



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 July 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:47 P.M., 20 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Ministry of Justice: Young People

Stuart Anderson:

[\[32516\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps he is taking to strengthen young people's (a) engagement with and (b) understanding of (i) the work of the Crown Prosecution Service and (ii) other services provided by his Department.

Lucy Frazer:

The CPS has a strong record of outreach programmes to engage young people in its work, and to promote career opportunities, including through apprenticeships.

The CPS has over 400 apprentices currently enrolled onto programme across England and Wales and has a strong record of consistently meeting the apprenticeship targets as set out by Cabinet Office. At the end of June 2021, CPS was at 4.9% apprenticeship starts against the 2.3% target. 49% of the apprentices are aged 16 to 24 years old and 4% are aged under 19 years old.

■ Rape: Prosecutions

Sir John Hayes:

[\[31293\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what assessment he has made of the (a) reasons for the reduction in rape prosecutions and (b) effect of that reduction on the reporting of rape.

Lucy Frazer:

The CPS is determined to drive up the number of rape and serious sexual offence ('RASSO') cases going to court. Too few victims are seeing justice and reversing that is an absolute priority. The reasons for the decline in prosecutions are complex, with the Government rape review finding no single factor is to blame.

The CPS is working tirelessly in making improvements to the handling of these sensitive cases through its RASSO 2025 Strategy and the Joint National RASSO Action Plan with the police. This includes targeted work supporting victims in order to increase confidence in reporting. Following the impact of Covid-19 on prosecution volumes, it is encouraging to see increased volumes quarter on quarter – however, it is recognised that there is still work to be done.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY**■ Batteries: Fire Prevention****Jerome Mayhew:****[31536]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of regulating lithium-ion battery energy storage systems to help mitigate the risk of fire.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Lithium-ion battery energy storage systems, including grid-scale installations and those used in homes and businesses, are covered by a robust regulatory framework which requires manufacturers to ensure products are safe before they are placed on the market, that they are installed correctly by project developers, and that any safety issues found after products are on the market or after installation are dealt with.

There are a number of regulations that must be met for the product and installation of a battery to mitigate the risk of fire, including the Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016, the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. In addition, for large scale battery storage there are statutory requirements to notify the Fire and Rescue Service to inform their emergency response planning.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Mr Mark Harper:****[R] [33870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the guidance contained on the gov.uk webpages entitled Working safely during coronavirus (Covid-19): guidance from step 4 is legally binding in respect of (a) businesses' insurance policies and (b) health and safety duties.

Paul Scully:

The Working Safely guidance does not supersede businesses' existing legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment and equalities duties. It is important that businesses continue to comply with existing obligations. Businesses have a legal duty to manage risks to those affected by their business. The way to do this is to carry out a health and safety risk assessment, including the risk of Covid-19, and to take reasonable steps to mitigate the risks identified. In order to help businesses conduct their risk assessment, the 'Working Safely' guidance provides advice on sensible precautions employers can take to manage risk and support their staff and customers.

■ Energy: Scotland

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[33837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of Ofgem's network charging reforms on levels of investment within the Scottish energy sector.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[33838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of Ofgem's network charging reforms on levels of employment in the Scottish energy sector.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[33839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of Ofgem's network charging reforms on the Government's commitment to support greater deployment of renewable energy projects.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Network charges are one of many factors which developers will take into account in deciding whether, where and when to progress particular energy projects in Scotland and across Great Britain. The reforms which Ofgem is progressing are, amongst other things, designed to support decarbonisation and contribute to meeting net zero at lowest cost. While network charging is a matter for Ofgem as the independent energy regulator, Government recognises the significant role that electricity network charging reforms will have on the wider energy sector, including renewables, and will continue to engage with Ofgem, industry and other interested parties to consider the impacts of the reform proposals.

■ EU Grants and Loans: Scotland

Alan Brown: [\[33966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 25 June 2021 to Question 21949 EU Grants and Loans: East Ayrshire, what discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the allocation of funding to replace the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Scotland that Scotland previously received.

Paul Scully:

The Department regularly meets with the Scottish Government to discuss a range of issues.

■ **Fireworks: Animal Welfare**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[34018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the sale and use of fireworks on pets and other animals.

Paul Scully:

The Government takes the issues associated with the sale and use of fireworks seriously and we understand the concerns that some people have about the potential for distress to be caused to animals. That is why there is a comprehensive regulatory framework in place for fireworks, that aims to reduce the risks and disturbances to both people and animals.

Through our public awareness campaign for the 2021 fireworks season, we will also be promoting the safe and considerate use of fireworks to the general public, to ensure that those using them do so safely and considerately.

■ **Gas-cooled Reactors**

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[34084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will take steps to ensure that UK expertise and capability in gas-cooled nuclear reactors is utilised to deliver next generation reactors, rather than obtaining this from an international vendor.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has a wealth of expertise and capability in civil nuclear power. In 2018, the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group – of which the Department is a member - estimated that the sector employed approximately 89,000 full-time equivalents across the UK, including North Wales. The development and deployment of next generation technologies such as Small and Advanced Modular Reactors, will create new, exciting opportunities both for our existing highly skilled workforce and for those outside of the sector wishing to pursue a career in nuclear to support net zero.

■ **Green Homes Grant Scheme: Local Government**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[31513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many councils applied for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme before the 4 December 2020 deadline.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The application window for Local Authorities to apply for funding under Phase 1A of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme was open from 4th August to 1st September 2020. A total of 86 applications were received; 70 of these were from individual Local Authorities and 16 were from consortia made up of a total of 90 Local Authorities.

The application window for Phase 1B of LAD was open from 23rd October to 4th December 2020. A total of 108 applications were received: 87 of these were from individual Local Authorities and 21 from consortia made up of a total of 133 Local Authorities.

Lists of the Local Authorities which were successful in being awarded funding can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-homes-grant-local-authority-delivery-successful-local-authorities>.

Wera Hobhouse: **[31514]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many councils expressed an interest in applying for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme but did not apply.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Expressions of Interest (EOIs) were not sought prior to the launch of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme Phase 1A application window. We received 86 applications in total for Phase 1A funding - 70 of these were from individual Local Authorities and 16 were from consortia made up of a total of 90 Local Authorities.

Experience of the Phase 1A application process informed design of the Phase 1B scheme, and we requested Local Authorities submit EOIs in order to estimate the likely quantum of applications. We received 83 EOIs and then subsequently 108 full applications for funding from Local Authorities or Consortia.

Lists of the Local Authorities which were successful in being awarded funding can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-homes-grant-local-authority-delivery-successful-local-authorities>.

Wera Hobhouse: **[31515]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many councils have expressed an interest in applying for Phase 1B of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We received 83 Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from Local Authorities indicating their interest in applying for funding under the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme Phase 1B. When the application window closed on 4th December 2020 we had received 108 applications for funding from Local Authorities or consortia - this was comprised of 87 applications from individual Local Authorities and 21 from consortia made up of a total of 133 Local Authorities.

■ Green Jobs Taskforce

Mr Gregory Campbell: **[33860]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the budget is of the Green Jobs Taskforce in each of the next three years.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The independent Green Jobs Taskforce has concluded its work, with the publication of its recommendations to government, industry and skills sector on the 14th July 2021. Government will now consider these recommendations as part of the development of our Net Zero Strategy, building on the work already underway to deliver the skills for net zero.

The Government has already invested in a variety of initiatives that will boost green skills and jobs across the country, including a wide range of green apprenticeships; Green Skills Bootcamps; the Emerging Skills Electrification Project; and, Free Courses for Jobs, backed by £95 million from the National Skills Fund, to allow adults to take a Level 3 qualification for free. Additionally, as part of our initial response to the Taskforce's independent report, we have announced a cross-cutting delivery group to oversee the development and delivery of the Government's plans for green jobs and skills.

■ Heating**Alyn Smith:**[\[34056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish its Heat and Buildings strategy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in due course. The strategy will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings, as well as our approach to the key strategic decisions needed to achieve a mass transition to low-carbon heat.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus**Kim Leadbeater:**[\[34087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to (a) protect and (b) support pub and hospitality businesses as part of the recovery from covid-19 lockdowns.

Paul Scully:

The Department regularly meets with representatives from across the Hospitality sector to discuss how it can recover and build back from the pandemic.

We have provided an unprecedented support package of £352 billion, including grants, loans, business rates relief, VAT cuts and the job retention scheme, which hospitality businesses have access to.

We have published a new Hospitality Strategy: Reopening, Recovery, Resilience to ensure England's pubs, bars, restaurants and other hospitality venues can thrive long-term.

■ Nuclear Power

Virginia Crosbie: [\[34085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate he has made of the contribution of nuclear fission to the economy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In 2018, the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group – of which BEIS is a member - estimated that the sector employed approximately 89,000 full-time equivalents across the UK. The 2016 Oxford Economics' Nuclear Activity Report suggested that, in 2016, the nuclear sector contributed approximately £6.4bn GVA to the UK economy, where each civil nuclear worker contributed an average of £96,600 – significantly higher than the UK average of £56,200.

■ Nuclear Power Stations: Construction

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[31380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the financing of new nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As set out in our response to the consultation on the Regulated Asset Base (RAB), RAB is a credible model for financing large-scale nuclear projects. It is also our assessment that using a RAB for such projects would require primary legislation. We are continuing to explore the RAB model with nuclear project developers and undertaking further policy development. We are also continuing to assess the potential role of Government finance during the construction of a nuclear project, subject to clear value for money for consumers and taxpayers, and all relevant approvals.

■ Nuclear Power: Hydrogen

Virginia Crosbie: [\[34083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using Advanced Modular Reactors for the production of hydrogen energy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government believes that nuclear could have a role in low-carbon hydrogen production and is aware of industry proposals showing how current nuclear technologies could play a role during the 2020s, while small and advanced modular reactors could unlock greater efficiencies in the production process.

While work continues to better understand the role that emerging technologies could play in our net zero future, the recent Nuclear Industry Association hydrogen roadmap suggests nuclear could provide up to a third of anticipated 2050 demand for

hydrogen and modelling from the Energy Systems Catapult predicts a similar outcome.

We will say more on the role of various hydrogen production technologies in our forthcoming UK Hydrogen Strategy.

■ Renewable Energy: Finance

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[33834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the Contracts for Difference scheme provides sufficient long-term visibility to investors making financial decisions.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme has been successful in bringing forward renewable generation whilst also reducing the costs of technology and since its inception has become established as a route to bring forward investment at scale. As set out in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Ministers' Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, we have committed to holding regular CfD allocation rounds approximately every two years, and the next round will open in December 2021. The Department continues to keep the scheme under review to ensure it maintains a focus on investment certainty and stability to enable renewable deployment at scale. We recently concluded a Call for Evidence on this topic, seeking views to inform the future design and evolution of the CfD and will publish a response shortly.

■ Renewable Energy: Northern Ireland

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[33835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits for the UK's net-zero ambitions of extending the Contracts for Difference scheme to cover renewable energy projects in Northern Ireland.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Decarbonisation of Northern Ireland's electricity system will play a key role in achieving the UK's 2050 net zero targets. Energy policy is devolved to Northern Ireland. In a consultation earlier this year, the Department for the Economy (DfE) put forward a range of potential policies that could form the basis of Northern Ireland's new Energy Strategy. This included a proposal to explore the possibility of extending the Contracts for Difference scheme to Northern Ireland. In this context, officials from BEIS and DfE are working together to consider the options.

■ Wind Power

Wera Hobhouse: [\[31516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has for expanding onshore wind power.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Onshore wind is a key part of the government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector. Achieving net zero will require increased deployment across a range of technologies, including onshore wind. Our recent Energy White Paper stated that we will need sustained growth in the capacity of onshore wind over the next decade alongside solar and offshore wind.

This is why we announced on 2 March 2020 that onshore wind and other established renewable technologies such as solar PV will be able to compete in the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round. The round will open in December 2021 and aim to deliver up to double the renewable capacity of the last successful round in 2019.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Business: Coronavirus****Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[25073\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if his Department will take steps to clarify what (a) legal requirements and (b) Government guidelines apply to businesses in the event that further easing of covid-19 restrictions is announced for the 19 July 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

Regulations that place COVID-secure requirements on businesses, including table service, and distancing between tables, will be lifted. 'Working Safely' guidance will be updated to provide examples of sensible precautions that employers can take to reduce risk in their workplaces. Employers should take account of this guidance in preparing the risk assessments they are already required to make under pre-pandemic health and safety rules.

■ Carbon Emissions**Geraint Davies:**[\[26988\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 18 June 2021 to Question 14131, if he will publish the Carbon Management Plan designed by Arup (a) for the G7 event and (b) any other events they have worked on.

Geraint Davies:[\[26989\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the cost to the public purse was of Arup's work on the Carbon Management Plan for the G7 summit in Cornwall.

Geraint Davies:[\[26990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 18 June 2021 to Question 14131, what the carbon emissions

were from the travel by (a) the Prime Minister, (b) other G7 leaders and (c) staff for the G7 summit; and whether the Prime Minister's travel by private jet was included in the Carbon Management Plan designed by Arup.

