Sir David Amess:

[\[31273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to prevent the members of Police Misconduct Panels being held personally liable for awards made in (a) Employment Tribunals and (b) County Courts for breaches of the Equality Act 2010 arising as a consequence of those misconduct proceedings.

Kit Malthouse:

Indemnity against such action is currently provided by Police and Crime Commissioners as part of the terms and conditions of Legally Qualified Chairs when they are appointed

The Home Office is currently considering a request to legislate for indemnity but a decision on how to proceed has not yet been made.

■ **Refugees**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[31396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State on 12 July 2021, Official Report, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for the UK's international obligations towards refugees of the Government's proposals on making entry to the UK from a safe country a criminal offence through the Nationality and Borders Bill.

Chris Philp:

This policy is compatible with our international obligations. Individuals who are recognised as refugees and who have travelled directly to the UK, in line with Article 31 of the Refugee Convention, will benefit from the protection of Article 31 and should therefore not be convicted of the illegal entry or arrival offences. No one will be returned to a country where they may be subjected to persecution.

We remain committed to our international obligations under the UN Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights but individuals should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

Travel: Quarantine**Justin Madders:**[\[29828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 30 June 2021 to Question 21249, which body holds the data on fixed penalty notices that have been issued for breaches of covid-19 hotel quarantine restrictions.

Kit Malthouse:

Data on the number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued under the COVID-19 regulations by police forces in England and Wales is collected by policing and published by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) on a monthly basis and can be found on the NPCC website.

The latest publication from 28th June 2021 can be found here:

(<https://cdn.prgloo.com/media/fefef3f0ea8241018b9bda2d33fa95be.pdf>)

Violence Reduction Units: Finance**Mr David Davis:**[\[28940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of funding for Violence Reduction Units.

Mr David Davis:[\[28941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department uses in determining which areas receive funding for Violence Reduction Units.

Mr David Davis:[\[28942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of updating the areas eligible for Violence Reduction Unit funding.

Kit Malthouse:

We have invested £105.5m over three years into the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) programme, establishing and developing 18 VRUs in the areas worst affected by serious violence. The minimum allocation any one VRU receives each financial year is £880,000. VRUs do not operate in a single form, therefore costs associated with their operations vary significantly; however, funding made available through the

programme has been sufficient to allow for the establishment and sustainment of a range of VRU operating models.

These 18 areas have been selected for funding based on their volumes of hospital admissions relating to injury with a sharp object, which represents the most consistent and reliable data source for serious violence. Collectively, these areas have accounted for 80% of total relevant admissions, allowing VRU funding to focus on a significant majority of the serious violence problem across England and Wales.

A review of this data informed the most recent decisions about VRU funding made in February 2021. At this point, the available data demonstrated that the Humberside police force area, which includes the constituency of Haltemprice and Howden and county of East Riding of Yorkshire, did not feature in the ranked list of areas experiencing the greatest volume of hospital admissions for injury with a sharp object that collectively accounts for 80% of said admissions (i.e. the top 18 force areas, of which Humberside was not one, collectively accounted for 80% of relevant admissions). On this occasion, Ministers determined not to provide funding from the Serious Violence fund for Humberside.

Future VRU funding for currently eligible and ineligible areas, and any potential allocation models, will be carefully considered in the context of Departmental priorities through the upcoming Spending Review process.

Further information on the levels of police recorded crime within Haltemprice and Howden and/or East Riding of Yorkshire can be found in the Open Data Tables, available here: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/police-recorded-crime-and-outcomes-open-data-tables). The Home Office collects and publishes this information at the CSP level; information on offences involving firearms or knives are available at the Police Force Area level from the same link.

■ Violence Reduction Units: Humberside

Mr David Davis:

[\[28944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the eligibility of Humberside for funding for Violence Reduction Units.

Kit Malthouse:

We have invested £105.5m over three years into the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) programme, establishing and developing 18 VRUs in the areas worst affected by serious violence. The minimum allocation any one VRU receives each financial year is £880,000. VRUs do not operate in a single form, therefore costs associated with their operations vary significantly; however, funding made available through the programme has been sufficient to allow for the establishment and sustainment of a range of VRU operating models.

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Future VRU funding for currently eligible and ineligible areas, and any potential allocation models, will be carefully considered in the context of Departmental priorities through the upcoming Spending Review process.

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■ Visas: Dependants

Stephen Timms: [\[31281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to reports that fewer than one in 25 adult dependent visa applications were granted on the first attempt over a period of four years, whether her Department has made an assessment of the impact on the NHS of staff leaving to care for their adult dependents living abroad; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

It is not possible to make an assessment of the impact on the NHS of staff leaving to care for their relatives living abroad as the Home Office does not record the reason why individuals leave the UK.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Steve Reed: [\[31415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to help local authorities to take further steps to reduce the transmission of covid-19 in their localities.

Luke Hall:

Ministers and officials from my Department have regular discussions with counterparts in the Department for Health and Social Care on a range of matters including helping local authorities to take steps to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 in their localities

The £23.75 million 'Community Champions' scheme has supported those groups at greater risk of Covid-19, to ensure key public health advice is understood, safer behaviours are followed and vaccine take-up promoted.

■ Council Tax: Arrears**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[31426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England that have fallen into council tax arrears; and what steps his Department is taking to support economically vulnerable households in those areas.

Luke Hall:

The Department does not collect data on the number of households that have fallen into council tax arrears. The Government has provided £670 million of new funding in 2020-21 to support councils in delivering their local council tax support schemes to reduce council tax bills.

■ Finance**Steve Reed:**[\[31412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding will be available for the (a) Towns Fund, (b) Future High Streets Fund, (c) Levelling Up Fund, (d) UK Community Renewal Fund and (e) Community Ownership Fund in financial year (i) 2021-22, (ii) 2022-23 and (iii) 2023-24.

Luke Hall:

We have now offered Town Deals to all 101 places that were invited to submit proposals as part of the Towns Fund, committing over £2.4 billion. This includes the accelerated funding provided to places last year. The exact funding distributed each year is subject to agreeing spend profiles with each town.

The [Future High Streets Fund](#) aims to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves experience and ensures future sustainability. In total, 72 places are sharing over £830 million of capital funding from the Future High Streets Fund, between January 2021 and March 2024, to deliver transformative projects which will support their towns and high streets to reopen and recover from the effects of the pandemic.

At the Spending Review, the UK Government committed an initial £4 billion for the Levelling Up Fund for England over the next four years (up to 2024-25) and set aside at least £800 million for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK Government

will use the new financial assistance powers in the UKIM Act to make the Fund available to the whole of the UK, enabling all communities to receive the investment and support they need to recover from the pandemic. As such, up to £4.8 billion until 2024-25 will be available for the Fund across the UK, with at least £800 million invested in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Community Renewal Fund is a one year fund with a budget of £220 million. The UK Community Renewal Fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

The Community Ownership Fund is a £150 million fund over four years to support community groups across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets which are at risk of being lost to the community.

■ Local Government Finance: Reserves

Steve Reed:

[\[31411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the average level of reserves held by local authorities in England in (a) 2010, (b) 2015 and (c) 2020.

Luke Hall:

Local authorities report to MHCLG their levels of reserves for the start and end of each financial year. The latest outturn figures include reserve levels to 31 March 2020. These can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing .

■ National Security: Hong Kong

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[31424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to prevent money administered through the British National (Overseas) support packages funding organisations operating in the UK supporting the Hong Kong National Security Law.

Luke Hall:

My department is fully aware of the potential sensitivities with regards to Hong Kong, and will undertake robust due diligence procedures before awarding funding to any organisation through the Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme. This includes assessing the appropriateness and suitability of potential grant recipients, and their ability to deliver the support required.

■ Public Sector

Steve Reed:

[\[31413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to Partnerships for People and Place: guidance for local expressions of

interest, published on 12 July 2021, what outputs he plans to publish as a result of those pilots.

Luke Hall:

On 12 July my department invited 34 local authorities to submit expressions of interest in order to join the Partnerships for People and Place scheme, and published guidance online to help them do so. We will announce the successful projects soon.

■ **UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

Marsha De Cordova:

[31531]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to submit the UK's progress report on implementing the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination which was due in April 2020.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG is committed to fulfilling its commitments for the CERD State Report, and tackling inequalities remains one of the key objectives of our work. Our priorities for the past year have been shaped to ensure we have provided sufficient support to communities and local government to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ **Waking Watch Relief Fund**

Lucy Powell:

[31407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications have been received to the Waking Watch Relief Fund in each month since that Fund opened.

Lucy Powell:

[31408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications to the Waking Watch Relief Fund (a) have been approved, (b) have been rejected and (c) are yet to be reviewed.

Lucy Powell:

[31409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications to the Waking Watch Relief Fund have been reviewed in each month since that Fund opened.

Christopher Pincher:

Data on the Waking Watch Relief Fund, including the number of applications received, successful and rejected and the amount of funding approved, has been published at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/waking-watch-relief-fund>

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Agriculture: Exports**

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[31367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether he plans to increase the number of dedicated agriculture counsellors promoting UK agricultural exports.

Graham Stuart:

We are considering how we might expand our overseas support for agriculture, food and drink exporters, in line with the recommendations of the Trade and Agriculture Commission and will publish a response to the Commission accordingly.

■ Agriculture: Overseas Trade

Edward Timpson: [\[902808\]](#)

What recent steps her Department has taken to support British farmers and food producers to increase their global sales.

Graham Stuart:

The UK's farming, food and drink products are a source of pride, whether it be Scotch whisky, Welsh lamb, or other iconic products from across the country. Our new trade deals are unlocking new markets and opportunities for this important industry. Our 'Open Doors' campaign offers a wide range of support such as exporting masterclasses, a flagship mentoring programme and matching buyers with sellers to ensure more British produce is sold overseas.

■ Department for International Trade: Freedom of Information

Emily Thornberry: [\[31356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 9 July 2021 to Question 22145, on Department for International Trade: Freedom of Information, what were the final colour-coded ratings applied to the Freedom of Information requests (a) FOI2020/04220, (b) FOI2020/05327, (c) FOI2020/06174, (d) FOI2021/01596, (e) FOI2021/02962, and (f) FOI2021/03419 from the office of the Rt hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury at the point they were fully processed by her Department and not subject to further change, respectively on (i) 17 December 2020, (ii) 11 November 2020, (iii) 29 December 2020, (iv) 22 June 2021, (v) 28 June 2021 and (vi) 7 July 2021.