Geraint Davies:

[26991]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 18 June 2021 to Question 14131, whether Arup made any specific recommendations on air pollution as part of their work on the G7 event.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Cabinet Office worked with UK-based consulting firm Arup to provide independent expertise to secure ISO20121 sustainability accreditation for the G7 Summit and deliver a carbon neutral summit, as part of the Prime Minister's commitment to hosting a sustainable and carbon-neutral event.

The Government plans to publish an executive summary of the Carbon Management Plan developed as part of this work in due course, following a full assessment. It is intended that this document will be made available publicly on the G7 website.

<https://www.g7uk.org/sustainability/>

The Carbon Management Plan will include the final travel arrangements for all G7 and Partner Country Leaders and staff for the G7 summit, including air travel.

Arup did not make specific recommendations on air pollution, as this was not within the remit of their support for the Summit's ISO20121 accreditation and assisting HMG in delivering a carbon neutral summit.

The cost for Arup's work developing the Carbon Management Plan for the G7 Summit will be released under the usual transparency process, along with other Summit costs.

■ Civil Servants: Coronavirus

Layla Moran:

[34034]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) civil servants who have been absent from work due to long covid and (b) working days that have been lost as a result since March 2020.

Julia Lopez:

During the pandemic, employees (including civil servants) were advised to work from home where possible. From 19 July 2021, employees are no longer instructed to work from home and government departments, similar to other employers, are starting to plan for employees to gradually return to the workplace.

The Cabinet Office has not currently made any estimates of the number of civil servants who have been absent from work or working days lost due to long COVID across the Civil Service.

However, the Civil Service continues to improve its approach to health and wellbeing for all employees, assisting them to access the support they need. A range of best practice support is available including Occupational Health, Workplace Adjustments, Part Time on Medical Grounds and COVID-19 Supporting Attendance guidance.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [[33897](#)]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to COVID-19 Response: Summer 2021, published on 5 July 2021, on what date the Government plans to review covid-19 restrictions to assess the country's preparedness for autumn and winter 2021; and what the format of that review will be.

Penny Mordaunt:

As set out on 12 July in the Moving to step 4 of the roadmap publication, in September, the Government will undertake a review to assess the country's preparedness for autumn and winter, which will consider whether to continue or strengthen public and business guidance.

The Coronavirus Act and remaining regulations throughout the autumn and winter will be kept under review.

■ **Government Departments: Complaints**

Carol Monaghan:

[[33962](#)]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make it his policy that each Government department must provide either (a) an online form or (b) an email address which members of the public can use to make a complaint about any service delivered by that department.

Julia Lopez:

The [Government Service Standard](#) states that GOV.UK services must allow users to tell the Government what they think about a service, once they have used it. Services should also provide users with the opportunity to provide feedback whilst they are using the service.

GOV.UK provides a range of information and guidance to support users to contact individual government departments.

■ **GREAT**

Emily Thornberry:

[[20306](#)]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June 2021 to Question 16052, aside from Australia, Brunei, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore, which of the 47 other Commonwealth nations are not among the 145 countries where GREAT campaign activity has taken place.

Emily Thornberry:[\[20307\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June 2021 to Question 16051, aside from Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam, which of the 60 other non-EU countries with which the UK has signed continuity trade agreements are not among the 145 countries where GREAT campaign activity has taken place.

Emily Thornberry:[\[26090\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June 2021 to Question 16051, aside from Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam, which of the 60 other non-EU countries with which the UK has signed continuity trade agreements are not among the 145 countries where GREAT campaign activity has taken place.

Emily Thornberry:[\[27063\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 23 June 2021 to Question 16052 on GREAT: Commonwealth, aside from Australia, Brunei, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore, which of the 47 other Commonwealth nations are not among the 145 countries where GREAT campaign activity has taken place.

Julia Lopez:

The GREAT campaign is designed to be used in every country around the world, but to date there are a small number of countries where there has either not been sufficient HMG presence or opportunity to use the campaign. No country is out of scope for its use. The countries that have not yet used the campaign are:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Belize
- Dominica
- Faroe Islands
- Grenada
- Kiribati
- Liechtenstein
- Maldives
- Nauru
- Nicaragua
- Palestinian Authority
- Papua New Guinea
- St. Kitts and Nevis

- Saint Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Sierra Leone
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu

■ National Security

Lisa Nandy:

[33904]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to transfer responsibility for protecting British democracy to her Department as recommended by the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia, published on 21 July 2020.

Chloe Smith:

As set out in the Government's response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia, our adversaries adopt a whole of state approach to hybrid and malign activity and tackling it therefore requires a cross-Government and cross-society response. In order to do so effectively, the Government draws on the skills, resources and remits of different departments, agencies and non-government organisations.

This activity is coordinated by the Defending Democracy programme in the Cabinet Office, with individual Government departments and the Security and Intelligence Agencies playing a key role in all relevant areas. As announced in the Queen's Speech, the Home Office is bringing forward new legislation to provide the security services and law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to disrupt state threats, including threats to democracy. The National Security Council keeps this and all aspects of the Government's approach to protecting UK democracy under review.

■ Topham Guerin: Contracts

Fleur Anderson:

[34072]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the value is of covid-19-related contracts awarded to Topham Guerin (a) in total and (b) without competitive tender.

Julia Lopez:

Details of government contracts above £10,000 are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Churches: Singing

Rachael Maskell:

[29844]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what provisions will be put in place for people who remain concerned about covid-19 infection as singing is reintroduced in churches.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 12 July 2021]: The National Church Institutions as part of the DCMS and MHCLG Places of worship Task Force has produced fresh guidance for Parishes to help navigate the current situation. It reflects Government guidance as we move to step 4 of their roadmap as well as that from public health bodies and will continue to be updated as that evolves.

The guidance provided by the National Church Institutions it is hoped will inform local clergy and PCC's in their decision-making. The circumstances in each parish may differ due to space, age and health demographic, ability to ventilate the building or a variety of other concerns.

The full guidance can be available here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance>

COP26

■ UN Climate Conference 2021

Wera Hobhouse:

[31512]

To ask the President of COP26, when the Government plans to make a decision on the number of in-person participants at COP26.

Alok Sharma:

As hosts, we recognise how urgently world representatives must come together to agree on action to tackle climate change. To be successful, COP26 needs to be in person in Glasgow this November.

We are working closely with the UNFCCC, which is responsible for the accreditation and registration for COP, on determining the number of attendees for COP. This will be informed by the capacity of the venue, taking into account any COVID mitigation requirements.

We continue to monitor the COVID situation and will ensure the most appropriate protection measures are implemented, ensuring that the health of participants and the local community is foremost in our mind.

We will communicate the full set of measures to delegates in a timely manner once approved. Our focus remains on delivering a safe, successful, in-person COP26.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Wera Hobhouse: [\[31511\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, with representatives from what countries he (a) has had and (b) plans to have discussions to increase their ambition for offshore wind ahead of COP26.

Alok Sharma:

Accelerating the global energy transition from coal to clean power is a top priority of the UK COP26 Presidency. We are working with countries to expand the use of clean, renewable energy sources such as onshore and offshore wind, through both international forums and bilateral engagements. We launched the Energy Transition Council to bring together the political, financial and technical leaders of the global power sector to ensure that clean power is the most attractive option for new power generation for all countries. The Council engages with over twenty countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America. There has also been engagement on this topic with G7 members, who recently committed to achieving overwhelmingly decarbonised power systems in the 2030s. Wind generation will play an important role in delivering decarbonisation in the UK, and internationally we are working closely with partners including the Global Wind Energy Council.

DEFENCE

■ Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems

Mr Mark Francois: [\[32323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what type of (a) radar and (b) command system is used on the Crowsnest AEW helicopter programme.

Jeremy Quin:

CROWSNEST is a mechanically rotating radar. The mission system is an updated version of the CERBERUS mission system previously used on Sea King Mk7.

■ Ministry of Defence: Biodiversity

Jamie Stone: [\[34008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what protections for biodiversity are in place on land owned by the Ministry of Defence.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is committed to protecting and enhancing the biodiversity on the Defence Estate and delivering on its statutory obligations and Government policy commitments.

Each project, plan or programme that may impact biodiversity is subject to a sustainability appraisal process which identifies, assesses and manages potential biodiversity issues, constraints and opportunities.

Jamie Stone: [\[34010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what policies his Department has to ensure the protection of biodiversity during the sale of land by the Ministry of Defence.

Jeremy Quin:

In recognition of Government policies in support of sustainability and biodiversity on the Ministry of Defence estate, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) applies the same supporting principles to the sale of its land assets.

DIO will investigate the biodiversity value of a site in disposal and engage with Local Authorities and other agencies to agree protection measures and potential gains. This is in accordance with National and Local Planning policies.

■ Ministry of Defence: Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Jamie Stone: [\[34007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to help ensure that his Department will meet the 2050 net zero target using the same criteria as other Government departments.

Jamie Stone: [\[34009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to offset emissions produced by the Ministry of Defence's land use.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to supporting the Government's commitment to Net Zero Green House Gas Emissions by 2050. Over the last 10 years we have already reduced emissions across our UK estate by 50%.

We acknowledge we need to go further and in March this year, MOD launched the Defence Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach, which sets out the ambition, principles and the methods needed for UK Defence to meet the challenge of climate change, enhance our sustainably activities and lower our emissions.

MOD is initially prioritising energy efficiency and decarbonisation initiatives to lower our carbon footprint across our estate. A natural capital register and modelling tools are being developed for the Defence estate which includes an assessment of the available carbon sequestration opportunities.

■ Type 31 Frigates

Mr Mark Francois: [\[33154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the initial operating capability for the Type 31(e) Frigate.

Jeremy Quin:

On current plans, the initial operating capability date for the Type 31 frigate will be 2027.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Cybercrime**

Chi Onwurah: [\[33913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward legislative proposals in the forthcoming Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill to protect smart homes from the risk of scanning and hacking attempts.

Matt Warman:

The protections set out in the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill will make smart homes more resilient against cyber threats. New minimum security requirements will apply to all in-scope consumer connected products sold in the UK. The Bill will protect consumers from cyber attacks by preventing the sale of insecure devices with default passwords which are easy to hack and ensuring they are made aware at point of sale about how long smart home devices will receive security updates.

■ DiDi: Data Protection

Alexander Stafford: [\[32555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Information Commissioner's Office has taken to verify where ride-hailing service Didi stores data from UK riders and drivers.

Alexander Stafford: [\[32556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken to ascertain where ride-hailing service DiDi stores data from UK riders and drivers.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as the regulator for the UK's data protection legislation has informed my department that there are no investigations or enquiries regarding the ride-hailing company DiDi and they have not received any complaints about the company. Any concerns raised about the company will be assessed in line with the ICO's usual procedures.

Organisations processing personal information must comply with the data protection principles. In practice, this includes making sure they have legitimate grounds for collecting and using personal data; not using the data in ways that have unjustified adverse effects on the individuals concerned; being transparent about how they intend to use the data, and keeping the data safe and secure.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[32527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make it his policy to compensate music (a) festivals and (b) concerts if they have to be cancelled as a result of further covid-19 restrictions.

Caroline Dinenage:

As the Secretary of State made clear at the DCMS Select Committee in May, the government is aware of the wider concerns around securing indemnity for live events. Protecting public health is of vital importance to the government and we are working closely with the affected sectors and HMT on this issue to assess options to provide further support within the public health context.

Throughout the pandemic, the government's Plan For Jobs has supported jobs and businesses with over £400 billion of economic support. As part of this package, last year the government announced the unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund - the biggest arts funding package in history. To date, over £1.2 billion has been allocated from the £2 billion Fund, reaching over 5,000 individual organisations and sites.

On 25 June we announced details of the third round of the Culture Recovery Fund and portals for the Emergency Resource Support element of this round are now open. This third and final round of funding will provide further support as the cultural, heritage and creative sectors move towards reopening at full capacity, underlining the government's commitment to help them build back better as life returns to normal.

As you will be aware, from 19 July, following the success of the vaccine roll-out, outstanding legal restrictions on social contact and life events have been removed and all closed settings can reopen. The government will instead enable people to use personal judgement to manage the risk to themselves and others.

Kevin Brennan:[\[33858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of a Government-backed covid-19 cancellation insurance scheme for live events after 19 July 2021.

Kevin Brennan:[\[33859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support his Department will make available to live events that are cancelled or postponed after 19 July 2021 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises the important contribution that live events make to the UK's culture and economy, and the significant challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has presented. We have engaged closely with the sectors affected and listened to their concerns throughout the pandemic.

As the Secretary of State made clear at the DCMS Select Committee in May, the government is aware of the wider concerns around securing cancellation insurance for live events. The government continues to assess options to provide further support to the sector within the public health context.

This Government has provided significant financial support throughout the pandemic including extending the £1.57 billion package of support for the Culture Recovery Fund with £300 million of additional funding for 21/22. We would encourage businesses in the events sector to review the initiatives in the Government's support

package. Information on the Government's support for businesses and employees can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

■ **Football: Coronavirus**

Jessica Morden: [\[24140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with UEFA on travel restrictions for overseas visitors to the UK for the European Football Championship.

Nigel Huddleston:

In general, international visitors are subject to our current border restrictions and were not exempt from quarantining if they had a ticket for any Euro 2020 games being hosted in the UK. We did, via UEFA, communicate to all international ticket-holders on the nature of our border restrictions, and saw that most of those based overseas who originally purchased tickets latterly chose not to come here, with many transferring them to people in the UK.

The government and UEFA announced on 22 June that the semi finals and the final would be hosted at up to 75% capacity. We agreed with UEFA that all additional tickets sold by them for these matches would be limited to those based in the Common Travel Area

A limited number of accredited guests were provided an exemption from COVID-19 borders restrictions to attend the latter stages of the Championships. This ensured that the tournament could take place successfully in the UK. They were either:

- a) only permitted to leave isolation for official events, including matches or UEFA meetings, subject to strict public health mitigations, developed with the input of Public Health England and in line with other international events such as the G7; or
- b) required to travel directly from the airport to the stadium, and back again, helping to prevent contact with the local population.

■ **Gambling: Ombudsman**

Carolyn Harris: [\[32451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a Gambling Ombudsman.

Carolyn Harris: [\[32452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had and with whom on the potential merits of establishing a Gambling Ombudsman.

Carolyn Harris: [\[32453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will establish a Gambling Ombudsman.

Carolyn Harris:**[32454]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of a Gambling Ombudsman with statutory footing on incidence of gambling-related death.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8 December with the publication of a wide-ranging Call for Evidence. The Review will look at the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and whether further protections are needed. As part of its broad scope, it will also look at evidence on the case for changes to consumer redress arrangements, including assessing options such as an ombudsman. We intend to outline our conclusions and next steps in a white paper by the end of the year.

Details of ministerial meetings are publicly available and can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=transparency&organisations%5B%5D=department-for-digital-culture-media-sport

■ Gambling: Reviews**Martyn Day:****[27238]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the implications of research by Oxford and Warwick Universities, entitled The association between gambling and financial, social and health outcomes in big financial data, published in March 2021, for the Government's Review of the Gambling Act 2005.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As set out in response to the Oral Question in the House of Lords on 20th April, the government views the paper by Dr Naomi Muggleton and others which looks at the correlation between gambling spend and financial indicators of wellbeing as a useful contribution to the evidence base. We are considering its findings carefully as part of our ongoing Review of the Gambling Act 2005, alongside the responses to our call for evidence which closed at the end of March. We aim to publish a white paper outlining our conclusions and policy proposals by the end of the year.

■ Streaming: Disability**Lilian Greenwood:****[33894]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the report by Ofcom published on 9 July 2021, entitled Further Statement: Making on-demand services accessible, Informing requirements to make On-Demand Programme Services more accessible to disabled people, when he plans to respond to the recommendations in that report.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Under the Communications Act 2003, the Secretary of State has the power to impose requirements on service providers regulated in the UK, for the purpose of ensuring that Video-on-Demand services are accessible to people with disabilities.

As part of the implementation process, the Government asked Ofcom to provide recommendations on how legislation could make on-demand services more accessible. Ofcom published an initial report in December 2018, and published further recommendations on 9 July 2021, following a request from DCMS. We will give Ofcom's latest proposals careful consideration and will set out next steps in due course.

EDUCATION■ **Department of Education: Re-employment****Andy McDonald:**[\[33236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of 27 April 2021, Official Report, column 86WH, what steps his Department has taken to (a) investigate the use of fire and rehire tactics by its executive non-departmental public bodies, (b) communicate the Government's position on fire and rehire tactics to those bodies and)c) discourage the use of such tactics by those bodies.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has a robust governance structure in place across its non-departmental public bodies, which ensures full visibility, and approval where required, of any planned redundancies. No additional communications or investigations have been necessary on 'fire and rehire'.

■ **National Tutoring Programme****Peter Kyle:**[\[33985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 24 June 2021 to Question 21978, what data his Department holds on the number of (a) pupils enrolled and (b) schools onboarded in the National Tutoring Programme in each region.

Nick Gibb:

Since November 2020, over 240,000 pupils have enrolled onto the National Tutoring Programme. The number of pupils enrolled by each region is provided in the table below:

LONDON	41,842
South East	25,917
South West	18,207

LONDON	41,842
East of England	28,641
West Midlands	26,123
East Midlands	23,062
Yorkshire and Humber	25,238
North West	40,178
North East	10,982

Over 5,000 schools in England have onboarded on the National Tutoring Programme. The number of schools onboarded by region is provided in the table below:

EAST OF ENGLAND	741
East Midlands	534
London	742
North East	298
North West	917
South East	753
South West	500
West Midlands	608

■ Nuclear Power: Vocational Education

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[34086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to encourage schools and UK universities to promote nuclear science as a career path for apprentices and graduates.

Gillian Keegan:

My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has made it clear that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects are of great importance.

We want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to pursue a STEM career, regardless of their background. To support this, we have made substantial spending commitments on programmes to enhance STEM teaching and participation in schools, through programmes such as Isaac Physics and Science Learning Partnerships. Isaac Physics is an online learning platform designed to increase the

number of students studying physics, with a particular focus on those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and Science Learning Partnerships is a national network supporting teacher continuing professional development.

The department recognises that careers education has a crucial role to play in inspiring pupils towards STEM careers, including those in the nuclear industry. Secondary schools are expected to provide pupils with at least one interaction with employers per year, with a particular emphasis on STEM employers. These interactions demonstrate the range of different career possibilities in STEM and challenge stereotypes. Furthermore, the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) is making sure that every young person has access to inspiring encounters with the world of work, including work placements, work experience and other employer-based activities. The CEC encourage use of labour market information to identify which sectors are growing and promote sector-based campaigns through their networks.

This government has also been working to champion the diversity of roles and people that make up the STEM sector in order to remove pupils' misconceptions around working in STEM. Through continuing to fund the STEM ambassador programme, we are ensuring that extracurricular activities related to STEM are delivered by volunteers representative of the local population so that young people can be inspired by people they relate to. We have also recently funded and published Behavioural Insights Trials, with a cohort of 11,000 students, to better understand the low participation of girls in STEM.

We have also been improving our offer of apprenticeships so that anybody, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to pursue STEM careers whether they come via a technical or academic route. There are now 625 high-quality apprenticeship standards to choose from that have been designed by employers to meet their skills needs. Employers in the nuclear science sector can take advantage of standards in a number of occupational routes. Available standards include level 2 Nuclear Operative, level 5 Nuclear Technician and level 6 Nuclear Reactor Desk Engineer.

The institutional autonomy of universities is protected by law, meaning that what they include in their course content and careers programmes is at their discretion. Through the National Careers Service, anyone can access independent, professional advice on careers, skills and the labour market. Employers and professional bodies in the nuclear science sector can sign up to the 'Inspiring the Future' programme, which allows volunteers to visit state schools to talk to pupils about their job. This will raise the profile of various careers within nuclear science.

■ Qualifications

Chi Onwurah:

[33915]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has for the examination or assessment of qualifications in summer 2022.

Chi Onwurah:[\[33916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans for reduced curriculum content for qualification assessments in summer 2022 as a result of learning time lost during the ongoing covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

It is the Government's firm intention that exams and assessments should go ahead next year.

The Department recognises that those students taking exams next year have had significant disruption to their education and, together with Ofqual, we are proposing adaptations to the exams to take account of that. The Department has launched a joint consultation with Ofqual, to seek views on the proposed changes to exams in summer 2022 in light of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on students entering these qualifications.

The suggested arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels includes choices about the topics students will be assessed on for some subjects (optionality) and giving schools and colleges advance information about the focus of content of the exams for other subjects.

The Department has worked closely with exam boards to understand which elements of assessment can be made optional without an adverse impact on student progression within the subject. Where this is not the case, we have not proposed optionality.

We have and will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the sector who have all called for exams to go ahead. This includes unions, school and college head teachers, teachers, exam boards, higher education, and further education. The Department wants to ensure appropriate decisions are made for each subject.

The Government believes it is important that students cover the curriculum as fully as possible, so that they are prepared for progression to the next stage of their education. We expect that even topics not being assessed will still be taught in most cases.

The Government has invested over £3 billion in a package of measures to support education recovery, including tutoring, summer schools and mental health support, as well as further training and development for teachers.

Whilst the Department remains committed to exams going ahead in 2022, we will also work with Ofqual on contingency plans and announce further details in the autumn term.

■ Soft Drinks: Taxation**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[33945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many secondary schools have received funding from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy in each year since 2016.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[33946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to publish information on how the Soft Drinks Industry Levy has been allocated in each year since 2016.

Nick Gibb:

The 2016 Budget announced that, alongside the introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, the Department for Education would receive funding to invest in a number of related programmes. The funding has been used as follows.

The Primary PE and sport premium was increased to £320 million per year and has been maintained at that level. The Department publishes annual allocations, which can be accessed here: <https://skillsfunding.service.gov.uk/view-latest-funding/national-funding-allocations/PSG/2020-to-2021>.

£100 million was used for the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund in the 2018/19 financial year. Allocations for each local authority and multi-academy trust who were eligible to receive a direct allocation were published in March 2018 and are available here: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20190212204720/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/capital-allocations>. Details of successful Healthy Pupils Capital Fund projects funded through the Condition Improvement Fund have been published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/condition-improvement-fund-2018-to-2019-outcome>.

Funding of nearly £22 million was allocated between 2017 and 2019 for an Essential Life Skills programme to enable disadvantaged children and young people living in some of the most deprived parts of the country to participate in regular extra-curricular activities. The Essential Life Skills programme targeted disadvantaged children and young people aged five to 18 across 12 opportunity areas. Areas received £7.95 million in financial year 2017/18 and £13.8 million in financial year 2018/19. Details of the grants are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-life-skills-grant-s31-grant-determination-and-letters>.

The Department has funded £38 million for the National School Breakfast Programme between March 2018 and July 2021, to help set up or improve breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas and sustain them in the longer term.

■ **Standing Advisory Councils On Religious Education: Finance**

Luke Pollard:

[31532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 10631 on Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education: Finance, what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities to support their responsibilities in the delivery of the statutory obligations of their local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Pollard:

[31533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 10631 on Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education: Finance, what assessment his Department has made of the appropriate and equitable level of funding via the central school services block for local authorities to support their responsibilities in the delivery of the statutory obligations of their local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Pollard:

[31534]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question on Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education: Finance, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with their counterparts in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the appropriate and equitable level of funding via the central school services block for local authorities to support their responsibilities in the delivery of the statutory obligations of their local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The 'Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance', published in 2010, sets out advice to support the provision of high quality religious education in maintained schools in England. It also provides local authorities with information about their roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to their local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-guidance-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>.

In the 2021/22 financial year, the central school services block (CSSB) continues to fund local authorities for the ongoing responsibilities that they have a statutory duty to deliver for all pupils in maintained schools and academies. The total funding for ongoing responsibilities is £257 million in the 2021/22 financial year and is a 3.8% increase compared to the 2020/21 financial year, in order to keep up with inflation and pupil numbers. The Department will confirm funding allocations for the CSSB in the 2022/23 financial year shortly. We do not specify what proportion of their CSSB funding local authorities should spend on specific central services - this is for local authorities' own discretion.

The introduction of the CSSB in the 2018/19 financial year followed extensive consultation with local authorities, schools, and other stakeholders. A total of 87 local authorities saw a gain in funding, as a result of the introduction of the CSSB, with local authorities also protected against losses of more than 2.5% per pupil in funding for ongoing responsibilities.

The Department's officials regularly meet with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government officials to discuss cost pressures on local authorities. The decision on the level of funding for the CSSB each year is then taken by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education.

■ Students: Disadvantaged**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[28118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that white working class students' attainment is equal to that of their peers.

Nick Gibb:

Raising education standards for all pupils, irrespective of their background or where they live, remains an important focus of the Government. The Department has worked hard over the last decade to embed the reforms needed to raise standards for all children. Thanks to these efforts, and the work of head teachers, teachers and school support staff, the proportion of schools judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding has risen from 68% to 86% since 2010. Since 2011, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others has also narrowed by 13% in primary schools and 9% in secondary schools.

When it comes to raising standards, evidence shows that teachers are the most important in-school factor affecting pupils' education. The Department has announced an investment of over £250 million in our National Professional Qualifications and Early Career Framework programmes, which are based on the best available evidence and have been developed in partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation. Through this, the Department is committed to helping tackle the educational attainment gap for all pupils.

The Government recognises that extended school and college restrictions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's education and is committed to helping pupils catch up. The Department has announced over £3 billion to support education recovery, and the pupil premium is providing over £2.5 billion in the 2021/22 financial year to improve the educational attainment and wider outcomes of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

■ Vocational Guidance: Feltham and Heston**Seema Malhotra:**[\[33930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support (a) mentoring programmes and (b) the provision of careers advice for young people in education in Feltham and Heston constituency.

Gillian Keegan:

Mentoring is an important element of careers programmes. The government funds support for secondary schools and colleges in England, via the Careers & Enterprise Company's (CEC) Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs, to make progress towards meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance. This includes increasing young people's exposure to employers and the world of work and supporting schools and colleges to make links with providers and employers that offer mentoring opportunities.