Greg Hands:

Freedom of Information requests have been colour-coded according to the subject matter of the specific request in addition to other considerations. This consideration does not form part of the decision on whether or not to release information. The colour-coded status can also change during the lifecycle of a request, so no individual Freedom of Information request has a fixed colour-coded identifier.

■ Ogle Models and Prototypes**Emily Thornberry:**[\[31357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what model or prototype her Department commissioned from Ogle Models and Prototypes Ltd at a cost of £39,080 in April 2021.

Graham Stuart:

This cost was for the production and delivery of four models of the United Kingdom Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai for promotion of the United Kingdom's participation and programme of activity at the same event.

■ Overseas Trade**Kim Johnson:**[\[902809\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of her Department's trade policies on growth for British businesses.

Graham Stuart:

We have set out the potential impacts of Free Trade Agreements in our published Scoping Assessments for the US, Australia, New Zealand and CPTPP. An Impact Assessment has also been published on the recently signed agreement with Japan, which shows that it goes beyond the existing EU deal, providing a long-run boost to the UK economy of around £1.5bn, compared to a situation without the deal. Output in the North West and Wales could increase by £64 million and £34 million respectively.

Mr Philip Hollobone:[\[902812\]](#)

What assessment she has made of how international trade benefits (a) Kettering constituency, (b) North Northamptonshire and (c) England.

Graham Stuart:

Kettering and the wider East Midlands economy already benefit from the higher productivity and better-quality jobs associated with international trade. Over 680,000 jobs in the region were directly or indirectly linked to exports in 2016, and new Foreign Direct Investment created over 2,149 new jobs in 2020/21. We are confident the new Free Trade Agreements we are striking globally will create even more opportunities for Kettering and Northamptonshire companies.

Gerald Jones:[\[902820\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of her Department's trade policies on growth for British businesses.

Graham Stuart:

We have set out the potential impacts of Free Trade Agreements in our published Scoping Assessments for the US, Australia, New Zealand and CPTPP. An Impact Assessment has also been published on the recently signed agreement with Japan, which shows that it goes beyond the existing EU deal, providing a long-run boost to

the UK economy of around £1.5bn, compared to a situation without the deal. Output in the North West and Wales could increase by £64 million and £34 million respectively.

Nick Smith: [\[902823\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of her Department's trade policies on growth for British businesses.

Graham Stuart:

We have set out the potential impacts of Free Trade Agreements in our published Scoping Assessments for the US, Australia, New Zealand and CPTPP. An Impact Assessment has also been published on the recently signed agreement with Japan, which shows that it goes beyond the existing EU deal, providing a long-run boost to the UK economy of around £1.5bn, compared to a situation without the deal. Output in the North West and Wales could increase by £64 million and £34 million respectively.

■ Poultry: Australia

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[31352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answers of 21 June 2021 to Question 16807 on Trade Agreements: Australia and to Question 16808 on Livestock: Australia, what assessment she has made of whether Australian farmers would be allowed to export chickens reared using barren battery cages to the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade has always been clear that the deal with Australia will not compromise the UK's high standards. This agreement does not create new permissions for imports from Australia. Imports will continue to meet the same UK food safety and biosecurity import standards as they did before.

The Government has secured a comprehensive partnership to work with Australia, including internationally, to progress animal welfare in partnership with Australia. The Government has also agreed a non-regression clause on animal welfare - a first in a Free Trade Agreement. This commitment means that neither country can lower their animal welfare standards to undercut the other.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Alun Cairns: [\[902811\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the potential merits of the UK-Australia free trade deal for food producers.

Greg Hands:

This deal will support jobs and drive growth by cutting tariffs on key UK exports like food (up to around 20% on cheese) bringing huge benefits to the UK's agri-food sector.

Wales' food and drink sector exported £10m to Australia last year in goods and could benefit from the removal of tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

Dean Russell: [\[902813\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of the potential benefits of the free trade deal with Australia for the East of England.

Greg Hands:

More than 1,600 East of England firms exported to Australia in 2020. A removal of tariffs on the East of England's key exports to Australia in life sciences, clothing and motor industry can create more opportunities for businesses in the region.

Cutting red tape and aligning standards could also support growth in exports of life sciences.

■ Trade Agreements: Mexico

Stephen Metcalfe: [\[902818\]](#)

What plans she has to enhance the UK's trade deal with Mexico.

Greg Hands:

We have committed to start negotiations on a new upgraded trade deal with Mexico this year. Discussions will commence later in the year and will aim to secure even more benefits for British industries and go further in areas of mutual interest such as procurement, digital trade and service.

■ Tradeshow Access Programme

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[28980\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department has held with relevant stakeholders on (a) the cessation of the Tradeshow Access Programme and (b) a replacement scheme for the Tradeshow Access Programme.

Graham Stuart:

A range of trade associations were consulted last summer by Department for International Trade (DIT) officials on plans for a revised trade show support programme. DIT will announce further details when discussions with HM Treasury are concluded.

Bob Blackman: [\[29779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department has had with relevant stakeholders on (a) the cancellation of the Tradeshow Access Programme and (b) a replacement scheme for that programme.

Bob Blackman: [\[29780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department had with relevant stakeholders ahead of the cancellation of the Tradeshow Access Programme.

Graham Stuart:

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 15 July to Question UIN 28980.

Mick Whitley:

[R] [\[30416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department has had with industry representatives on (a) the cancellation of the Tradeshow Access Programme and b) any replacement scheme for the Tradeshow Access Programme.

Mick Whitley:

[\[30417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions her Department has had with relevant stakeholders on the cancellation of the Tradeshow Access Programme.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the hon. Member for Birkenhead to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for North Durham today, UIN: 28980.

Douglas Chapman:

[\[32422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions her Department has held with relevant business stakeholders on the Tradeshow Access Programme.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for North Durham on 15 July 2021, UIN: 28980.

■ UK Investment Council: HSBC**Peter Dowd:**

[\[29071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what considerations the Government undertook before appointing HSBC to sit on the UK Investment Council.

Graham Stuart:

Members of the Investment Council are invited and appointed in a personal capacity, based on evidence relevant to the following criteria:

- competence and experience in areas relevant to international investment,
- sector expertise, and
- an understanding of the UK investment climate

All members have been considered under a common due diligence process in line with 10 Downing Street and Cabinet Office guidance.

JUSTICE**■ Prisons: Industrial Disputes**

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[31488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of strike action on prison education in respect of the industrial dispute between the University and College Union and Novus at custodial establishments.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[31489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of whether financial penalties could potentially be invoked against Novus in the event that prison education is disrupted as a result of strike action.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[31490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to help resolve the industrial dispute between the University and College Union and Novus at custodial establishments.

Alex Chalk:

Contingency plans were put in place and enacted by Novus to manage the potential impact of industrial action by the University and College Union (UCU). There was limited impact on education delivery during the action.

Novus provide services under the Prison Education Framework contract which enables HMPPS to penalise providers for any non-delivery of education at site level where applicable. We continue to encourage UCU and Novus to engage proactively to resolve this dispute.

■ Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre

Philip Davies: [\[29005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the the Urgent Notification issued by HM Inspectorate of Prisons in December 2020, if he will make an assessment of the progress made against the joint action plan between MTC and his Department.

Alex Chalk:

Following the invoking of the Urgent Notification protocol at Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre (STC) last December, we ordered the provider MTC to take the immediate action necessary to address the unacceptable failings at Rainsbrook, including a focus on ensuring no child was isolated on arrival and all children in the Reverse Cohorting Unit had suitable access to services and a greater amount of time out of their room.

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) has continuously monitored progress against the Urgent Notification plan since publication in January. There was some early progress at the start of 2021, with Ofsted noting that 'some early signs of improvement were seen' in their monitoring visit from 26 January (report published on 22 February).

They did, however, note that many of the actions included in the plan still needed to be implemented, with other actions yet to have been embedded. The serious concerns relating to children 'reverse cohorting' at the centre were addressed, and the YCS had strengthened its oversight of the STC, as acknowledged by Ofsted. It is, however, clear that significant issues around staffing, safety, and on-site operational grip remain, with a second Urgent Notification invoked on 18 June following a full inspection of the centre.

We are currently transferring children from Rainsbrook to alternative appropriate accommodation within the children and young people secure estate. Separate to this, we are also considering the future of the centre, with a further announcement to be made on this position in due course.

Philip Davies:

[29006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children from (a) Oakhill Secure Training Centre and (b) other training Centres have been transferred into Rainsbrook Training Centre during 2021.

Alex Chalk:

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) placement team is responsible for placing children and young people under the age of 18 who have been remanded or sentenced into youth secure accommodation.

The youth estate is currently comprised of three sectors: Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), often larger establishments for boys aged 15-17; Secure Training Centre's (STCs) –smaller establishments for boys and girls aged 12-17, with a higher staff to young person ratio for children who may require additional support; and Secure Children's Homes (SCHs), which are operated by local authorities, and accommodate boys and girls aged 10-17. SCHs have a high ratio of staff to young people and are generally smaller facilities of 18-24 beds. The YCS contract beds for young people sentenced or remanded to custody at 8 SCHs, however, SCHs also hold children held on secure welfare orders.

A decision on the most appropriate accommodation to place a child is made following an assessment by the Youth Offending Team (YOT). The YCS will then make a decision about the most appropriate placement after consideration of each child's individual needs and their YOT's placement recommendation, against the available accommodation. Decisions are made with children's best interests as the primary consideration. Other factors including (but not limited to) age and gender; risk of harm (to self and others); family and resettlement; and maturity and resilience are also taken into account.

The number of children moved from other training centres to Rainsbrook STC amounts to five or fewer individuals. Providing this information would risk identification of the individuals concerned meaning that disclosure would be in breach of our statutory obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation and/or the Data Protection Act 2018. We have commenced work to remove all children from Rainsbrook, transferring them to alternative appropriate accommodation within the

youth secure estate. Separate to this, we are considering the future of the centre, with a further announcement to be made on this position in due course.

■ Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre: Novus

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[31491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Government Response to the Justice Select Committee's Seventeenth Report of Session 2019–2021: Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre, paragraph 11, for what reason the decision was made to change the education provider from Novus to Nacro; and when that decision was made.

Alex Chalk:

Although the Youth Custody Service monitors performance at Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre, the decision to change the education provider from Novus to Nacro was made by MTC as the private provider at Rainsbrook who are empowered to take such decisions. Nacro commenced education provision at the centre on 5 May 2021.

■ Sexual Offences: Rehabilitation

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[29878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners have accessed Sex Offender Treatment Programmes since 2015.

Alex Chalk:

Participation figures are drawn directly from the published data available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmpps-annual-digest-april-2019-to-march-2020>. Percentages have been added alongside this data to represent the proportion of prisoners who started a programme for those convicted of a Sexual Offence vs. the total number of programme starts in a given year.

	TOTAL PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS IN 12 MONTHS ENDING MARCH					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
2015						
Sexual Offending	1056	1113	1141	1022	1154	1133
Proportion SO Participants vs. Total Participants per year	12.11%	14.01%	14.84%	16.62%	19.80%	19.79%

■ Special Guardianship Orders: Legal Aid Scheme

Andrew Gwynne: [\[31346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the February 2019 Legal Support Action Plan, when he plans to bring forward proposals to expand the scope of legal aid to cover special guardianship orders in private law.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[31347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the February 2019 Legal Support Action Plan, when he plans to bring forward proposals to extend eligibility for non-means tested legal aid for parents, or those with parental responsibility, who wish to oppose applications for placement orders or adoption orders in public family law proceedings.

Alex Chalk:

In February 2019 as part of the Legal Support Action Plan, we agreed to remove the means test for those with parental responsibility to oppose placement or adoption orders in family law proceedings and we committed to bringing special guardianship orders into scope of legal aid.

Over the past year many elements of the Action Plan are up and running and work is proceeding on other. For example, the Civil Legal Aid Means Test Review is currently underway and is due to consult in the Autumn of this year, £3.1m has been provided for legal support for litigants in person, and changes have been made to the Civil Legal Aid telephone service, making it easier for people to get face to face advice. Furthermore, we've widened the scope of legal aid to cover immigration matters for separated migrant children.

Work on this specific action has been delayed, most recently due to the focus on the ongoing response to the Covid 19 pandemic and the prioritisation of Covid recovery. However, we still intend to undertake this work and will communicate revised timelines to stakeholders in due course.

■ Youth Custody

Philip Davies: [\[29007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to monitor the performance of his Department's Young Offender Institutions and Secure Training Centres; and what recent assessment he has made of that performance.

Alex Chalk:

The Youth Custody Service (YCS) monitors performance at Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) and Secure Training Centres (STCs) very closely, working with establishments to ensure that recommendations from the independent inspectorates are acted upon promptly. The YCS captures a range of performance information for both YOIs and STCs (noting the differences across sectors). This information is discussed widely with a range of partners and stakeholders to assess performance and address issues as required, to help support and improve the delivery across our

sites. In addition, a new YCS assurance framework will be developed throughout the year, designed to ensure that YCS is best able to monitor delivery and identify risks and with appropriate support from wider HM Prison and Probation Service take action to swiftly resolve as well as prevent issues from occurring.

The impact of COVID-19, and need to following physical distancing approaches, in line with national guidance, inevitably impacted regime delivery within sites throughout the last year. However, early indications from research commissioned by the YCS, in collaboration with academics, to evaluate and learn lessons from the impact and response to COVID-19, has shown that the large majority of children report feeling safe during the early period of the restrictions, with some reporting feeling safer than previous periods of time spent in custody. Furthermore, we have also observed through the research that there were positive reports of relationships between both children and children, and children and staff.

We are committed to improving the safety and life chances for the children in custody, investing in staff, education, psychology services and mental health support. This is underpinned by the Framework of Integrated Care (SECURE STAIRS) which sets out the principles for how our secure settings should work with and look after children. We continue to support and develop our brave and hardworking operational staff, with funding provided for our frontline officers to take up a degree level qualification in youth justice. As of March, there were 201 youth justice specialist officers already in post, with a further 319 staff signed up or undertaking the learning.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Office: Information

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[29020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what mechanisms are in place to audit information provided to his Department by (a) regulatory bodies and (b) non-departmental public bodies.

Mr Robin Walker:

My Department relies on a small number of non-departmental public bodies to provide independent advice and carry out a range of important functions to deliver strategic objectives. Assurance is taken on the quality of the information provided by these bodies through scrutiny by my officials and the work of internal and external auditors.

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: Information****Dr Matthew Offord:****[29026]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what mechanisms are in place to audit information provided to his Department by (a) regulatory bodies and (b) non-departmental public bodies.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland sponsors one Non-Departmental Public Body, the Boundary Commission for Scotland. The Boundary Commission for Scotland is responsible for reviews of UK Parliament constituencies in Scotland.

The relationship between the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Boundary Commission for Scotland is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. This acknowledges the Boundary Commission for Scotland's performance of the duties given to it by Parliament as an independent body, while following the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland's best practice in financial and corporate governance. The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland reports bi-annually to the department's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, on the sponsorship relationship.

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland's accounts include the costs of the Boundary Commission for Scotland, which are audited by the National Audit Office. The Boundary Commission for Scotland prepares an annual report, which is available on the Boundary Commission for Scotland's website. This is in addition to progress reports, which are compiled when the Commission is undertaking a Review, and are submitted to the Speaker of the House of Commons. These progress reports are published on the Boundary Commission for Scotland's website annually, in January.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services****Sarah Olney:****[31507]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many new bus routes have been created in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

Changes to bus services are notified to the Traffic Commissioners. The Traffic Commissioners Annual Report for 2020-21 has not yet been published; the latest available report covers 2019-2020. The latest published data from the Traffic Commissioners regarding the number of new registrations can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioners-annual-reports>

The numbers of new and/or cancelled registrations will not be the same as the number of starts and/or cessations of bus services. A registration that is cancelled

may be complemented by a new service introduction that is an exact match or a slight variation to the one which has been cancelled.

■ **Bus Services: Electric Vehicles and Hydrogen**

Sam Tarry:

[\[29945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to increase the availability of (a) electric charging points and (b) hydrogen refuelling stations required by bus and coach operators.

Rachel Maclean:

The Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme will provide up to £120 million funding to support zero emission buses and infrastructure. Local transport authorities were able to submit Expressions of Interest for funding for either battery electric buses and charging infrastructure or hydrogen fuel cell buses and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure.

£50 million funding has been provided through the All-Electric Bus Town or City scheme which will support the introduction of up to 300 electric buses and the charging infrastructure to support them.

£48 million funding was awarded through the 2018-2021 Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme which supported the introduction of both battery electric buses and charging infrastructure and hydrogen fuel cell buses and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure.

■ **Buses: Carbon Emissions**

Sam Tarry:

[\[29935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the level of additional funding required for the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas scheme beyond 2021-22 to achieve the Government's target of 4,000 new zero-emission buses.

Rachel Maclean:

Department for Transport budgets for 2022-23 onwards have not yet been set and will be agreed through the Spending Review later this year.

Sam Tarry:

[\[29936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many applications his Department has received for the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas scheme as at 8 June 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

As of 8 June 2021 the department had received 11 Expressions of Interest from 13 local transport authorities (two Expressions of Interest were submitted jointly by two local transport authorities) through the 'fast track' element of the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme.

Sam Tarry: [\[29937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to announce the results from the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas application process.

Rachel Maclean:

On 6 July 2021, the Department announced that six local transport authorities had been progressed to the second phase of the 'fast track' element of the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme:

- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
- Kent County Council
- Leicester City Council
- Milton Keynes Brough Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- West Midlands Combined Authority

An announcement on which local transport authorities have been awarded funding is expected to take place in the autumn.

The deadline for local transport authorities to submit Expressions of Interest to the 'standard track' element was 2 July 2021. The Department will announce which local transport authorities have been progressed to the next phase of the competition in due course.

Sam Tarry: [\[29938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of new zero-emissions buses that will be funded through the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has estimated that the £120m funding made available through the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme could support the introduction of up to 500 zero emission buses and the infrastructure needed to support them.

Sam Tarry: [\[29939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has held with (a) relevant stakeholders and (b) Cabinet colleagues on the potential continuation of the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas scheme into 2022-23.

Rachel Maclean:

My officials and I regularly engage with a range of relevant stakeholders and Ministerial colleagues to inform decisions on how best to drive the uptake of zero emission buses.

Sam Tarry: [\[29940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of new zero-emissions buses funded through the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas scheme that will be manufactured in the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

UK bus manufacturers are well placed to benefit from funding from the ZEBRRA scheme, which will support jobs and a green recovery for the sector.

Sam Tarry: [\[29941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has held with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on future funding beyond 2021-22 for the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

Department for Transport budgets for 2022-23 onwards have not yet been set and will be agreed through the Spending Review later this year.

Sam Tarry: [\[29942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has held with relevant stakeholders on prioritising UK bus manufacturers through the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

Department officials are in regular contact with relevant stakeholders. UK bus manufacturers are well placed to benefit from funding from the ZEBRA scheme, which will support jobs and a green recovery for the sector.

Sam Tarry: [\[29943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on (a) the production and distribution of green hydrogen to bus depots and (b) requirements of electricity capacity at bus depots to support an increase in zero-emissions vehicles introduced through the Zero Emissions Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government remains committed to meeting its decarbonisation targets and the Department for Transport and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy continue to work closely together on a range of issues.

Sam Tarry: [\[29944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to decarbonise the coach sector.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government continues to work with the coach sector, including through relevant trade bodies. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan, which was published this week, sets out further details on how we will decarbonise road transport.

■ Clean Air Zones

Sarah Olney: [\[31504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support the Government is providing to local authorities to introduce clean air zones.

Rachel Maclean:

Under the 2017 UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations and its further Supplement in 2018, 61 local authorities were directed to develop plans for delivering Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) compliance in the shortest possible time.

As a result of this process, a number of local authorities have determined that Clean Air Zone is needed to deliver legal NO₂ levels in the shortest possible time. Where this is the case, Government is providing guidance to local authorities to implement the zone, as well as financial assistance to help local businesses and individuals adapt - including grants to help upgrade vehicles supported by £880m of ringfenced support. The first two Clean Air Zones have been implemented by Birmingham City Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council, with further zones expected to be introduced later this year and next year.

Under the Transport Act 2000, local authorities are permitted to implement a charging zone to achieve air quality objectives independently of the Government's NO₂ programme.

The Mayor of London is responsible for air quality in the capital and has reserve powers under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to reflect this. The Mayor received funding to implement measures to improve air quality as part of the 2015 £5bn transport funding settlement.

Sarah Olney: [\[31505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government plans to take steps in response to local authorities reportedly delaying the introduction of clean air zones as a result of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on traffic levels.