Through CEC's 'Give an Hour' initiative, individual volunteers, groups of employees or entire businesses can volunteer to share their career journey and insights with young people in schools and colleges in their local community.

Cornerstone Employers are local and national businesses from a range of sectors that are experienced and have a strong track record of engaging with education. They drive leadership and strategic support within their communities to bring together business effort and engagement with local schools and colleges. They have a commitment to work with schools and colleges to offer more young people meaningful employer encounters through activities such as mentoring, work experience, mock interviews and careers talks. There are currently over 200 Cornerstone Employers.

Enterprise Advisers (EAs) are senior business volunteers that are matched locally with an individual school or college. EAs use their business experience and professional network to help senior leadership teams to develop their careers programme and create opportunities for young people to meet with employers.

The National Careers Service offers expert career coaching and guidance in the community, online and on the telephone.

The London Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN) connects schools and colleges with employers and entrepreneurs so that all young Londoners are aware of the career pathways and opportunities available to them. Over 500 London schools and colleges are part of the London EAN. They are supported by nearly 600 volunteer EAs from different industry sectors and professional backgrounds. The network is co-funded by the CEC and the Mayor of London. In West London, it is delivered by Reed In Partnership and Talentino in special schools and colleges. Careers Hubs will be launched in London in September 2021.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Re-employment

Andy McDonald:

[\[33237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of 27 April 2021, Official Report, column 86WH, what steps his Department has taken to (a) investigate the use of fire and rehire tactics by its executive non-departmental public bodies, (b) communicate the Government's position on fire and rehire tactics to those bodies and (c) discourage the use of such tactics by those bodies.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has been very clear that threatening fire and rehire as a negotiating tactic is completely unacceptable. We always expect employers to treat employees fairly and in the spirit of partnership working with trade unions, where relevant, constructively. We are confident that all non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) are aware of the Government's position on this matter.

We work constructively with each NDPB we have responsibility for and this includes when it comes to workforce management matters. However, each NDPB that does not employ civil servants is ultimately responsible for the management of its staff.

The Department has taken no recent action regarding the use of fire and rehire tactics in its executive NDPBs. Should information come to light that suggests this is an area of concern, then the Department would respond accordingly.

■ Firearms: Ammunition

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[33866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the work being undertaken by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation on (a) promoting lead free and environmentally sustainable shotgun and rifle ammunition and (b) the eventual voluntary phase out of lead ammunition in the next four years; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

I continue to welcome the British Association for Shooting and Conservation's decision to promote the use of lead-free ammunition and its ambition to see an end to lead and single-use plastics in ammunition for taking live quarry within the next four years.

Lead is highly toxic and the majority of its potential uses are regulated to control exposure to humans and the environment. A large volume of lead ammunition is discharged every year over the countryside and research suggests up to a hundred thousand wildfowl die annually in the UK by lead poisoning from spent gunshot.

During debates on the Environment Bill, Defra Ministers recognised the importance of restricting the use of lead shot, and asked officials to look further into the most effective options for tackling the issue.

As a result, Defra has asked the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA) to prepare a UK REACH restriction dossier for lead ammunition. HSE and EA will examine the evidence of risks posed by it on human health and the environment and consider the case for introducing a restriction on lead in ammunition. The process will take approximately two years after which the Secretary of State (with the consent of Scottish and Welsh Ministers) will, on the basis of this review, make a decision on whether to further restrict the use of lead ammunition. These restrictions will explore a ban on the sale of lead shot as well as its use.

■ Peat Bogs: Conservation

Tim Farron:

[\[31372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many peatlands have been restored in England in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to date.

Rebecca Pow:

Our last Peatland Capital Grant Scheme (2017-2020) allocated £10 million to deliver 6,498 hectares of peatland restoration for projects in England.

Additionally, investment from the Nature for Climate Fund funded 3,448 hectares* of peatland restoration in 2020/21. Alongside our new peatland mapping project, we are currently developing a Peatland Restoration Register which will record all restoration on an England-wide basis.

* This figure uses the data we have currently recorded. We are awaiting final reporting and that figure is expected to be higher.

Tim Farron:[\[31373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding the Government has committed to restoring peatlands in the years (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to date.

Rebecca Pow:

In July 2017, Defra launched a three-year, £10 million capital grant scheme for peatland restoration in England, funding sites that delivered the greatest potential for greenhouse gas emissions reduction, value for money and maximum environmental benefits.

Last year the Government also committed funds to the Nature for Climate Fund, which introduced a new capital grant scheme for peatland restoration. In advance of the scheme being launched this year, we made a number of investments in peatland restoration projects that were deliverable in 2020/21.

Overall, in the following financial years we committed:

- a) 2018/19 - £4,322,935.00
- b) 2019/20 - £2,492,607.00
- c) 2020/21 - £7,351,476.50

■ Plastics: Waste**Rachael Maskell:**[\[31463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the volume of plastic waste produced in (a) England and (b) the UK in each of the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste and we are making great strides to tackle plastic pollution across the country. In December 2018 we published the Resources and Waste Strategy, which sets out how we want to achieve this, move towards a circular economy and keep resources in the system for as long as possible.

Our Environment Bill will enable us to significantly change the way that we manage our waste and take forward a number of the proposals from the Resources and Waste Strategy. The Bill will include powers to create Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes; introduce Deposit Return Schemes (DRS); establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better control the export of plastic waste; and give us the power to set new charges for other single-use plastic items. These measures will help us reduce the amount of plastic waste generated and keep resources in the system for as long as possible to extract maximum value from them.

In their plastic market situation report the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) estimate that 2.36Mt of plastic packaging and 2.5Mt of non-packaging plastic waste was generated in the UK in 2017. A recent plastic flow report by Valpak's suggested that the amount of plastic packaging generated in the UK fell to 2.29Mt in 2019.

We do publish figures on the amount of plastic packaging generated and recycled and these can be found in our published dataset here: [ENV23 - UK statistics on waste - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The latest figures cover 2017 and we are due to publish figures for 2018, 2019 and 2020 on the 15 July.

Regarding the total volume of plastic waste generated, figures for some separately identifiable plastics are available, however there are significant tonnages of mixed waste categories, which will contain plastic, for which we do not have robust composition estimates. Therefore, we cannot provide a figure on the total volume of plastic waste generated/ produced for England or the UK.

Rachael Maskell:

[31464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with (a) manufacturers and (b) supermarkets and their supply chains on reducing plastic waste.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out our ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste, and in December 2018 we published the Resources and Waste Strategy which sets out how we want to achieve this and move towards a circular economy which aims to keep resources in the system for as long as possible.

Our Environment Bill will enable us to change significantly the way that we manage our waste and take forward a number of the proposals from the Resources and Waste Strategy. The Bill will include powers to create extended producer responsibility schemes; introduce deposit return schemes; establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better control the export of plastic waste; and give us the power to set new charges for other single-use plastic items. Further information can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/news/stronger-protections-for-the-environment-move-closer-as-landmark-bill-takes-shape.

We have recently consulted on a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, extended producer responsibility for packaging and our reforms to household and

business waste collection. Alongside these public consultations, within Government the Resources and Waste Strategy division (RWS) conducts regular meetings with key stakeholders across the supply chain to discuss our policy development and ambitions. For example, the RWS Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) meets quarterly, and the members invited cover a broad range of areas within the resources and waste sector, including representatives of manufacturers, supermarkets and their supply chains.

The Government also works closely with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). In April 2018, WRAP launched the UK Plastics Pact (UKPP) in association with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF). The UK Plastics Pact is a collaborative initiative to create a circular system that keeps plastic in the economy and out of the natural environment. The Pact's members include over 95% of the UK grocery market by market share in 2019. By 2025 members have agreed to meeting the following targets: eliminate problematic/unnecessary single-use plastic packaging; 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable; 70% of plastic packaging to be effectively recycled or composted; and finally, 30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging.

■ River Thames: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[31309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on ensuring that craft operating on the River Thames do not adversely affect the air quality of the surrounding area.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[31312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking with local authorities in London to mitigate the levels of water and air pollution in and around the River Thames.

Rebecca Pow:

My Rt Hon Friends the Environment Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport work closely together on issues related to air pollution, which poses the biggest environmental threat to public health. Defra officials also have regular discussions with their counterparts in the Department for Transport.

The Mayor of London is responsible for air quality and transport strategy in the capital and, through Transport for London, is also responsible for managing traffic on the river.

Local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality and to take action where there are high levels of air pollution. Defra provides support for local authorities through statutory guidance, a dedicated helpline and assessment tools. In London the Mayor provides this support.

River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) are strategic plans for England's waters and set statutory objectives for water bodies and how to achieve them. In London, the Environment Agency is working in partnerships, updating RBMPs and flood risk management plans together, for a more integrated approach to improving water quality in London, including the Thames.

The London Tideway Tunnels are being built to intercept the 39 million tonnes of diluted sewage that would otherwise spill into the River Thames from storm overflows in a typical year. The Tideway tunnel will start to intercept sewage overflows by 2023 and be fully completed by 2025, resulting in further significant improvements to water quality in the tidal Thames. At a community level, the Environment Agency works with Thames Water and local authorities on combined flood and water quality projects, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

■ Transport: Rivers

Rachael Maskell:

[\[31457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the development of rivers in urban areas for water transport.

Rebecca Pow:

No such assessment has been made. The Government does not have a role in operational matters on inland waterways, which is the responsibility of the relevant navigation authority. Local authorities have responsibility for transport policies within their areas, including any proposals for using rivers.

■ Tree Planting

Tim Farron:

[\[31370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of trees that have been planted in England in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to date.

Rebecca Pow:

The Forestry Commission produces statistics on all new planting of woodland for the UK. These Official Statistics are produced to meet the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics. The latest statistics can be found in Provisional Woodland Statistics: 2021 edition on the Forest Research website together with background information at [Forestry Research](#). These statistics are reported for each financial year in thousands of hectares. The latest available figures are for 2020-21.

For all new planting of woodland in the most recent year, there is also a published estimate of the approximate number of trees this represents available from the Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators. For 2020-21 this was an estimated 4,252,000 trees newly planted in England.

The areas of new planting (woodland creation) for England taken from the published Forestry Statistics are shown below:

YEAR (ENDING 31 MARCH)	NEW PLANTING IN ENGLAND (THOUSAND HECTARES)	NEW PLANTING IN ENGLAND (ESTIMATED NUMBER OF TREES)
2018-19	1.42	..
2019-20	2.34	..
2020-21	2.18	4,252,000

Source: Forestry Commission, Forestry England, grant schemes and with estimates for areas planted without grant aid.

Note 1: ‘..’ denotes data not available. Estimates of numbers of trees in newly-planted woodland are incomplete for years before 2020-21.

Note 2: Estimates for areas planted without grant aid are believed to be under-reported and, as a result, the reported figures are likely to under-estimate the true level of planting activity. For England, woodland planting funded by sources other than the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant, the Woodland Carbon Fund and the HS2 Woodland Fund include planting supported by the Woodland Trust, by the Environment Agency, by Natural England and land acquired by the National Forest Company.

■ Tree Planting: Finance

Tim Farron:

[\[31371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding the Government has allocated to planting trees in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to date.

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 18 May. This sets out our plans to at least treble tree planting rates in England as a key contribution to that 30,000ha UK commitment – this represents an unprecedented increase in woodland creation in England, supported by £500 million from the Nature for Climate Fund.

From that £500million, a series of funds will support the creation and management of woodland. This includes over £25 million for our Woodland Creation Partnerships this year, £6 million for the Urban Trees Challenge Fund for the next two years, a £2.7 million Local Authority Treescape Fund over this next year, and the £15.9 million England Woodland Creation Offer launched in spring 2021. This will support traditional methods of tree establishment as well as natural colonisation, agroforestry, and riparian planting.

In the planting season 2019/20, the Government made major commitments to help reach our tree planting targets. In January 2020, the Prime Minister announced £5.7 million to launch the new Northern Forest. In the Autumn Budget 2019, the

Chancellor announced £50 million to help plant new woodlands through the Woodland Carbon Guarantee, and £10 million to plant new trees, including valuable street trees, in our towns and cities through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, launched in May 2019.

For the last planting season (2020/21) we kick-started tree planting efforts through a number of initiatives including £12.1 million investment in expanding England's ten Community Forests; £1.4 million of planting along rivers through the Environment Agency; Support from the £80 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund for a range of charity projects to protect and plant trees.

■ **Water Charges: Slough and Thames Valley**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[31523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the affordability of water bills for residents in (a) Slough and (b) Thames Valley.

Rebecca Pow:

Ofwat, the independent economic regulator, is responsible for ensuring that water companies charge fair prices and deliver quality services, through a process called the Price Review. Ofwat has set spending budgets over the next five years - reducing the average household water bill. While there are systems in place to deliver value for money to consumers, we acknowledge that some households struggle with their water bills.

We are committed to ensuring all customers receive reliable water and waste services. All water companies offer reduced bills for eligible customers via the WaterSure scheme and social tariffs. In addition, water companies also offer a range of other financial support measures such as payment holidays, bill matching and advice on debt management and water efficiency.

Each year the Consumer Council for Water (CCW) publishes its [Water for All](#) report, which examines the efforts made by each water company in England and Wales to support customers who need financial help or other forms of assistance if they're in vulnerable circumstances.