Rachel Maclean:

Following the initial impact of the pandemic Government agreed last summer to requests to delay work on the introduction of Clean Air Zones in a number of areas, recognising the significant uncertainties and economic hardship arising from Covid19.

While levels of Nitrogen Dioxide emissions (NO₂) fell across the UK during lockdown, levels are rising again in many places as traffic levels increase. That is why various interventions such as Clean Air Zones are needed to tackle pollution levels and to improve public health. We have therefore made clear that we expect local authorities to progress their work to implement measures to tackle NO₂ exceedences in the shortest possible time, including introduction of Clean Air Zones where these are needed.

We continue to engage with local authorities and keep plans for all Clean Air Zones under regular review to ensure we deliver compliance in the shortest time possible.

We are pleased that Bath and North East Somerset introduced their Clean Air Zone on 15 March 2021 with Birmingham following on 1 June. Portsmouth City Council is expected to launch its CAZ over the winter, and further zones expected to be introduced next year.

Local authorities have been supported by the Government with a comprehensive package of technical and financial support to deliver compliance with roadside NO₂ concentration limits.

■ Department for Transport: Electric Vehicles

Kerry McCarthy: [\[31341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28986, if he will make it his policy that all new vehicles acquired by his Department between 12 July 2021 and 2030 are zero emission vehicles rather than ultra-low emission vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is determined to be seen to lead by example as the UK transitions to zero emission vehicles. As part of the 'Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain' publication, on 14 July, the Government increased its level of ambition on its own vehicle fleet electrification, and committed to 100% of the Government car and van fleet to be fully zero emission at the tailpipe, by 31 December 2027. This brings forward the target by three years from 2030, strengthens the ambition level from ultra low emission (ULEV) to zero emission (ZEV), and includes vans in the commitment for the first time. The interim target of 25% ultra low emission cars in Government fleets by 2022 remains.

■ Driving Licences

Mike Amesbury: [\[29890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with insurance companies on DVLA guidance in respect of drivers driving on an expired licence while waiting for a replacement licence to be issued.

Rachel Maclean:

Section 88 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 allows drivers who have sent a valid application to the DVLA to continue driving while waiting for their application to be processed. Strict criteria apply and these are outlined online [here](#).

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Esther McVey: [\[29791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many villages the HS2 route travels through; and what recent assessment the Government has made of the impact on housing supply in those villages.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 aims to avoid residential areas but HS2 Ltd does not categorise the different types of residential areas that lie along its route.

HS2 will act as a catalyst for growth and regeneration in and around the major cities it connects, creating opportunities to develop new homes in close proximity to station sites.

Imports: Costs**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[31327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will carry out an assessment of the reasons for the recent increases in shipping costs for products from overseas, including the Far East, for wholesalers and suppliers in the UK.

Robert Courts:

My Department has been monitoring international shipping operations, and engaging closely, with the sector throughout the pandemic. Shipping costs during 2021 have risen to a global high level in international freight markets as a result of unprecedented levels of demand driven by changed consumer behaviour during the pandemic.

Historical trends in the shipping sector are of pricing peaks and troughs and although industry estimates that high levels of demand and pricing are likely to continue throughout 2021, it is expected that pricing levels should similarly re-adjust when the current demand drivers change.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[31345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of heavy goods vehicle drivers required to fill current UK vacancies in that sector.

Rachel Maclean:

We concur with estimates from industry sources, including the industry think tank, 'Driver Require', and Logistics UK, which estimate there are 22,000 vacancies for heavy goods vehicle drivers. The underlying, longer-term shortage, which has been present for several years, has been estimated to be between 60,000 to 76,000.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Waste Disposal**Catherine West:**[\[31493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking with local authorities to increase the number of heavy goods vehicle drivers who work in local authority waste collection.

Rachel Maclean:

Waste collection is a responsibility of local authorities, and this includes oversight of all components of the service provided.

■ Large Goods Vehicles

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[31447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what risk assessment his Department carried out before 31 January 2020 on the effect of the UK leaving the EU on the domestic road haulage sector; and what steps he took in response to the findings of that risk assessment.

Rachel Maclean:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) allows EU hauliers to continue to operate to, from, through and within the UK without the need for permits. The TCA ensures that the vast majority of journeys will continue as they did before the end of the transition period. The agreement also entirely respects the UK's right to decide for ourselves how we regulate the domestic transport sector since domestic transport standards are out of scope of the Agreement.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[31448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department made of the potential implications for his policies for the domestic road haulage sector of the combined effect of the UK leaving the EU and the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) allows EU hauliers to continue to operate to, from, through and within the UK without the need for permits. The TCA ensures that the vast majority of journeys will continue as they did before the end of the transition period. The Agreement also entirely respects the UK's right to decide for ourselves how we regulate the domestic transport sector since domestic transport standards are out of scope of the Agreement.

On the impact of Covid-19 on the domestic haulage market, Covid-19 necessitated a suspension in commercial driver testing, pausing supply of domestic talent, but the DVSA have now restarted and ramped up testing to address the backlog. This shortage of HGV drivers is longstanding and predates the UK's decision to leave the EU.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[31342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will publish its response to the consultation on Pavement parking: options for change, announced on 31 August 2020, before the summer recess.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department received over 15,000 responses to the consultation. We are carefully considering the consultation findings and the results will inform our policy decisions. We will be publishing a response when we have completed this work.

Sarah Olney: [\[31508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to publish the findings of its consultation entitled Pavement parking: options for change, announced on 31 August 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department received over 15,000 responses to the consultation. We are carefully considering the consultation findings and the results will inform our policy decisions. We will be publishing a response when we have completed this work, which is a priority.

■ Railways

Sarah Olney: [\[31506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many closed railway lines the Government has assessed for reopening in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to date.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In 2020, the Government pledged £500 million for the Restoring Your Railway Fund to deliver its manifesto commitment and start reopening lines and stations. The Department is always considering potential schemes that come forward. As part of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund, we have assessed 199 bids to develop proposals to build and enhance rail lines and stations, and awarded funding to 25 so far. We expect to announce the outcomes of the third round in the summer.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions

Feryal Clark: [\[29152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on ensuring that the Transport Decarbonisation Plan makes progress for achieving net-zero for all modes of transport.

Rachel Maclean:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Ministerial Colleagues on a number of issues including transport decarbonisation. We have worked closely right across government throughout the development of our world-leading plan, "*Decarbonising Transport: a better, greener Britain*" which has now been published. We will continue to work together to implement its policies and deliver our commitments to decarbonise transport and achieve net zero by 2050.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Dan Jarvis: [\[31401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason it is the Government's policy that people travelling from amber list countries during covid-19 travel restrictions who take a PCR test to release at Day 8 with a negative result are not allowed to leave

quarantine whereas those that pay for a PCR test on Day 5 and test negative are allowed to leave quarantine.

Robert Courts:

Testing remains an important part of our toolkit to manage the risk of imported cases of Covid-19, as well as identifying variants of concern.

The timing of all post-arrival tests is based on data modelling from Public Health England which shows that, due to the limited number of travellers taking up the scheme and the smaller differential between levels of infection at Days 5 and 8, Test to Release has minimal impact on infection rates but supports essential travel for businesses and individuals where appropriate.

However, even the most accurate test can only detect the virus in a person when the viral load is high enough to do so. Therefore, the day 8 test is necessary to ensure that Amber arrivals who are due to end self-isolation no longer pose a threat of infecting others. This applies even if you have opted into Test to Release and tested negative on day 5. If your day 8 test is positive you must self-isolate for a further 10 days.

We will continue to regularly review the measures in place to take account of the domestic and international health picture.

TREASURY

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Blood Cancer

Henry Smith:

[\[30341\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for those employees with blood cancer whose work makes it difficult for reasonable covid-19 adjustments to be implemented.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is available to all employers and employees providing they meet the eligibility criteria. This includes Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) individuals; such as those with cancers of the blood.

Shielding advice was paused on 1 April, and the Government is now advising clinically extremely vulnerable people generally to follow the same guidance as everyone else, taking appropriate precautions to keep themselves safe. The Health and Safety Executive has also published resources to support employers and CEV employees, which can be found on its website.

CEV individuals should also talk to their employer to discuss and agree options in relation to work, for example the ability to work from home, or returning to the workplace in a different role if their previous position cannot be fulfilled in a Covid-secure manner.

Closing the CJRS at the end of September is designed to strike a balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work as demand returns.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Zero Hours Contracts

Mr Clive Betts:

[31307]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether staff employed on zero hour contracts, who receive their holiday pay as an average of their earnings, are entitled to receive their full holiday pay entitlement through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; and whether there are requirements under that scheme for employers to provide employees with written confirmation of holiday (a) entitlement and (b) payment whilst being furloughed.

Jesse Norman:

Individuals, including those on zero-hour contracts, can take paid holiday, and continue to accrue holiday entitlement, while on furlough.

If a furloughed worker takes holiday, the employer should pay them their full holiday pay, calculated in accordance with BEIS guidance. Employers will be obliged to fund any additional amounts over the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) grant.

BEIS has published guidance covering how holiday entitlement and pay operate during the coronavirus pandemic, where it differs from the standard holiday entitlement and pay guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/holiday-entitlement-and-pay-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

There is no requirement specific to the CJRS scheme in which the employer will need to provide written confirmation to workers of holiday entitlement and holiday payment while on furlough.

■ Cryptocurrencies: Registration

Philip Davies:

[29003]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to section 1E of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 on the competition objective, what assessment he has made of the performance of the Financial Conduct Authority in respect of the anti-money laundering / counter terrorist financing registration of cryptoasset businesses.

Philip Davies:

[29004]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Financial Conduct Authority's recent extension of the Temporary Registration Regime for cryptoasset businesses.

John Glen:

The FCA's competition objective, as set out in section 1E of the Financial Services and Market Act 2000 (FSMA), requires the FCA to promote effective competition in the interests of consumers in markets for regulated financial services. Activities relating to cryptoassets do not constitute regulated financial services, except where a

cryptoasset qualifies as a Specified Investment under the Regulated Activities Order or is e-Money. The FCA's competition objective therefore does not apply with respect to most markets for cryptoassets. Where a cryptoasset is a Specified Investment or e-Money, the cryptoasset business should already have been registered with the FCA for anti-money laundering supervision, independently of the new supervisory regime for cryptoasset businesses.