Last October, Defra commissioned CCW to review the effectiveness of existing support schemes in water to ensure they are fit for purpose now and in the future. Their [report](#) sets out ten key recommendations that could result in better outcomes for the most vulnerable customers. Defra is working with CCW and industry to explore these recommendations further and a number of water companies have already established pilots to improve their support measures.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[32545\]](#)

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

Nigel Adams:

The UK is clear in its condemnation of the coup and the appalling violence by the military, which has left over 900 people dead. We are deeply concerned at the worsening political, Covid and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. The military continues to imprison opposition figures, journalists and foreign nationals and they have maintained their brutal crackdown on dissent. The UK is calling for a peaceful and inclusive resolution to the crisis. We continue to call publicly for a return to democracy and the release of all those in arbitrary detention, including democratically elected politicians, journalists, civil society and foreign nationals. We are using all levers available to us to achieve this end, this includes sanctions and working to prevent the flow of arms to Myanmar.

David Simmonds:[\[903006\]](#)

What discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the principles outlined in the successor to the Cotonou Agreement and the effect of the implementation of that successor agreement on the UK's interests.

James Duddridge:

We continue to work with the EU and our African partners on a range of priority global issues, in line with the Integrated Review and to be a force for good in the world.

The proposed successor to the Cotonou Agreement covers objectives which we share, including contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I welcome their progress on these areas.

Janet Daby:[\[903009\]](#)

What progress he has made on making an assessment of the potential merits of granting diplomatic protection to Anoosheh Ashoori.

James Cleverly:

We have received Mr Ashoori's application for diplomatic protection. The Foreign Secretary is considering the matter carefully. We remain committed to securing Mr Ashoori's immediate and permanent release. We have been supporting Mr Ashoori's family since we became aware of his detention. The Foreign Secretary has remained in contact with the family to reinforce the UK's efforts to bring him home. He last met them on 17 June.

We will continue to press for consular access and appropriate medical care until he is released.

Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[903015\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the political situation in the Crimea.

Wendy Morton:

Seven years on from Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, we continue to make clear to Moscow that Crimea is, and will remain part of Ukraine. Russia must withdraw forces and end illegitimate control.

Under UK leadership, G7 Foreign Ministers issued statements on 18 March, to mark the seventh anniversary of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, and on 12 April, calling for de-escalation following Russia's build-up of military forces in Crimea and near the Ukrainian border. At the G7 Cornwall Summit in June, G7 leaders called on Russia to withdraw military troops and materiel from Crimea. The Foreign Secretary has raised these matters directly with his counterparts, including on 17 June with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov.

We will continue to call for international monitoring missions to have access to Crimea, currently denied by Russia. We have contributed nearly £700,000 this financial year to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission, which monitors and documents human rights abuses in Crimea. We welcome and support Ukraine's proposal to establish an International Crimean Platform. We are exploring what role we can play .

We also remain deeply concerned about ongoing human rights abuses experienced by minorities in Crimea, including Crimean Tatars.

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[903020\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that tackling poverty and inequality throughout the world remains a priority for his Department.

James Duddridge:

Poverty reduction is at the core of the mission of the new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. It is fundamental to all seven of our strategic priorities for development and ODA spending.

By bringing our development and diplomatic expertise together in the new FCDO, and coordinating all UK activity in country better, we are using the full resources of Her Majesty's Government to tackle poverty and reduce inequality.

■ **Afghanistan: Overseas Aid**

Sarah Champion:

[\[31410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement on Afghanistan on 8 July 2021, Official Report, cols 1104-20, what the budget headings are for allocation of the £100 million of Official Development Assistance for 2021-22; and whether those funds are in addition to the £37.7 million listed on DevTracker.

Nigel Adams:

As the Prime Minister said, in addition to the £3.3 billion of UK support to Afghanistan since 2002, we will provide over £100 million of development assistance to Afghanistan this year. This includes the programmes currently listed on DevTracker and others where we are still working out detailed allocations in accordance with the priorities outlined by the Foreign Secretary.

Final and audited spend for 2020/21 will be published in our annual report later this year.

■ Belarus: Sanctions**Tony Lloyd:**[\[31314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the evidential basis was for the decision to remove AGAT System from the consolidated list of financial sanctions targets in the UK.

Nigel Adams:

The designation of AGAT System was insufficiently clear as to which entity was to be designated. The UK has therefore revoked the listing for AGAT System with immediate effect. The UK makes decisions on whether or not to designate each person under powers provided by the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 and the relevant sanctions regulations.

We have imposed over 100 designations in response to the fraudulent elections and the subsequent human rights violations in Belarus. We will continue to keep all evidence and potential listings under close review, guided by the objectives of the UK Belarus sanctions regime.

■ Coronavirus: International Cooperation**Chris Law:**[\[31438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure immediate access to (a) vaccines and (b) treatments in (i) sub-Saharan Africa and (ii) other areas where there is a surge in covid-19 cases and deaths.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has played a leading role in supporting global access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines and treatments from the outset of the pandemic and stands side by side with our international friends and partners during this deeply challenging time to tackle COVID-19. The UK is among the largest donors to COVAX, which has so far shipped over 107 million COVID-19 vaccines to 135 participants, including 47 countries in Africa. It aims to provide doses equivalent to up to 30% population in low- and middle-income countries by early 2022. The UK has also pledged up to £40 million to the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator to support the rapid development of, and access to, treatments for COVID-19 in low and middle income countries.

The UK is proud that our G7 Presidency secured agreement from leaders to support vaccinating the world in 2022 and to share and finance an additional 1 billion doses over the next year to accelerate vaccine roll-out. This includes a commitment from the UK to share 100 million doses, 80% of which will go to COVAX to support countries in need, with 5 million doses to be shared by the end of September beginning in the coming weeks. We continue to work closely with the G7 and international partners on expanding global access, including efforts to mobilise international financing, increase vaccine supply and support in-country delivery, including community mobilisation and efforts to build vaccine confidence.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[32546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support the distribution of covid-19 vaccines throughout the world.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has championed since the beginning of the pandemic the importance of rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are among the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), committing £548 million which leveraged through match funding \$1 billion from other donors in 2020. This support to COVAX has been critical to it distributing COVID-19 vaccines to over 135 countries and economies, with its aim to provide up to 1.8 billion doses to low- and middle-income countries by early 2022. The UK has also committed to share 100 million vaccine doses by June 2022, 80% of which will go to COVAX to provide further support for countries in need.

The UK's investment in the research and development of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine has been a key contribution to the global vaccination effort. So far over 500 million doses of the vaccine have been distributed worldwide at non-profit prices, with two-thirds of these going to low- and middle- income countries.

■ **Cuba: Demonstrations**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[33877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking in response to the recent suppression of democratic protests by the Cuban regime.

Wendy Morton:

On 12 July, the UK was one of the first countries to publicly reaffirm the Cuban people's right to peaceful protest. Officials from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office spoke to the Cuban Ambassador on the same day, urging respect for fundamental human rights. On 14 July, the British Ambassador in Havana met with officials in the Cuban Government and urged them to uphold freedom of expression in Cuba, including over government policy. We are clear that detention

and imprisonment should not be used to restrict freedom of expression and assembly, and will continue to raise our concerns directly with the Cuban Government, and call for the authorities to release information on detained citizens.

■ Developing Countries

Sarah Champion: [\[33934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) plans he has and (b) his timescale is for consulting with relevant stakeholders on the Government's International Development Strategy.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary is leading work on the new International Development Strategy, which will be cross-government in scope. The International Development Strategy will set out the UK's approach to development, in line with the Integrated Review. We look forward to engaging with a range of external stakeholders on the development of the strategy over the coming months. This will build on the extensive engagement and call for evidence that was undertaken to inform the Integrated Review.

■ Egypt: LGBT People

Peter Gibson: [\[31544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with its Egyptian counterparts on LGBT+ rights in that country.

Peter Gibson: [\[31545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the increased numbers of arrests of members of the LGBT+ community in Egypt.

Peter Gibson: [\[31546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications of reports of the torture of LGBT+ prisoners in Egypt.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to protecting and promoting the rights of LGBT+ people and to supporting the legal, cultural and social change required to make equality a reality for LGBT+ people around the world.

Egypt is a human rights priority country for the UK. We are concerned about reports of torture and mistreatment in detention of LGBT+ people in Egypt. We regularly raise human rights with the Egyptian Government, which is well aware of our position on LGBT+ rights and we call on the government of Egypt to uphold and protect the rights of everyone in Egypt. We monitor and will continue to raise these issues with the Egyptian authorities and internationally.

■ Equality and Poverty

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[32550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure tackling poverty and inequality is a focus of his Department.

Wendy Morton:

Poverty reduction is the central purpose of the UK's development assistance, which is set out in law through the International Development Act 2002. The UK is committed to the global fight against poverty and to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The Integrated Review renews our commitment to the UK as a force for good in the world. We outline that we will maintain a liberal approach to economic development, creating greater opportunities for all.

To achieve the FCDO's goal of reaching the poorest our development assistance is prioritising getting more girls into school, providing urgent humanitarian support to those who need it most, supporting sustainable and inclusive social protection and tackling global threats like climate change, COVID recovery and other international health priorities. In alignment with the UK Equality Act (2010) and the Gender Equality Act (2014), the FCDO will continue to champion equality to create a fairer, safer and more prosperous world.

■ Foreign Relations

Dr Kieran Mullan: [\[32549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to enhance UK soft power overseas.

Nigel Adams:

The Integrated Review highlighted the UK's status as a soft power superpower and the importance of soft power in building positive perceptions of the UK, creating strong people-to-people links and familiarity with our values.

The FCDO is continuing to fund projects and programmes that support UK soft power, including the British Council, BBC World Service and our Chevening, Marshall and Commonwealth scholarships.

Our international leadership and determination to work as a force for good in the world is an important part of our soft power, as we are seeing through our hosting of the G7 and COP26, and our support for a globally accessible Covid-19 vaccine.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy

Lisa Nandy: [\[32374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Departmental staff have been made redundant as a result of the merger of the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and what is the total cost of redundancy payments made to those staff.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: As the Foreign Secretary said on 18 June 2020, there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Re-employment**Andy McDonald:**[\[33943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of 27 April 2021, Official Report, column 86WH, on the Government's policy on the inappropriate use by some employers of fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic, what steps their Department has taken to (a) investigate and (b) discourage the use of fire and rehire negotiation tactics by their Department's executive non-departmental public bodies; and what steps they have taken to communicate the Government's policy on those practices to those bodies.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government has been very clear that threatening fire and rehire as a negotiating tactic is completely unacceptable. We always expect employers to treat employees fairly and in the spirit of partnership working with trade unions, where relevant, constructively. We are confident that all non-departmental public bodies are aware of the Government's position on this matter.

The FCDO works constructively with each non-departmental public body it has responsibility for and this includes when it comes to workforce management matters, however each is ultimately responsible for the management of their staff.

France: Coronavirus**Julian Sturdy:**[\[31386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations (a) he and (b) his officials are making to counterparts in France on allowing British travellers arriving in France who have received the AstraZeneca/Oxford covid-19 vaccines sourced from the Serum Institute of India to follow regulations in France in-line with people who are fully vaccinated with other approved covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is in close touch with partners across Europe, including France, on the issue of the 5 million doses of AstraZeneca that were manufactured by the Serum Institute of India for use in the UK, called Vaxzevria. The European Medicines Agency has authorised this vaccine and we are confident travel will not be affected. The Government stands ready to share further details of the MHRA's approval of this particular batch should it be required.

■ Israel: Arms Trade

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[33947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the terms of any licences issued for the export of arms to Israel have been varied as a result of the violence in that country and the neighbouring Palestinian Territory in May 2021.

James Cleverly:

HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. If extant licences are found to be no longer consistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, those licences will be revoked.

■ Libya: Travel Restrictions

Damien Moore:

[R] [\[32503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the potential (a) merits and (b) risks of changing his Department's advice against all travel to Libya.

James Cleverly:

All FCDO travel advice pages remain under constant review to ensure they reflect the latest threat assessment to British nationals and include up-to-date information and advice.

■ Malta: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[\[31385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations (a) he and (b) his officials are making to counterparts in Malta on allowing British travellers arriving in Malta who have received the AstraZeneca/Oxford covid-19 vaccines sourced from the Serum Institute of India to follow regulations in Malta in-line with people who are fully vaccinated with other approved covid-19 vaccines.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is in close touch with partners across Europe, including Malta, on the issue of the 5 million doses of AstraZeneca that were manufactured by the Serum Institute of India for use in the UK, called Vaxzevria. The European Medicines Agency, as well as our own medicines regulator, has authorised this vaccine and travel should not be affected. We have confirmed with the Maltese authorities that all vaccines delivered in the UK, regardless of type, batch or location of manufacture, are sufficient for entry into Malta.

■ Nepal: Coronavirus**Yasmin Qureshi:** [\[33884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of making emergency covid-19 vaccines donations to Nepal.

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[33885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to lead on providing 40 million covid-19 vaccine doses to Nepal in the next three months.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is a leading donor to COVAX, the multilateral mechanism set up to support international co-operation on vaccines, having committed £548 million to the scheme. COVAX has delivered over 1,800,000 doses to Nepal so far with further tranches on the way. As G7 chair this year the UK has also secured a commitment to donate 1 billion vaccine doses to the developing world by June 2022, including 100 million donated by the UK. The majority of these doses will be donated to COVAX. COVAX remains best-placed to allocate vaccines to where they will be most effective. It is helping to support countries to assess vaccine introduction readiness, develop detailed national deployment and vaccination plans, and strengthen delivery systems.

As shareholders and contributors to both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, the UK has also pushed hard for multilateral organisations to provide finance to countries for vaccine procurement, including Nepal. The World Bank has now made at least \$75 million available to the Government of Nepal for that purpose; a further \$165 million will soon be proposed to the board of the Asian Development Bank, which the UK will also support.

■ Overseas Aid: Water**Feryal Clark:** [\[34078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction in the UK foreign aid budget from 0.7 percent to 0.5 percent on clean water projects across the globe.

Wendy Morton:

The Government has made the difficult and temporary decision to reduce Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 0.7% to 0.5% to account for the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our support to global health - which embraces many aspects of water, sanitation and hygiene - remains a priority for this year's budget.

The UK has helped over 62 million people gain access to safe water and/or sanitation between 2015 and 2020 - but many more need to be reached to secure universal access. For this reason, we will move beyond supporting the delivery of water and sanitation facilities, refocusing our efforts and influence on strengthening national

systems that are able to deliver and sustain inclusive and resilient water and sanitation services at scale. This approach will support our ambition for global health and make the best use of tax payers funds.

■ **Palestinians: Coronavirus**

Sarah Olney:

[\[34005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Israeli Government on that Government's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention to provide vaccines for the population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly:

We recognise that under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the occupying power, has a duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene, to the fullest extent of the means available to it, including in relation to combating the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We also recognise the Palestinian Authority's responsibilities for vaccinations under the Oslo Accords (under Article 17). Cooperation is key to tackling Covid-19: the British Embassy Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General Jerusalem are in regular contact with both parties and continue to urge them to coordinate on vaccine access.

■ **Rendition and Torture: Reviews**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[33997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what reviews his Department has conducted into torture and rendition since December 2019.

Nigel Adams:

The UK unreservedly condemns the use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as well as rendition. We do not participate in, solicit, encourage or condone such practices for any purpose. The UK supports torture prevention initiatives globally and partners with the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Association for the Prevention of Torture to fund projects such as monitoring the first hours of detention and police custody in Brazil, Mexico, Panama, the Philippines and Rwanda. More information can be found in the FCDO's Human Rights & Democracy report for 2020:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999607/Human_Rights_and_Democracy_the_2020_Foreign__Commonwealth__Development_Office_report.pdf

■ Saudi Arabia: Military Aid**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[31550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK Government trained any members of the Saudi Royal Guard Rapid Intervention Force in each year from 2013 to 2017.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government did not provide training to the group known as the Rapid Intervention Force between 2013 and 2017.

■ Three Seas Initiative**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[31368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the UK is giving to the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government supports the aims of the Three Seas Initiative, which align closely with our own: building back better, addressing the drivers of climate change, and addressing our shared geopolitical challenges. The annual Three Seas Initiative Summit and Business Forum was held in Sofia, Bulgaria on 8-9 July. The Foreign Secretary addressed the Presidential Panel via video message and DIT Minister Graham Stuart led a UK Business Delegation to the Business Forum. The UK continues to explore options for deeper engagement with both the Initiative and the Fund, including sharing expertise on areas of UK excellence on digital, infrastructure, and clean energy.

■ Tigray: Famine**Mr Andrew Mitchell:** [\[31319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of Tigrayans who (a) are classified as facing a famine and (b) have already died as a result of famine conditions.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and shares the concerns outlined in the report on 24 June by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report in June reported high levels of food insecurity in Tigray. It concluded more than 3 million people are in 'crisis', nearly 2.1 million in 'emergency' and 353,000 in 'catastrophe' states, per the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) levels.

On 14 June, I [Minister Duddridge] announced that the UK will reallocate a further £16.7 million to the crisis in Tigray. This will support civil-military coordination to help aid get to those in need and address famine risk through the provision of healthcare, sanitation, and nutritional support. This allocation is on top of the existing £27 million

in 2020-21 already directed to the response, and an additional £4 million allocated to support nutrition and vaccinations in Tigray. This brings UK total funding to support response to the crisis to £47.7 million. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

■ Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[31320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Defence on the potential merits of deploying RAF coordinated airdrops of food and other essentials into the Tigray Region in Ethiopia.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and shares the concerns outlined in the report on 24 June by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Ensuring assistance gets to those who need it most remains our priority in Tigray. We continue to explore all options with partners to expand humanitarian access by both air and land including the possibility of air bridges into Tigray. At this point the FCDO assess that airdrops would not be a viable response to the current situation.

On 14 June I [Minister Duddridge] announced that the UK will allocate a further £16.7 million to the crisis in Tigray. This will support civil-military coordination to help aid get to those in need and address famine risk through the provision of healthcare, sanitation, and nutritional support. This allocation is on top of the existing £27 million in 2020-21 already directed to the response, and an additional £4 million allocated to support nutrition and vaccinations in Tigray. This brings UK total funding to support response to the crisis to £47.7 million. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[31321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the Eritrean Government on using their ports for humanitarian supplies to be transported to Tigray in Ethiopia.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and shares the concerns outlined in the report on 24 June by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Ensuring assistance gets to those who need it most remains our priority in Tigray. We continue to explore all options with partners to expand humanitarian access by both air and land. We have not discussed access for humanitarian supplies with the Government of Eritrea given the destabilising role their forces continue to play in the conflict. We are focussed on securing the complete, immediate and verifiable withdrawal of all Eritrean troops from Tigray in order to help humanitarian relief efforts.

On 14 June I [Minister Duddridge] announced that the UK will allocate a further £16.7 million to the crisis in Tigray. This will support civil-military coordination to help aid get to those in need and address famine risk through the provision of healthcare, sanitation, and nutritional support. This allocation is on top of the existing £27 million in 2020-21 already directed to the response, and an additional £4 million allocated to support nutrition and vaccinations in Tigray. This brings UK total funding to support response to the crisis to £47.7 million. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[31322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Sudanese counterpart on the viability of transporting aid through Sudan to the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and shares the concerns outlined in the report on 24 June by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Ensuring assistance gets to those who need it most remains our priority in Tigray. We continue to explore all options with partners to expand humanitarian access by both air and land. During his visit to Sudan the Foreign Secretary commended Sudan's leaders for their efforts to press for a peaceful resolution to the situation in Tigray and for their support for refugees entering Sudan from Ethiopia. There is currently no viable land route from Sudan into Tigray due to ongoing fighting in Western Tigray although we continue to monitor the logistical and political viability of this route and are engaging the Government of Sudan to support any route that becomes available.

On 14 June I [Minister Duddridge] announced that the UK will allocate a further £16.7 million to the crisis in Tigray. This will support civil-military coordination to help aid get to those in need and address famine risk through the provision of healthcare, sanitation, and nutritional support. This allocation is on top of the existing £27 million in 2020-21 already directed to the response, and an additional £4 million allocated to support nutrition and vaccinations in Tigray. This brings UK total funding to support response to the crisis to £47.7 million. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

■ Travel Information: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[\[33929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the consistency of travel advice for UK citizens issued by his Department with travel advice issued by the Department for Transport.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Travel Advice and the International travel Traffic Lights System are two independent processes based on

different risk analyses. FCDO travel advice considers the risk to British nationals travelling overseas, and specifically the risk in each country or territory, while the Traffic Light System assesses and aims to mitigate the overall risk to UK public health from all inbound travellers to the UK. At present, Travel Advice advises against all but essential travel to all countries on the 'Red' list and does not advise against travel to any country on the 'Green' list.

The International traffic light system is currently signposted across all FCDO Travel Advice pages, both at the top of each page, where there are links to relevant covid guidance and also within each country page where the Traffic Light status of that country is given.

■ Uganda: Coronavirus

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[31431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to provide covid-19 vaccines to Uganda through the COVAX programme.

James Duddridge:

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are supporting the COVAX Facility as the best mechanism to deliver this and have committed £548 million to its Advance Market Commitment to support its work, making the UK one of its largest donors. To date, Uganda has received 1,139,200 vaccines through the COVAX scheme, with further deliveries expected in the coming months.

Our G7 Presidency in June championed equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics, confirming that the UK will share 100 million doses within the next year. 30 million of these will be shared by the end of 2021, with 5 million by the end of September.

■ Uganda: Education

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[31433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support educational programmes in Uganda.

James Duddridge:

To help address the disruption caused to education provision by COVID-19, UK programming will this year reach approximately 300,000 children to maintain access and learning through radio lessons, community led literacy and numeracy classes, bursaries, teacher support, and support to children with disabilities. A further 100,000 children in refugee hosting districts will be supported with home learning, accelerated education programmes, and reducing barriers for girls through menstrual hygiene management.

The UK is also one of the leading funders of the Global Partnership for Education and World Bank, which provide further support including to reform policy and financing and improve education systems.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Bile Duct Cancer**

Daisy Cooper: [\[31548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to raise awareness of the early signs and symptoms of bile duct cancer in (a) healthcare settings and (b) among the general public.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans to run a specific public awareness campaigns on bile duct cancer.

■ **Cancer: Drugs**

Alex Norris: [\[34020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set a target for improving access to cancer medicines to support NHS England's Long Term Plan ambition of improving cancer survival by 2028.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans to introduce a specific target for improving access to cancer medicines. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is responsible for making evidence-based recommendations on whether new medicines represent an effective use of National Health Service resources. NICE is also able to recommend cancer medicines for use through the Cancer Drugs Fund which has helped over 64,000 patients to benefit from the most promising cancer medicines where there is uncertainty about their effectiveness. NICE now appraises all new medicines and significant licence extensions and it has recommended 92% of cancer medicines it appraised in 2020-21.

■ **Clinical Trials**

Alex Norris: [\[32497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase the number of patients recruited to clinical trials in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 29 June to Question [22008](#).

■ **Contraceptives: Analgesics**

Dan Jarvis: [\[17742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his plans are for making pain relief available for women when having an intrauterine device insertion.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 22 June 2021]: This is a clinical issue. The current guidance on intrauterine contraception from the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare does not recommend the routine use of pain relief for improving ease of insertion or reducing pain during insertion of intrauterine methods. Local anaesthetic can be used in some circumstances. The Faculty's guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.fsrh.org/standards-and-guidance/documents/ceuguidanceintrauterinecontraception/>

■ Coronavirus**Paul Blomfield:****[30346]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, in each of the last four weeks, what proportion of covid-19 hospitalisations were for people aged (a) over 50, (b) between 40-49, (c) between 30-39, (d) between 18-29 and (e) under 18.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 July 2021]: Data on the proportion of COVID-19 hospitalisations is not available in the format requested.

■ Coronavirus and Long Covid: Mental Health**Ben Bradley:****[33326]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people whose mental health has deteriorated as a result of (a) the covid-19 outbreak and (b) having contracted long covid.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We published 'COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan', to ensure that we have the right support in place this year to respond to the impact of the pandemic on mental health and those affected by 'long' COVID-19.

NHS England and NHS Improvement's 'Long COVID: the NHS plan for 2021/22' states that those with 'long' COVID-19 who are experiencing persistent mental health problems such as depression, anxiety or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder should be considered for referral to an Improving Access to Psychological Therapy service. Referral into other specialist mental health services should be considered where adults or children and young people present with serious mental illness. Psychologists should be part of the multidisciplinary rehabilitation team, providing individual and group input and advice to other staff.

■ Coronavirus: Disadvantaged**Colleen Fletcher:****[29064]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the drivers of health inequalities; and what steps

his Department is taking to tackle health inequalities to protect those at greatest risk from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 July 2021]: We do not yet fully understand the effect of COVID-19 on health inequalities or on health indicators like life expectancy. Public Health England (PHE) has undertaken an in-depth analysis of the disparities arising from COVID-19. 'Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19' published in June 2020, confirmed that the impact of the pandemic replicated and increased existing health inequalities. The report found that the risk of dying from COVID-19 was higher in older age groups, males, those living in more deprived areas and some ethnic minority groups.

The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) is leading cross-Government work to better understand the disparities in the risks and outcomes from COVID-19 and the relationships between the different risk factors. The 'Third quarterly report on progress to address COVID-19 health inequalities' was published in May and reflects that considerable efforts are underway to address these disparities including through the Community Champions scheme led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and supported by the Department, which has provided £23.75million in funding to local authorities.

The Government remains committed to levelling up health outcomes across the country and will publish a White Paper later this year, setting out bold new policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunity in all parts of the United Kingdom. This will have a focus on reducing inequalities in the way different communities experience and are impacted by threats to health, targeting action towards disproportionately affected groups.