The FCA's decision to extend the Temporary Registration Regime for cryptoasset businesses to 31 March 2022 will allow firms that are currently on the temporary register to continue operating whilst their applications are assessed, and preserve consumers' access to a range of cryptoasset firms in the intervening period. This strikes an appropriate balance between mitigating the risk of money laundering in the cryptoasset sector, and ensuring that cryptoasset businesses based in the UK, and the customers they serve, are not subject to undue disruption.

■ Cryptocurrencies: Regulation

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[31366\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what comparative assessment he has made of the Financial Conduct Authority's regulatory approach to (a) digital and (b) currencies; what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of UK financial regulation of digital currencies on their development; what assessment he had made of the adequacy of the steps being taken to support new business and innovation in this area in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to retaining its global leadership position in fintech and fully recognises its important role in delivering better financial services for people and businesses. The Government also believes that, in practice, this means creating a regulatory environment in which firms can innovate, while crucially maintaining the highest regulatory standards so that people can use new technologies both reliably and safely. This is essential for continuing confidence in the financial system more broadly.

On 10 January 2020, the FCA became the anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing (AML/CTF) supervisor for cryptoassets firms. A robust AML regime for cryptoassets will help to bolster confidence in the UK as a safe and reputable place to start and grow a cryptoasset business.

To further protect consumers, the FCA has banned the sale of cryptoasset derivatives to retail consumers, and recently issued a warning stating that consumers who invest in cryptoassets should be prepared to lose their money.

The Government has also proposed several further changes to respond to cryptoassets. On 7 January launched a consultation on its regulatory approach to cryptoassets and stablecoins. This set out the view that new and emerging forms of cryptoassets, known as stablecoins, which seek to stabilise their value, could be used as widespread means of payment and potentially deliver improvements in cross-

border transactions. At the same time, depending on scale and nature of use, these developments could pose similar financial stability and consumer risks as traditional regulated payment systems.

The Government is considering responses and will outline next steps in due course. Any steps taken in light of this consultation will aim to balance the potential risk to consumers with the ambition to foster competition and innovation in the sector.

This measure is being considered alongside a proposal to bring certain cryptoassets, including Bitcoin, into the scope of financial promotions regulation. This would ensure that relevant cryptoasset promotions are held to the same high standards for fairness, clarity, and accuracy that pertain in the financial services industry. The Government will be publishing its response in due course.

■ Imports: Carbon Tax

Geraint Davies: [\[902805\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the introduction of a carbon tax for imported goods.

Kemi Badenoch:

As we transition to net zero, the UK recognises the carbon leakage risk. A range of approaches could potentially help to address this risk, of which carbon border adjustments are one. Treasury ministers and officials are in regular contact with colleagues across the government on all matters related to the Net Zero transition.

■ Non-domestic Rating (Telecommunications Infrastructure Relief) (England) Regulations

Stephen Timms: [\[31282\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many certificates the Valuation Office Agency has issued under the Non-Domestic Rating (Telecommunications Infrastructure Relief) (England) Regulations 2018; and what the value is of those certificates.

Jesse Norman:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has issued 71 certificates. The Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 restricts VOA from providing specific information, in order to protect ratepayer confidentiality. Disclosing the total value of the certificates could allow specific companies to be identified, since only a small number of companies are included.

Stephen Timms: [\[31283\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many certificates the Valuation Office Agency has issued to BT pursuant to The Non-Domestic Rating (Telecommunications Infrastructure Relief) (England) Regulations 2018; and what the total value of those certificates is.

Jesse Norman:

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is responsible for the valuation of non-domestic properties for business rates purposes in England and Wales. The Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 restricts VOA from providing specific information about companies, in order to protect ratepayer confidentiality.

Overseas Loans: Republic of Ireland**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[31328\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total amount was that the Republic of Ireland received under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010; and how much in interest was paid on that loan.

John Glen:

Ireland received a loan of a total of £3,226,960,000 under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010, which has been repaid in full as of 31 March 2021. The total interest paid was £628,677,551.77.

Public Sector Debt**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[31329\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of public sector net debt at the end of the 2021-22 financial year.

Steve Barclay:

The Treasury does not publish forecasts of the economy or the public finances; the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is the UK's official forecaster. In their March 2021 forecast, the OBR projected that Public Sector Net Debt (PSND) for 2021-22 will be £2.5 trillion or 107.4% of GDP. In addition, underlying debt (PSND excluding the Bank of England) is forecast to be £2.2 trillion or 93.8% of GDP in 2021-22.

This reflects that the policy support announced by the government in response to the pandemic has led to a significant but necessary increase in borrowing and debt. At the Budget in March, the government set out steps to strengthen the public finances, with the OBR forecast showing the public finances on a more sustainable footing with debt stable over the medium-term.

Revenue and Customs: Legal Costs**Philip Dunne:**[\[28999\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much HMRC has spent in aggregate on legal costs defending claims from taxpayers which reached court in each of the last 10 available financial years.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC incur several different types of legal costs when defending claims in Tribunals and Courts, such as Counsel fees, Court costs and Expert Witness costs. The

department's financial records are not currently set up to differentiate between costs relating to defending claims in Courts or Tribunals and other legal spend.

However, HMRC can provide costs incurred on Counsel fees and Court fees in litigation teams over the last 10 years. Aside from their staff costs, these will cover the vast majority of external legal spend on litigation and related activities.

	2010/1	2011/1	2012/1	2013/1	2014/1	2015/1	2016/1	2017/1	2018/1	2019/2	2020/2
£000s	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1
Counsel fees	6,643	7,983	6,851	7,326	8,840	8,599	7,956	7,923	8,926	8,464	7,935
Court costs	90	109	128	130	90	121	175	127	148	155	134
Expert Witnesses costs*										1,030	1,107

*Data not available for years 2010/11 – 2018/19

The Tax Assurance Commissioner's Report (part of HMRC's Annual Report) contains details of the tax protected in litigation by HMRC. Over the last 5 years this has amounted to over £180 billion.

■ Taxation: Self-assessment

Ruth Cadbury: [\[31428\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the average time taken by HMRC in processing self-assessment repayment requests.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[31430\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to reduce the time taken by HMRC to process self-assessment repayment requests.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC have to balance processing repayment claims quickly with protecting the public purse from incorrect or fraudulent claims. In order to do this they undertake a number of automated and manual checks. Currently, owing to the effects of COVID-19 and the introduction of various Government schemes to support taxpayers, HMRC are seeing an increase in the number of repayment claims within the Self-Assessment system. HMRC aim to provide a fair and consistent service to all taxpayers while prioritising the most vulnerable where appropriate. HMRC deploy their resources based on customer demand, business requirements, and key business events, in order to provide the best possible service.

HMRC publish their performance data regularly at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports> and
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[31391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee on 7 July 2021, when she plans for all universal credit claimants to have been sent a letter informing them that the £20 uplift to the standard allowance will be removed on 30 September 2021.

Will Quince:

The Government has always been clear that the £20 increase was a temporary measure to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March.

Claimants will be notified ahead of this change to the temporary uplift. The details of this process are currently being finalised.

■ Bereavement Support Payment

Justin Madders: [\[29816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 28 April 2021 to Question 186186 on Bereavement Support Payment, what his timetable is for completing the evaluation of the Bereavement Support Payment.

Guy Opperman:

The exact timetable for completing the evaluation of BSP is still under review.

It has always been our intention to evaluate how Bereavement Support Payment (BSP) is working once sufficient time has elapsed to allow claimants to come to the end of the 18-month period of payment, and for a sufficient sample size of claimants to build.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Fees and Charges

Marion Fellows: [\[29832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much the Child Maintenance Service collected in application and processing fees for the collect and pay service during the (a) financial year 2020-2021 and (b) first financial quarter of 2021-22.

Guy Opperman:

The information requested is not available until the audit of the 2020/21 and 2021/2022 Child Maintenance Service Annual Report and Accounts is complete.

■ Children: Maintenance

Marion Fellows: [\[29836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of parents who are paying child maintenance and the 20 per cent fee through the Child Maintenance Service collect and pay service are (a) men and (b) women.

Guy Opperman:

All Paying Parents with a Collect and Pay arrangement pay the 20 percent fee and the number of such parents at the end of March 2021, broken down by gender are shown in the table below.

Table 1: The number of Paying Parents with a Collect and Pay arrangement by gender, March 2021, Great Britain.

QUARTER ENDING	FEMALE	MALE	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
Mar-21	10,580	168,390	5,030	183,990

Source: The Child Maintenance Service administrative system

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest 10. The total may not sum due to rounding.
2. These figures include cases with CMS arrears and no ongoing monthly liability.
3. The figures supplied are derived from the datasets used to produce the [CMS Official Statistics](#).

Marion Fellows: [\[29837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of parents receiving child maintenance and paying the 4 per cent fee through the Child Maintenance Service collect and pay service are (a) men and (b) women.

Guy Opperman:

All Receiving Parents with a Collect and Pay arrangement pay the 4 percent fee and the number of such parents at the end of March 2021, broken down by gender are shown in the table below.

Table 1: The number of Receiving Parents with a Collect and Pay arrangement by gender, March 2021, Great Britain.

QUARTER ENDING	FEMALE	MALE	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
Mar-21	174,310	9,590	4,440	188,330

Source: The Child Maintenance Service administrative system

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest 10. The total may not sum due to rounding.

2. The figures supplied are derived from the datasets used to produce the [CMS Official Statistics](#).

■ Employment Schemes: Disability

Stephen Timms: **[31280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure economically inactive disabled people are supported to find jobs; and if she will make a statement.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to improving the lives of disabled people, and will publish a National Disability Strategy later this year. The Strategy will be informed by insights from the lived experience of disabled people, focusing on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects and phases of life, including employment.

A range of DWP initiatives are supporting disabled people to stay in and enter work. These include the Work and Health Programme, the Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme, Access to Work, Disability Confident and support in partnership with the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services. The Government has also increased the number of specialist Disability Employment Advisors in Jobcentres.

In addition, the DWP will shortly publish a Green Paper on health and disability support which will consider how we can improve our current service, provide extra support to navigate the system and seek to better understand how we can improve the current employment support offer.

■ Food Poverty

Rachael Maskell: **[31455]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to provide support to local authorities for individuals and families in food poverty over the 2021 summer holiday period.

Will Quince:

On 1 December, the Government launched the Covid Winter Grant Scheme, now the Covid Local Support Grant, which has provided Local Authorities in England with additional funding to support families and individuals who are struggling with the cost of food and essential utility bills as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. On 21 June we extended this temporary scheme for a final time with an additional £160 million in funding through 30 September, taking total funding under the scheme to £429 million.