The new Office for Health Promotion (OHP) will continue to drive health promotion and prevention. Under the professional leadership of the Chief Medical Officer, it will help the Department deliver proactive, predictive and personalised prevention strategies. Alongside the recently announced cross-ministerial board on prevention, the OHP will put addressing health inequalities as a key priority.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Mr Mark Harper:

[R] [\[28127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 25 of Covid-19 Response: Summer 2021, for how long his Department plans to continue regular asymptomatic covid-19 testing for (a) the public, (b) children at school, (c) students at university or college and (d) employees in workplaces.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 July 2021]: Test, Trace and Isolate has an important ongoing role in managing the virus and reduces the risk of potentially dangerous variants spreading. It continues to be important that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 arranges to have a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test and that they stay at

home while they are waiting for a home test kit, a test site appointment or a test result.

We continue to recommend twice-weekly asymptomatic testing. Testing remains freely available to all through pharmacies and online at GOV.UK. However, we are stopping free testing offered through workplaces as planned on the 31 July 2021. Asymptomatic testing will continue for education settings open over the summer, including summer schools and wraparound care. On the return to school and college in the autumn term, pupils will take two tests onsite before continuing with twice weekly asymptomatic testing until the end of September, when the position will be reviewed. Asymptomatic testing in vulnerable and higher-risk settings, such as the National Health Service, social care and prisons, will continue until further notice.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[31530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is collecting data on the proportion of people testing positive for the Delta covid-19 variant who are unvaccinated.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England collects and publishes data on COVID-19 vaccination status for all confirmed Delta variant cases. This information is available in the variant technical briefings at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/investigation-of-novel-sars-cov-2-variant-variant-of-concern-20201201>

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[33925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of what the maximum covid-19 PCR testing capacity per day will be for England on 1 August 2021.

Jo Churchill:

We estimate capacity will be approximately 540,000 tests on 1 August 2021.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Lilian Greenwood: [\[33895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that 17 year olds who are starting university in the autumn can access the covid-19 vaccine before they are 18 to allow them to be double-vaccinated before they arrive at university.

Rachael Maskell: [\[33971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to ensure that young people who (a) will turn 18 in July or August and (b) are going to university in 2021 have been offered both doses of a covid-19 vaccination prior to the commencement of the university new term.

Rachael Maskell:[\[33972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to young people who may be under the age of 18 when going to university in September 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering those young people covid-19 vaccines if they are over the age of 16.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has accepted the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice that young people, including students, may be offered a COVID-19 vaccination within three months of turning 18 years old. The second dose of the vaccine would be offered eight weeks after the first dose.

Students over the age of 16 years old with underlying health conditions that put them at risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 have been offered both doses of vaccine as part of phase one of the vaccine deployment programme. Age is assessed to be the strongest factor linked to mortality, morbidity and hospitalisations.

■ Dental Services**Karin Smyth:**[\[2343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of access to NHS dentistry provision for new patients; and what plans he has to ensure there are sufficient NHS dental patient places available to meet demand.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no specific assessment. NHS England and NHS Improvement are responsible for commissioning primary dental care services to meet local need, including for new patients. Where a prospective new patient is unable to access National Health Service dentistry, NHS England's Customer Contact Centre can provide assistance.

We continue to work closely with the NHS, Public Health England and the profession to safely increase levels of service and ensure that there are sufficient NHS dental places available to meet demand

This includes increasing access to dental services, while maintaining measures to protect staff and patients from COVID-19 infection; reviewing the current dental contract; and exploring opportunities and options for flexible dental training pathways, to develop dental care teams, improve retention and deliver safe and effective care.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Re-employment**Andy McDonald:**[\[33942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of 27 April 2021, Official Report, column 86WH, on the Government's policy on the inappropriate use by some employers of fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic, what steps their Department has taken to (a) investigate and (b) discourage the

use of fire and rehire negotiation tactics by their Department's executive non-departmental public bodies; and what steps they have taken to communicate the Government's policy on those practices to those bodies.

Edward Argar:

There is no scope within the human resources policies of the Department's executive non-departmental public bodies to allow 'fire and rehire' as a negotiating tactic. The legally permitted reasons for dismissal and the relevant process must be followed, in line with ACAS guidelines.

■ **Long Covid**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[31469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the total number of cases of Long Covid that will result from the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Office for National Statistics estimates that 962,000 people in the United Kingdom had self-reported 'long' COVID-19 symptoms as of 6 June.

From September, NHS England and NHS Improvement will publish activity data on referral, assessments and waiting times for post-COVID-19 assessment clinics.

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

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[33365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review report entitled First Do No Harm, published in July 2020, what recent steps he has taken to progress implementation of recommendation five of that report on the rollout of specialist centres.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As of April 2021, eight National Health Service trusts are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide specialised services for women with complications of mesh inserted for urinary incontinence and vaginal prolapse. We continue to consider specialist centres for those adversely affected by medicines taken during pregnancy. Further detail on this recommendation will be included in the full response to the report to be published this year.

■ **Mental Health Services: Young People**

Feryal Clark:

[\[34076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to improve mental health care by investing in early access mental health support for young people.

Feryal Clark:[\[34077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education to ensure schools receive adequate resources and funding for early access mental health support.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Ministers are in regular contact with their counterparts in the Department for Education about how best to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. The Government is investigating the early access model of support: there are currently around 60 'early support hubs' in England that feature early intervention and prevention services. They are locally designed and funded and often provide several different services. Clinical commissioning groups and local authorities work with local partners to understand local needs and commission services on that basis.

Alongside the additional investment in children and young people's mental health services outlined in the NHS Mental Health Implementation Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24, we are making an additional £79 million available in this financial year, which will be used to significantly expand children's and young people's mental health services including accelerating the coverage of mental health support teams providing early support in schools and colleges. £15 million is to be invested in local authority areas in the most deprived parts of the country to help stimulate and boost prevention and early intervention services to support those hardest hit by the pandemic, including families, children and young people, and ethnic minority groups.

■ NHS: Drugs**Peter Dowd:**[\[33956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to criminalise the inflation of prices for the NHS by drug companies.

Peter Dowd:[\[33957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to require pharmaceutical companies that artificially inflate the cost of their products to make those products more affordable.

Jo Churchill:

Anti-competitive behaviour, including excessive pricing, is a matter for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The Department asks the CMA to investigate where it has concerns about abuses of competition law for generic medicines and where companies are found by the CMA to be in breach of the legislation, the Department will seek damages and invest that money back into the National Health Service.

The Government relies on competition to reduce the prices of generic medicines. This has led to some of the lowest prices in Europe and allows prices to react to the

market. The Department has been considering proposals for ways to address high prices of generic medicines and will consult in due course.

The Department also has powers in the NHS Act 2006 to control the prices of NHS medicines. Prices of branded medicines are controlled through the 2019 Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS) and alternative statutory scheme which utilises those powers. VPAS caps branded medicines' sales at an agreed level of growth. Any growth in sales above this level results in payments made by scheme members.

■ **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**

Florence Eshalomi: [\[32563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to increase the number of specialist clinicians in obsessive compulsive disorder within NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: We have no plans to do so. All consultant child and adolescent psychiatrists and the extended multi-disciplinary team have specific training and qualifications to work with young people presenting with obsessive compulsive disorder as a core element of their specialist clinical role. This is integral to the provision of all community-based and specialised mental health inpatient services for children and young people.

■ **Patient Recruitment Centres**

Alex Norris: [\[32499\]](#)

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:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 15 July Question [25117](#).

■ **Primary Health Care: Telephone Services**

Julian Knight: [\[31445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the length telephone waiting times for primary care networks in 2021.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with a number of areas to test advanced telephony requirements and specifications, which will improve telephone capacity. NHS England and NHS Improvement intend to share learning from these areas to support practices across the country to improve telephony in primary care.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists

Stephen Morgan:

[\[34027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of NHS patients awaiting operations that have been delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

No recent estimate has been made. The collection of data on cancelled operations has been paused in order to release capacity across the National Health Service to support the pandemic response.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants

Julian Sturdy:

[\[29038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to implement all the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review on pelvic mesh.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have implemented the recommendation of the Independent Medicines and Medical Device (IMMDS) Review which calls for the establishment of specialist mesh centres. As of April 2021, eight National Health Service trusts are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement to provide specialised services for women with complications of mesh inserted for urinary incontinence and vaginal prolapse.

The Review recommended a patient-identifiable database for the implantation of all devices, including vaginal mesh. NHS Digital has developed a pelvic floor registry under the Surgical Devices and Implants Direction, which will collect information from pelvic floor and mesh related procedures. Specialist mesh removal centres will be required to provide information to the pelvic floor registry.

We are considering the associated actions for improvement that relate to mesh and we will respond in full to the IMMDS Review this year.

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[31274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the debate on the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review on 8 July 2021, Official Report, columns 1148 to 1187, what steps he plans to take to research new and improved techniques for removal of eroded surgical mesh implants; and if he will make it his policy to establish a unit for developing such techniques in order to train a new generation of mesh-removal specialists to treat people experiencing the effects of failed mesh implants in the future.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 July 2021]: There are no current studies specifically relating to new and improved techniques for the removal of eroded surgical mesh. However, there are five studies ongoing on surgical mesh implants and the National Institute for Health Research welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of

human health, including on the removal or implantation of vaginal mesh. There are currently no plans to establish a unit in order to train mesh removal specialists.

■ Tobacco

Mark Jenkinson: [R] [\[31543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish the updated Tobacco Control Plan before the publication of the Office for National Statistics data in 2021 on smoking prevalence.

Jo Churchill:

The Government's new Tobacco Control Plan will be published later this year. This is likely to take place after the Office for National Statistics publish data on smoking prevalence in early autumn 2021.

HOME OFFICE

■ Crime: Rural Areas

Sir John Hayes: [\[31298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to reduce (a) rural crime rates and (b) incidences of hare coursing; and what the timeframe is for implementing those plans.

Kit Malthouse:

We remain committed in our ambition to reduce levels of rural crime; including those offences related to hare coursing. That is why, we are supporting the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on its legislative proposals set out in the Action Plan on Animal Welfare, which was published on 12 May 2021.

This department is also assisting with police's operational and strategic efforts to reduce levels of rural crime, through the ongoing recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers, and continued funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

■ Extinction Rebellion: Demonstrations

Sir John Hayes: [\[31302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests have been made during Extinction Rebellion protests since 2019.

Sir John Hayes: [\[31304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many protests have been prevented or restricted under existing legislative powers in the last 12 months.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes statistics on the number of arrests, conducted by each police force in England and Wales, on an annual basis.

Data are held at the offence group level (for example 'Violence against the person' and 'Public order' offences) and Police Force Area level only.

Information on the number of arrests made at Extinction Rebellion protests are not held centrally.

Also linked question PQW/21-22/2021/02713

How many protests have been prevented or restricted under existing legislative powers in the last 12 months?

The Home Office does not record the numbers of protests that take place, have been prevented or restricted. We do not hold information to answer the question.

■ Immigration and Visas: Human Rights

Alyn Smith:

[\[31535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that citizens of (a) Belarus and (b) other countries where people who oppose political regimes are at risk of human rights abuses will be offered the opportunity to renew their UK visas or UK immigration status without having to return to their home country to make the necessary application to her Department.

Kevin Foster:

As part of the introduction of the points-based system, we have enabled applicants to switch between immigration routes without having to leave the UK. This applies to all nationals.

Information on those immigration routes, which must be renewed from the home country of the applicant, is available on our website at:

[Application to extend stay in the UK: FLR\(IR\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) There is also the option to make an asylum claim in person, whilst in the UK, at an application centre. Further information on the asylum process, as well as locations at which an asylum claim can be made, is available here:

[Claim asylum in the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Kate Osamor:

[\[31476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to expedite outstanding EU Settled Status applications.

Kevin Foster:

We currently have 1,500 UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) European Casework staff in post.

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

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

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

The rights of those EU citizens and their family members who were lawfully resident at the end of the transition period and who, from 1 July 2021, have a pending application under the EUSS made by the deadline, or an appeal against the refusal of an application submitted by then, will be protected until their application is finally determined.

Kate Osamor:

[31477]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU Settled Status applications submitted after the deadline of 30 June 2021 are being processed by her Department.

Kevin Foster:

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

The latest published information shows the total number of applications to the EUSS was 6.02 million up to 30 June 2021, of which 5.45 million had been concluded. Data to 31 July 2021 will be published in early August 2021.

Published EUSS figures refer specifically to applications made to the EUSS and cannot be directly compared with estimates of the resident population of EU/EEA nationals in the UK.

The published figures include non-EEA national family members, Irish nationals and eligible EEA nationals not resident in the UK, none of whom are usually included in estimates of the resident EU/EEA population.

Furthermore, the population estimates do not take account of people's migration intentions and will include people who have come to the UK for a range of purposes, including some who have no intention to settle in the UK.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a blog on 2 July 2021, further discussing the differences and their plans for future population estimates:

[Are there really 6m EU citizens living in the UK? | National Statistical \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Kate Osamor:

[31478]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff in her Department have been working on processing EU Settled Status applications in each month since January 2020.

Kevin Foster:

Since the start of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) we have maintained 1500 full-time equivalent officials within its casework operation, and a further 250 staff within

the Settlement Resolution Centre in place to provide assistance to applicants with any questions about the scheme or who need help applying.