As part of this extension, the City of York Council has been allocated an additional £392,216, taking its total funding since 1 December to £1,051,874.54.

This year, we are also investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme which has been expanded to every local authority across England.

Children eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals have the option to join a holiday club programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the Summer holiday period. We also increased the value of Healthy Start Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 in April.

■ **Kickstart Scheme: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[29095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Answer of 8 February 2021 to Question 143815 on Kickstart Scheme: Disability, what progress her Department has made towards tracking the success of the Kickstart scheme among young people who have a disability or health condition; and whether her Department holds data on (a) how many and (b) what proportion of Kickstart candidates (i) are disabled and (ii) have a health condition.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [6284](#).

■ **Personal Independence Payment**

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[31316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of claimants for personal independence payment that are on a fixed-term award in (a) England, (b) the North West, (c) Wirral and (d) Wallasey constituency.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus**

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[31317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of personal independence payment claimants previously awarded a fixed-term award who have had their claim stopped due to a delay in processing claims as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

We always aim to make an award decision as quickly as possible and are treating as a priority advance claims, where a person's previous fixed term award has ended. Where a person is found to still be eligible for Personal Independence Payment their award is backdated to the point they claimed or when their previous award ended, so no one loses out financially.

■ Unemployment: Ethnic Groups

Feryal Clark:

[\[29931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent representations has she made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on reducing the unemployment gap for Black, Asian, and ethnic minority people in (a) Enfield North constituency, (b) Greater London and (c) England.

Mims Davies:

The Government is committed to supporting people from all backgrounds, including those from ethnic minorities, to move into work. It provides a national offer of support ensuring that no matter where they live, all customers receive the help they need, when they need it.

Our Job Centre Plus network offers tailored interventions which allow Work Coaches to adapt their approach to suit each customer's needs. Our Plan for Jobs Programme protects, supports and creates jobs, targeting young people, the long term unemployed, and those in need of new training and skills. It includes the Kickstart scheme, an expanded youth offer, and the expansion of the Work and Health Programme, all offering new support to jobseekers, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

We also have a national programme of mentoring circles, involving employers offering specialised support to unemployed, ethnic minority jobseekers.

■ Universal Credit

Stephen Timms:

[\[31284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of paying childcare costs within universal credit in advance, to support parents who cannot afford to pay upfront charges; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

With Universal Credit, working families can claim back up to 85% of their registered childcare costs each month, compared to 70% on the legacy benefits system regardless of the number of hours worked. This can be claimed up to a month before starting a job and for families with two children, this could be worth up to £13,000 a year.

Eligible claimants can get help from the Flexible Support Fund with initial up-front fees and costs as they move into work. Alternatively, help with upfront costs may also be available through Budgeting Advances.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[31392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many current universal credit claimants have been first-time claimants of universal credit in the period since 1 April 2020.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The available information on the number of people on Universal Credit, by duration of claim, is published monthly and can be found at:

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

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

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

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[31393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of removing the £20 uplift to universal credit standard allowance on levels of in-work poverty.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[31394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of removing the £20 uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on levels of child poverty.

Will Quince:

It is not possible to produce a robust estimate of removing the £20 uplift on levels of in-work poverty or on child poverty. This is particularly the case at the moment given the uncertainty around the speed of the economic recovery, and how this will be distributed across the population.

As the economy recovers, our ambition is to help people move into and progress in work as quickly as possible based on clear evidence around the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. Our ambitious Plan for Jobs is already delivering for people of all ages right across the country and includes new schemes such as the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme, the £2.9 billion Restart Scheme and our Job Entry Targeted Support Scheme.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic and we have always been clear the uplift was temporary as part of an extensive £400 billion package of measures put in place to protect incomes, businesses and public services during the pandemic.

■ Work Capability Assessment**Jessica Morden:****[29001]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if the Government will establish an independent inquiry into the (a) number and (b) causes of deaths of those who have died after being found fit to work following a benefits assessment in each of the last six years.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department's key obligation is to ensure that claimants receive the benefits that they are entitled to, in a timely manner. We have recently put in place a number of improvements to disability benefits assessments, to ensure that vulnerable customers are identified and all evidence relevant to the claim is taken into account.

The Department is committed to learning from cases where there is suggestion or allegation that the Department's actions or omissions may have negatively contributed to a customer's circumstances. We conduct internal retrospective investigations (known as Internal Process Reviews) to capture these lessons, and take them forward to inform future policy and service.

In England and Wales (where engaged) a Coroner has responsibility for concluding the cause of death.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ The 2020 Government Chemist Review

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Science, Research and Innovation) (Amanda Solloway): [\[HCWS182\]](#)

The twenty-fourth Annual Review of the Government Chemist has been received. The Review will be placed in the Libraries of the House plus those of the Devolved Administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Review will also be laid before the Scottish Parliament.

The Government Chemist is the Referee Analyst named in Acts of Parliament. The Government Chemist's team carry out analysis in high-profile or legally disputed cases. A range of referee analysis work was carried out during 2020, which included the evaluation of genetically Modified Organisms in rice products, honey authenticity and the labelling of a novel food supplement. The Government Chemist continues to work closely with government departments, their governance group, Devolved Administrations, Non Governmental Organisations and industry, to address strategic cross-department issues such as cannabidiol (CBD) and SARS-CoV-2 viral detection.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Government Transparency and Accountability

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):
[\[HCWS185\]](#)

Since 2010, the Government has been at the forefront of opening up data to allow Parliament, the public and the media to hold public bodies to account.

Despite the need to reprioritise resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, central government departments continue to publish core transparency data. Such online transparency is crucial to delivering value for money, cutting waste and inefficiency, and ensuring every pound of taxpayers' money is spent in the best possible way.

Following the recent [Declaration on Government Reform](#), the Government will continue to look at how the range of information published by Government can be improved and made as useful as possible to the public, press and Parliament.

The following subject areas include documents and information that the Government is due to publish. This statement also includes updates on cross-government work on outcome delivery plans, business appointment rules, information management guidance for public authorities and policy work on ministerial absences.

Outcome Delivery Plans

The Government is today publishing Outcome Delivery Plans for the financial year 2021 to 22. Outcome Delivery Plans form the basis of the revised Government planning and performance framework, building and improving on the previous Single Departmental Plan framework.

Outcome Delivery Plans set out how each UK Government department is working towards the delivery of its priority outcomes, which were first and provisionally published at Spending Review 2020. Priority outcomes capture the Government's most important long-term policy objectives, from maximising employment and improving skills to achieving net zero by 2050.

In areas where closer working between departments would achieve better results, 16 outcomes were agreed on a cross-cutting basis between departments - reflecting the Government's commitment to breaking down silos and enabling stronger collaboration between departments. Outcome Delivery Plans place a greater emphasis on joint working between departments, enabling departments to plan together to deliver shared outcomes. The Government has also identified provisional metrics for each outcome at Spending Review 2020, against which progress towards delivering these outcomes will be measured.

Since the Spending Review 2020, these priority outcomes and metrics have been further refined and revisions to those are reflected in Outcome Delivery Plans. Priority outcomes and metrics will be reviewed again where appropriate at the next Spending Review later this year.

In addition to setting out the strategy for achieving priority outcomes, departments also identify plans for delivering critical enabling activities, which are crucial to the successful delivery of outcomes. These enabling activities include: attracting and investing in skilled people; embracing innovation; and strengthening functional expertise to support the delivery of outcomes. To ensure we deliver on our sustainability commitments and make the Civil Service the UK's most inclusive employer, the plans set out how departments are driving sustainability, how their work contributes to the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Government's equality objectives.

The new plans also place greater emphasis on high-quality evaluation, which is critical to understanding what works. This builds on the detailed overviews of evidence bases and valuation plans that departments provided to inform decisions at Spending Review 2020.

The Government uses regular reporting to monitor progress against Outcome Delivery Plans. Parliament and the public will be able to review how each department is performing against its priority outcomes in their Annual Report and Accounts, which departments publish annually after the end of each financial year. More regular performance information for many of the metrics agreed for priority outcomes can be found in official statistics and other public datasets. Hyperlinks to these datasets have been included in Outcome Delivery Plans to make this data more accessible to the public.

Transparency in delivery of major projects

The Cabinet Office is publishing the Annual Report on Major Projects 2020-21 (and accompanying quarterly Government Major Projects Portfolio data taken as a snapshot at 31 March 2021). The annual publication on the Government's major projects raises awareness of how Government is improving public services, providing value for money and benefits for citizens through its major projects. The report and accompanying spreadsheets detail the 183 projects on the Government's Major Project Portfolio.

Ministerial Transparency

Departments will be today publishing the routine quarterly Ministerial data on external meetings, gifts, hospitality and overseas travel.

Transparency on Special Advisers and Senior Officials

Special advisers are a critical part of the team supporting Ministers. They add a political dimension to the advice and assistance available to Ministers while reinforcing the impartiality of the permanent Civil Service by distinguishing the source of political advice and support.

In line with legislation, each year the Cabinet Office publishes a list of Special Advisers and their costs. Today, the Cabinet Office will be publishing the list of special advisers in post along with the cost of special advisers from the previous financial year (April 2020 - March 2021).

The Cabinet Office will also be publishing quarterly data on gifts and hospitality received by special advisers, as well as information on special adviser meetings with senior media figures and business appointment rules advice.

Departments will also be publishing routine quarterly data on the travel, expenses and meetings of senior officials and on business appointment rules advice.

Transparency in the Civil Service

Alongside routine workforce management information and sickness data, departments will shortly be publishing updated organograms.

Transparency on correspondence

The Cabinet Office is publishing correspondence data on the performance of departments and agencies in responding to correspondence from Members of Parliament and Members of the House of Lords during the calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Transparency in public bodies and public appointments

The Cabinet Office will today be publishing 'Public Bodies 2020'. Public Bodies play a vital role in the delivery of public services for all our citizens, covering wide-ranging functions. Well-governed, effective and efficient public bodies enable the Government to deliver its priorities. Public Bodies 2020 is an annual directory that provides a single transparent source of top-level financial and non-financial data on all executive agencies, non-departmental public bodies and non-ministerial departments across Government.

The Cabinet Office will also be publishing public appointments data. The public appointments data report provides a breakdown of the diversity of public appointees who

were in roles covered by the Governance Code on public appointments on 31 March 2020 and those appointed to such roles between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. The latter data is a subset of the information published in the Commissioner for Public Appointments' annual report.

Management of public authority records and information

The Government is publishing a revised Code of Practice on records management. Under Section 46(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport has a duty to publish, and a right to revise, a Code of Practice providing guidance to relevant authorities on the management of their records. The Code is a technical document aimed at supporting information management professionals in public authorities to discharge their duties under the Act.

In 2018, the National Archives was commissioned to undertake a routine review of the Code. The Code has since been revised and updated on a principles-based, format-neutral basis, bringing the existing 2009 code up to date with contemporary information management practice and the modern digital working environment. The revised Code places information management in the context of broad principles, providing a more accessible framework which outlines how authorities should best manage their information to support appropriate public access under the Act. The Code also clarifies the basis on which the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives operates.

Ministerial Absences - Further Work

Following the passing of the Ministerial and other Maternity Allowances Act in March of this year, the Government has continued work considering the practical and policy considerations surrounding other forms of Ministerial absence. We are specifically considering whether provision can be extended in circumstances of paternity leave, adoption leave, shared parental leave and sickness leave. These are complex issues which require careful consideration, taking into account modern working practices and the wider constitutional context. The Government has continued to make progress in its consideration of these issues as they relate to Ministers but is mindful of related work in other areas looking at the wider workforce and provisions for MPs, led by IPSA. The Government will present a report focused on ministerial leave provision to Parliament in the Autumn, setting out considerations and proposals.

Improving the Business Appointment Rules

As the Government has previously set out, the Cabinet Office is working with the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments to improve the operation and efficacy of the Business Appointment Rules. The work will consider and implement improvements to the scope and clarity of the Rules, including the enforcement of the rules with an update to the Rules later this year. The Cabinet Office is also working closely with Departments to improve the consistency and proportionality of the implementation of the rules, including improving training on and communication of the rules.

Copies of associated documents are being placed in the Library of the House and will be published on GOV.UK.

DEFENCE**■ UK Carrier Strike Group – Phase One Update****Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):****[[HCWS188](#)]**

On 23 May the UK Carrier Strike Group (CSG21) set sail on her maiden operational deployment and has now completed the first phase. The Strike Group's route has taken them through the eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and in the final weeks of June, they were operating in the Black Sea and delivering combat missions from the eastern Mediterranean concurrently.

During the first phase CSG21 has undertaken an impressive array of exercises working with NATO allies and key international partners. Exercise Steadfast Defender was the principal NATO exercise during this period, but we also participated in dual-carrier operations with our French allies, with HMS Queen Elizabeth sailing in company with the FS Charles de Gaulle.

The carrier air wing has undertaken a range of air exercises including Atlantic Trident and Gallic Strike with the US and France; Falcon Strike with Italy, the US and Israel; and Tri-Lightning with the US and Israel.

This was also a period of concentrated operational activity and development of the carrier strike capability. We provided support to ongoing NATO operations in the Black Sea and NATO's maritime security operation (Sea Guardian) in the Mediterranean. For around two weeks, CSG21 provided support to Operation SHADER, the UK contribution to the Coalition effort to defeat Daesh in Iraq and Syria. While in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean we had to deal with persistent and often irresponsible harassment by Russian forces. This unfortunate continuation of Russian aggression was dealt with exceptionally by our forces, demonstrating not only the capabilities of the CSG, but also the professionalism and restraint of our Service personnel.

Ships from the Strike Group have conducted port visits to Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine. The programmes and ministerial attendance around those visits helped enhance security, diplomatic and trade relationships that will make the world safer, and will protect and promote prosperity and the rule of law.

We extend our enormous thanks and our great respect to all those nations and armed forces with whom we have engaged and worked alongside. This deployment is the Integrated Review in action and demonstrates the friendships and alliances that we have in place across the globe. Together with our allies we are developing a joint capability that is cutting-edge.

Phase two of the of the deployment, began on 7 July, and will involve transiting the Suez Canal into the Red Sea ahead of the group crossing the Indian Ocean and on to the Indo-Pacific.

Whilst operating in the eastern Mediterranean HMS Diamond experienced some technical issues and has detached from the Task Group for maintenance, inspection and

defect rectification. She is expected to re-join the Task Group during the Indo-Pacific phase of the deployment.

During phase one, as part of routine testing, Covid 19 cases were detected on four vessels within the Strike Group. All deployed personnel on CSG21 are fully vaccinated, tested regularly and appropriate protocols were put in place to isolate the cases where possible.

All personnel who are symptomatic are experiencing mild symptoms only and to date there has not been a single COVID-19 admission to sickbay. The Strike Group is currently at sea, has only contactless activity planned for the coming weeks, and will have had at least two weeks at sea before its next planned visits. We take nothing for granted in that regard and are working closely with partners to understand how we can balance engagement and interaction with safety for all concerned.

It is also with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence can confirm that a Royal Navy sailor from HMS Kent died on 10 July 2021. The individual's next of kin have been informed and have requested privacy at this difficult time. The Ministry of Defence offers its profound condolences to the individual's family and friends. The Ship's Company of HMS Kent are in our thoughts during this difficult time.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Consultation on introducing an approved sale mechanism for the sale of National Lottery products by 16 and 17 year olds

Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale): [\[HCWS180\]](#)

The National Lottery has made a huge contribution to life in the UK since it was launched in 1994, raising over £43bn for arts, sports, heritage and community projects. More recently, it has contributed over £1.2bn to those affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, supporting everything from our outdoor spaces to our museums, theatres and sports clubs, helping to keep us active, entertained and safe.

Following a consultation, the Government announced last year that it was raising the age at which National Lottery tickets can be bought and sold from 16 to 18, protecting young people from the possible risk of gambling harm. The legislation comes into force on October 1st and the operator and retailers have already stopped selling tickets to anyone aged below 18.

Since then, it has emerged that the increase to 18 for the minimum age to sell in particular may lead to operational difficulties for some retailers who employ young people aged 16 and 17.

In order to balance the need for a smooth transition for retailers with the intent of the original policy, this consultation [published today](#) seeks views on a minor technical easement which would introduce an approved sales mechanism for National Lottery products. This will be based on the systems already in place for alcohol sales in England, Wales and Scotland, and sales of tobacco and nicotine vaping products in Scotland,

through which a designated person aged 18 or over can approve a sale by someone under 18 years old. This approach therefore builds on an existing framework and maintains the intent of the original policy.

I look forward to hearing views of interested parties during the consultation.

EDUCATION

■ Skills Reform Update

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

[[HCWS186](#)]

Today, as the Government continues to build back better from the pandemic and begins the critical work of levelling up our country, the Department for Education is announcing the next steps towards delivering the ambitious reforms set out in the Skills for Jobs White Paper.

This includes announcing the Skills Accelerator trailblazer areas, a further expansion of Skills Bootcamps, publishing the National Skills Fund Consultation and launching a consultation seeking views on simplifying funding for adult skills and strengthening the accountability of colleges.

These reforms will help to put employers at the heart of the system, making sure people have the skills they need to get good jobs in the areas our economy needs. They will also ensure people have the opportunity to train, retrain and upskill at any stage while empowering and enabling providers to deliver these reforms.

Skills Accelerator

The Skills Accelerator programme will give employers a central role working with colleges, other providers, and local stakeholders to shape technical skills provision so that it meets labour market needs. It establishes partnerships led by employer representative bodies, developing Local Skills Improvement Plans that will drive investment in the skills sector.

We are now taking the next step towards delivering the Skills Accelerator, by announcing 18 development fund pilot areas, of which 8 will also be Local Skills Improvement Plan trailblazer areas. Details can be accessed here at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-accelerator-trailblazers-and-pilots>.

The new employer-led plans will ensure that technical education and training is well-aligned to what employers need. Ultimately, this will support learners to develop the skills that will enable them to get a well-paid and secure job, no matter where they live, and in the sectors that are critical to our future economic success.

Members of the pilot development fund collaborations will deliver their proposals, which will enable and enhance strategic partnerships between employers and post-16 providers, and test how these alliances will help shape future technical skills provision.

Skills Bootcamps expansion

Since the Prime Minister set out his vision for the Lifetime Skills Guarantee last year, the Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps have been helping adults to gain valuable skills that employers need. Both these adult skills offers are funded through the National Skills Fund, a long term, substantial investment of £2.5bn to drive adult retraining at the advanced and higher technical skills levels the nation needs.

The National Skills Fund has successfully delivered the first wave of Skills Bootcamps and we are pleased to announce the next wave of this exciting, transformational programme – this expansion will roll out more in demand skills to approximately 16,000 adults by the end of March 2022. These innovative, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks will continue to give adults aged 19 and over the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. These Skills Bootcamps cover a wide range of digital, technical and construction skills, including software development, data analytics, construction site management and retrofitting. We are expanding the Skills Bootcamps so they are available to adults across the country and registration for the first of these is open now, with more becoming available over the coming weeks. Details are available here at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-courses-for-jobs>.

National Skills Fund Consultation

Through the National Skills Fund, we are already delivering the Free Courses For Jobs offer which provides adults across England with the opportunity to achieve their first full Level 3 qualification by giving access to around 400 fully funded courses. While Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps are already enabling thousands of adults to gain valuable skills, we know there is much more to do and the potential for what we could do through the Fund is great.

That is why today we are launching a national consultation to help us ensure that we use National Skills Fund investment effectively to meet the skills needs of adults and employers to the end of this parliament.

We are keen to hear from a wide range of stakeholders in response to the consultation, as it presents stakeholders with an excellent opportunity to feed back on the Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps which are already being funded through National Skills Fund investment. The consultation also requests views on meeting critical skills needs to help us ensure we deliver valued skills that will help us build back better.

The consultation closes on the 17 September and can be accessed via <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-further-education-fe-funding-and-accountability>

Funding and Accountability Consultation

Today we are also launching a consultation seeking views on simplifying funding for adult skills and strengthening the accountability of colleges.

This consultation delivers a key commitment of the Skills for Jobs White Paper. The proposed changes aim to:

- make sure colleges and other providers are better supported to focus on helping their students into good jobs employers are recruiting for, now and in the future;

- reduce the complexity of adult funding through the Skills Fund;
- define clearer roles and responsibilities for Ofsted and the Further Education Commissioner.

The consultation closes on the 7 October and can be accessed via <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforms-to-fe-funding-and-accountability>.

Conclusion

Today's announcements are key milestones in the delivery of our ambitious Skills for Jobs reform programme which will transform the whole skills system so that we can train the dynamic and flexible workforce needed to rebuild our economy, build back a greener, and compete globally.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Report on Regulations Made under Section 32 of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018

Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams): [\[HCWS184\]](#)

My Honourable Friend, the Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon), has made the following written Ministerial statement:

I am today laying before Parliament a report, 'Report under section 32 of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 on the exercise of power to make Regulations under section 1 of the Act'.

The report details the regulations made under section 1 of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 during the reporting period from 23 May 2020 to 22 May 2021, with a focus on those regulations which are aimed at dealing with gross violations of human rights.

We have also included information on additional actions the government has taken related to human rights sanctions, including information on certain designations made in relation to serious human rights abuses or violations.

■ The Government Hospitality Wine Cellar Bi-Annual Report 2018 - 2020

Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams): [\[HCWS179\]](#)

I have today placed a copy of the Government Hospitality Wine Cellar Bi-Annual Report for the Financial Years 2018-19 and 2019-20 in the Libraries of both Houses.

Following the outcome of the review of the Government Hospitality Wine Cellar in 2011, this Bi-Annual Report continues our commitment to reporting to Parliament on the use of the Wine Cellar, covering consumption, stock purchases, costs, and value for money. The wine cellar has been self-funding since 2011/12, through the sale of some high-value stock and payments made by other Government departments for events organised by Government Hospitality.

The report notes that in 2018-19:

- The highest consumption level by volume was again of English and Welsh wine, at 53% of the total (cf. 57% in 17/18);
- Purchases amounted to £46,906 (ex-VAT), a decrease of nearly 18% by value cf. £56,976 in 17/18;
- The highest volume of purchases was of English and Welsh wines at 49% of the total;
- Consumption by volume increased by some 2.8% in FY 2018/19;
- Sales of stock amounted to £44,200 (cf. £50,600 in FY 17/18);
- Further funds from other government departments added £16,985 to the overall receipts (cf. £26,494 in 17/18).

The report notes in 2019-20:

- The highest consumption level by volume was again of English wines, at 56% of the total;
- Consumption by volume fell overall by 17.5% in FY 2019/20;
- The highest volume of purchases was of English or Welsh wines at 73% of the total;
- No sales were achieved due to the advent of the Coronavirus pandemic, but funds recovered from other government departments added £23, 220 to the overall receipts;
- Purchases amounted to £73,091, due to major purchases of English still and sparkling wines.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Mental Health Act reform consultation response

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid):

[\[HCWS189\]](#)

The Government has today published the joint Department of Health and Social Care and Ministry of Justice consultation response to the White Paper *Reforming the Mental Health Act*, published in January this year.

The publication of this report represents a significant milestone on the road to reform of the Mental Health Act, a once in a generation reform programme. It summarises the invaluable and constructive responses that we have heard from the public and stakeholders, and takes us a step closer towards the fulfilment of two Manifesto commitments:

- That we “will legislate so that patients suffering from mental health conditions...have greater control over their treatment and receive the dignity and respect they deserve”.

- That we “will make it easier for people with learning disabilities and autism to be discharged from hospital and improve how they are treated in law”.

In January we published a Mental Health Act White Paper, responding to the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act which was conducted by Sir Simon Wessely and published in 2018.

This White Paper set out that we will be accepting the vast majority of the recommendations and asked a series of consultation questions on the detail and implementation of the proposals.

Since the consultation closed in April, we have analysed more than 1,700 responses. In parallel to the consultation, our departments have held policy development workshops to get richer insights from service users, clinicians, and those with lived experience of detention under the Act, on the details of the proposals.

The consultation response, published today, includes no new policy announcements, and instead reports on the feedback from clinicians, service users, those with lived experience of detention, and other key stakeholders on the 35 questions posed in the White Paper to gather views on the best way to implement the reforms and ensure they achieve their aims, and inform further policy development as we progress towards a Bill to reform the Act, which we will bring forward when parliamentary time allows.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with general support for the proposals and direction of travel set out in the White Paper. The responses have provided valuable insights on the practicalities of implementation, which our departments will work through, and continue to engage as we do so. We are committed to continue the open policy making approach, in order to bring forward a Bill which will improve how the Act works for everyone. There are a small number of areas where the consultation response did not support the direction of travel set out in the White Paper, or there were mixed views on the proposals. We will reflect on the feedback received, and continue to engage with key stakeholders, prior to taking final policy decisions to inform the Bill.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Update on Delivery of Food and Essential Goods

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): [\[HCWS187\]](#)

I wish to update the House on the measures the Government is taking to ensure the availability of food, sanitary and other essential goods.

The food sector is facing a new, exceptional challenge resulting from the acute shortage of HGV drivers across the distribution network. This is resulting in missed deliveries of food and other essential goods and has the potential to lead to significant shortages. The Government wants to respond to this proactively by ensuring the industry has the tools available to effectively respond to these pressures to minimise any disruption to the public.

My colleague, the Rt Hon Grant Shapps, [introduced measures](#) on 12 July 2021 aimed at proactively addressing this issue, through the temporary relaxation of HGV driving time regulations. I wish to complement these measures by making this Written Ministerial Statement about the enforcement of planning conditions relating to delivery hours to retailers of food, sanitary and other essential goods. This will allow for both measures to work in tandem, providing the industry with much needed logistical flexibility. We believe these measures will provide supermarkets, other retailers of food and essential goods and their suppliers with increased flexibility over deliveries to ensure a consistent supply of essential goods.

Many supermarkets, food retailers and distribution centres in England are subject to controls which restrict the time and number of deliveries from lorries and other delivery vehicles, particularly at night. These include planning conditions, which are necessary to make the development acceptable to local residents who might otherwise suffer from traffic, noise and other local amenity issues as a result of these deliveries.

The National Planning Policy Framework already emphasises that planning enforcement is a discretionary activity, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control.

The purpose of this Written Ministerial Statement, which comes into effect immediately, is to make clear that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to their engagement with food retailers and distributors, as well as the freight industry, to ensure planning controls are not a barrier to deliveries of food, sanitary and other essential goods.

Local planning authorities should not seek to undertake planning enforcement action which would result in unnecessarily restricting deliveries of food, sanitary and other essential goods during this period, having regard to their legal obligations. The Government recognises that it may be necessary for action to be taken in relation to the impacts on neighbours of sustained disturbance due to deliveries outside of conditioned hours, particularly where this affects sleep. In this case a local planning authority should consider any efforts made by retailers to manage and mitigate such disturbance, taking into account the degree and longevity of amenity impacts.

On 13 March 2020, I made a similar statement to the house in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We kept this under review and extended the provisions with additional statements as necessary. This statement will replace all my previous statements on the matter.

This Written Ministerial Statement only covers England and will expire on 31 January 2022, giving direction to the industry and local planning authorities over the next six months. We will keep the need for this statement under review.

TRANSPORT**■ Traffic Light System Update****Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**[\[HCWS178\]](#)

From 04:00 BST Monday 19 July, the following countries will be added to the Government's green list:

- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Hong Kong
- Taiwan

Croatia and Taiwan will also be added to the green watchlist, signalling to passengers that these countries are potentially at risk of moving from green to amber at short notice, should swift action be required in order to protect public health in England. Passengers arriving from green list destinations need to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test result prior to travel and take a further test on day 2 of their arrival in the UK.

The following countries are being added to the amber list:

- Balearic Islands
- British Virgin Islands

As announced on Thursday 8 July, arrivals from amber list countries who have been fully vaccinated under the UK vaccination programme (plus 14 days), will no longer need to quarantine or take a day 8 test if they can provide proof of their vaccination status to carriers in advance of travel to England. This policy will also apply to those on a formally approved UK COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial, and children under the age of 18. These changes will also take effect from 04:00 BST Monday 19 July.

Non-vaccinated passengers arriving from amber countries need to provide evidence of a negative test result prior to travel, self-isolate at home for 10 days, and take a test on day 2 and day 8 after arrival. As before, these passengers will have the option to take a further test on day 5 and end their 10-day self-isolation early, upon receipt of a negative test result.

The following countries are being added to the red list as they present a high public health risk to the UK from known variants of concern, known high-risk variants under investigation or as a result of very high in-country or territory prevalence of COVID-19:

- Cuba
- Indonesia
- Myanmar
- Sierra Leone

Passengers arriving from these destinations, irrespective of vaccination status, will be required to self-isolate in a managed quarantine hotel, provide a valid notification of a negative test result prior to travel and take a test on day 2 and 8 after their arrival.

All arrivals into the UK must continue to complete a Passenger Locator Form.

As health matters are devolved, the Devolved Administrations will confirm their respective positions in due course.

TREASURY

■ Annual European Union Finances Statement

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay):

[\[HCWS181\]](#)

I have today laid before Parliament the “ *European Union Finances 2020: statement on the 2020 EU Budget and measures to counter fraud and financial mismanagement* ” (CP472). This is an annual publication and is the fortieth in the series. This edition of the statement is the last in this publication series that will cover the period of the UK’s membership of the EU (which lasted until 31 January 2020) and also covers the eleven month transition period that ended on 31 December 2020.

This year, Annex E of the statement provides additional detail on the assurance arrangements that HM Treasury has introduced in relation to the financial settlement under the Withdrawal Agreement, and which was reflected in domestic law in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. HM Treasury has worked with the European Commission and its implementing partners to ensure their systems and controls over financial reporting are suitable for the specific requirements of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The first invoice under the financial settlement was received in April 2021 in relation to payments to be made in the period June to September 2021. The net UK liability under the first invoice was €3.74 billion and the first of four equal monthly instalments was paid at the end of June. A second invoice, covering payments due in the period from October 2021 to April 2022, is due in September.

The document also provides an updated HM Treasury estimate of the total value of the financial settlement. HM Treasury estimate that the current value of the financial settlement is £37.3bn. This remains within the Government’s previously published reasonable central range, adjusted to take into account the UK’s 31 January 2020 exit date. In Annex E, HM Treasury provides an updated summary of the financial settlement, other costs set out in the Withdrawal Agreement and short-term public expenditure costs.

The 2020 statement also includes a new Annex F on UK participation in EU programmes under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. This sets out an update on the EU programmes the UK is set to associate with later this year.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Bereavement Benefit Update**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions & Financial Inclusion (Guy Opperman): [\[HCWS183\]](#)

My honourable Friend, The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions (The Baroness Stedman-Scott) has made the following Written Statement.

We have today laid the draft proposal for a Bereavement Benefits (2021) Remedial Order. Copies of the draft proposed Remedial Order and Explanatory Memorandum are available in the Journal Office and the Vote Office (Commons) and the Printed Paper Office (Lords).