Kate Osamor: [\[31479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of EU nationals in the UK who have missed the deadline to apply for EU Settled Status.

Kate Osamor: [\[31480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many EU Nationals have made late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

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

The latest published information shows the total number of applications to the EUSS was 6.02 million up to 30 June 2021, of which 5.45 million had been concluded. Data to 31 July 2021 will be published in early August 2021.

Published EUSS figures refer specifically to applications made to the EUSS and cannot be directly compared with estimates of the resident population of EU/EEA nationals in the UK.

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The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a blog on 2 July 2021, further discussing the differences and their plans for future population estimates:

[Are there really 6m EU citizens living in the UK? | National Statistical \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Lucy Powell: [\[33932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the update to the EU Settlement Scheme caseworker guidance on late applications and the section on children in care and care leavers in that guidance, whether care leavers who are aged 18-25 years at the deadline are included in the children in care and care leavers category as having reasonable grounds to make out of time applications.

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 support a care leaver aged 18 to 25 in making an in-time application to the EUSS.

As made clear on many occasions the guidance published on 1 April is not exhaustive. We will take a pragmatic and flexible approach to cases in light of the particular circumstances of each application

■ **Offenders: Deportation**

Lee Anderson:

[31542]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to remove foreign national offenders.

Chris Philp:

The Government is clear foreign nationals who abuse our hospitality by committing crimes should be in no doubt of our determination to deport them.

Any foreign national who is convicted of a crime and given a prison sentence is considered for deportation at the earliest opportunity and since January 2019 we have removed 7,985.

For non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals, deportation will be pursued where it is conducive to the public good including where a person receives a custodial sentence of 12 months or more, commits an offence that caused serious harm or is a persistent offender. European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens, and their family members, who are protected by the EU Withdrawal Agreement Act 2020 are considered for deportation on public policy and public security grounds where it concerns conduct (including any criminal convictions relating to it) committed on or before 31 December 2020.

Our New Plan for Immigration will make it easier to deport foreign criminals with no right to be in the UK and keep our citizens safe. Further information can be found in [New Plan for Immigration: policy statement \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92222/new-immigration-policy-statement-accessible.pdf).

■ **Pets: Theft**

Sir John Hayes:

[31297]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of trends in the level of pet theft since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

We recognise the distress pet theft causes and are committed to doing more to prevent these cruel crimes. The Government has been assembling evidence on pet theft as part of the work of the Pet Theft Taskforce, launched 8 May, and this will be published in due course.

The Taskforce is considering the issue from end to end, including causes, prevention, reporting, enforcement and prosecution.

■ Public Order Offences

Sir John Hayes:

[\[31303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of replacing the common law offence of public nuisance with a statutory offence of intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance.

Kit Malthouse:

When drafting the measure on Public Nuisance for Part 3 of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill, the Government considered the Law Commission's recommendation to restate the common law offence of public nuisance in statute provided in their report "Simplification of Criminal Law: Public Nuisance and Outraging Public Decency" .

The Law Commission held a public consultation which informed the recommendations of their report and argued that this restatement will provide clarity to the police and potential offenders, in comparison to the common law offence. We also consulted HMICFRS, who also agreed with this recommendation. Having considered these, the Government decided to introduce the statutory offence of public nuisance and replace the existing common law offence.

■ UK Border Force: Coronavirus

Layla Moran:

[\[34033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of Border Force staff who were self-isolating due to covid-19 (a) infection or (b) exposure on 15 July 2021; and how many days Border Force staff had been off duty as a result.

Kevin Foster:

All Border Force staff strictly adhere to health measure regulations. We continue to review and refine any processes to ensure optimal staffing levels to carry out the vital function of border security.

Resourcing is under constant review, ensuring Border Force has the capacity to deploy resources flexibly and to risk when it is safe to do so.

Border Force do not routinely publish sickness and absence data.

■ Visas

Kate Osamor:

[\[31485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people made a visa application using the super priority service in each month since 2015; and how many of those people received a decision by the end of the next working day in each month since 2015.

Kate Osamor: [31486]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people (a) made a visa application using the priority service and (b) received a decision within five working days on that application in each month since 2015.

Kevin Foster:

Information on numbers of applications made using the priority and super priority service has been routinely published as part of the quarterly Immigration statistics since 2019.

The current data is available and can be found via the link below on tab VC_02.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visas-and-citizenship-data-q1-2021>

Between 2015 and 2019 data was derived from unpublished management information collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. There are currently no plans to publish this data.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [33840]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has commenced the comprehensive review of Immigration Rules in relation to Tier 1 (Investor) Visas that the Court of Appeal advised its May 2021 judgement on circular investments.

Kevin Foster:

We strongly disagree with the Court of Appeal's judgment and are seeking permission to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Dame Margaret Hodge: [33841]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 8 February 2021 to Question 148671 on Visas, when she plans to publish the review of all Tier 1 (Investor) visas issued between 2008 and 2015.

Kevin Foster:

The review of Tier 1 (Investor) visas granted between June 2008 and April 2015 is being finalised.

It will be published in due course.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme

David Mundell: [31351]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on expanding the Youth Mobility Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

We remain open to negotiating Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) arrangements with other countries and territories. However, as each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK Nationals, with the detail

negotiated and agreed between the relevant parties, we are unable to disclose the status of negotiations as they occur.

Further details of additional YMS agreements will be announced once they are concluded.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ House of Commons: Coronavirus

Layla Moran: [\[34036\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the House of Commons Commission has discussed any plans for a commemoration for Members and staff as part of a memorial day for those who have lost their lives to covid-19.

Sir Charles Walker:

The Commission has not considered this. However, the Speaker has asked the Speaker's Chaplain to liaise with St Margaret's Church to develop a memorial service for the parliamentary community to take part in for those who have lost their lives to Covid. The service will take place in autumn if public health advice continues to allow church services and gatherings at that point.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Fleur Anderson: [\[32531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, as of 13 July 2021, how many applications have been submitted to the Building Safety Fund.

Fleur Anderson: [\[32532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding has been allocated to buildings for cladding remediation through the Building Safety Fund, as of 13 July 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: Data on the Building Safety Fund, including the number of applications and how much funding has been allocated, are published and updated monthly at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Hilary Benn:

[\[33124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the total number of buildings in England with (a) cladding and (b) other fire safety problems that have not yet been fully remediated.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: Information on the remediation progress of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe ACM cladding can be found in the monthly data release here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding#acm-remediation-data>.

For high-rise residential buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding, the Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund at pace so more remedial works can begin as swiftly as possible. We expect applicants to the Building Safety Fund to start works on site by 30 September 2021 where possible. Information on registrations to the Building Safety Fund can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics>.

We have begun a pilot data collection project for 11-18m residential buildings to identify materials in use and to inform the design of a wider national 11-18m data collection exercise. We will publish further details shortly.

The Building Safety Bill will bring about a fundamental change in both the regulatory framework for building safety and construction industry culture, ensuring those responsible for buildings ensure fire and structural safety risks are properly managed.

■ Camping Sites: Licensing

Neil Parish:

[\[31384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 28 June 2021, HCWS128 on Supporting Tourism in England, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on (a) facilitating a quick licensing process and (b) expediting new applications for camping licences to provide certainty for applicants of temporary campsites.

Christopher Pincher:

As the Written Statement made clear, the Government wants local authorities to expedite new applications for licenses for temporary campsites, where they are needed, to provide certainty for applicants.

Under the campsite licensing legislation, if a local authority fails to meet this expectation for a fast decision and does not respond to a licensing application within a month, the operator can continue without a license.

My Department and DEFRA will continue to work together with local authorities to ensure licensing does not become a barrier to increased temporary campsite capacity over the Summer.

■ Coal: Cumbria

Valerie Vaz: [\[33210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the environmental effect of proposals to open a new deep coalmine in Cumbria.

Valerie Vaz: [\[33211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in light of proposals to open a new deep coalmine in Cumbria.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: A public inquiry, overseen by an independent Planning Inspector, is scheduled to begin in September. The inquiry will hear the evidence for and against the proposal, and once completed, the Inspector will prepare a report and recommendation for Ministers, based on that evidence. As this application will come before Ministers for decision it would not be appropriate to comment further at this time.

■ Community Assets and Historic Buildings

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[32364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to protect community assets and heritage buildings that are at risk of being lost.

Eddie Hughes:

On 15 July the Government launched the first bidding for the UK wide £150 million Community Ownership Fund to help community groups to save assets at risk of loss. The fund will run for 4-years and help communities protect assets which are locally important and deliver a community benefit

The Government has also taken steps to safeguard local heritage through a campaign to encourage local authorities, working with their communities, to identify locally important historic buildings and assets for inclusion in their local heritage list. £1.5 million of funding has been made available to 22 areas across England to take forward this work.

■ Council Housing: Carbon Emissions

Helen Hayes:

[\[33991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities are adequately resourced to undertake carbon reduction retrofitting of local authority homes.

Eddie Hughes:

Undertaking carbon reduction retrofitting is a crucial step in achieving our commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and will contribute towards our Carbon Budget targets and our legally binding fuel poverty targets. The 2019 Conservative Manifesto included a commitment to a £3.8 billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period, administered by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to support local authorities and housing associations to improve the energy performance of social rented homes. £62 million has so far been awarded to 19 local authority-led Demonstrator projects across the country, covering over 2,300 social homes, to test innovative approaches to retrofitting at scale. Beyond these projects, there will be around £160 million total funding for the first wave of the SHDF programme in 2021/22 to make further progress towards delivering the government's commitment to invest in the energy performance of homes.

■ Council Housing: Insulation

Helen Hayes:

[\[33990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities are adequately resourced to undertake fire safety remediation works on council homes.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is investing over £5 billion supporting the owners of residential buildings over 18m in height to carry out necessary fire safety remediation.

This includes £400 million for the full funding of remediation of unsafe aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding on social sector residential buildings over 18m in height, including council-owned blocks. 98% of social sector buildings in the Fund have started remediation and 69% have completed.

In addition, social sector landlords including councils are eligible to apply to the £4.5 billion Building Safety Fund to support the costs of remediating non-ACM cladding that would otherwise be borne by leaseholders in their buildings, including shared owners.

■ Fire Extinguishers

Hilary Benn:

[\[33123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merit of installing sprinklers in buildings with (a)

cladding and (b) other fire safety problems, including whether this would enable the removal of waking watches.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: A detailed building specific assessment of the level of risk is required to ascertain the most appropriate mitigation measures. The installation of a sprinkler system may be a proportionate fire safety measure in some circumstances. The Government supports the proportionate assessment of the level of risk in buildings.

We have been clear that it is the responsibility of buildings owners to ensure that they have a fire risk assessment in place and adopt proportionate mitigation measures where necessary.

■ **Hospitality Industry: Licensing**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[33336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his letter to leaders of local authorities on 5 March 2021, what progress he has made in extending the temporary provisions that simplified the route for pubs, restaurants and cafes to obtain a temporary pavement licence for another 12 months from 30 September 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: On 8 June we laid the Business and Planning Act 2020 (Pavement Licences) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 which extends the temporary streamlined pavement licence provisions that we introduced last summer for 12 months until September 2022. The regulations have now been approved in Parliament and the legislation has come into effect. Therefore, businesses will now be able to apply for a licence for the extended period.

■ **Housing Associations: Repairs and Maintenance**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[31466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken to help ensure that housing associations assess best value when undertaking (a) property maintenance and (b) building enhancement works.

Eddie Hughes:

Housing associations are independent organisations and are responsible for ensuring that they appropriately assess any expenditure on their homes. Those that are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing must ensure they comply with the regulator's consumer and economic standards.

The Regulator's Home Standard requires that registered providers ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas. This should demonstrate an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money. The Home Standard is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-standard/home-standard-2015>

The Regulator of Social Housing's Value for Money Standard requires that providers ensure that their resources and assets are used optimally, ensuring economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of their organisation's strategic objectives. Registered providers must demonstrate consideration of value for money across their whole business. The Value for Money Standard and the Value for Money Report are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/value-for-money-standard/value-for-money-standard-april-2018>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2020-global-accounts-of-private-registered-providers/value-for-money-metrics-report-annex-to-global-accounts-2020>

Providers are expected to demonstrate to the Regulator of Social Housing that their approach to achieving value for money is robust and there is a rigorous appraisal of potential options for improvement. Performance in achieving value for money should be regularly monitored and reported against and they must annually publish evidence in their statutory accounts to enable stakeholders to understand their performance against their value for money targets. Where underperformance is identified, providers must clearly outline their plans to address this or provide a rationale for why this would not be appropriate.

■ Housing Associations: Service Charges

Rachael Maskell:

[31465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that residents of housing association schemes are consulted on changes to their service charge.

Eddie Hughes:

The law is already clear that service charges, and any increase in costs, must be reasonable and where costs relate to work or services, the work or services must be of a reasonable standard. The consultation process set out in Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 further sets out a process associated with major works. A determination of the Tribunal is required if the consultation requirement is to be dispensed with. In addition residents may make an application to the First-tier Tribunal for it to make a determination on the reasonableness of their service charges or on section 20 grounds.

The Government's policy statement on rents for social housing tenants (published in February 2019) states that where new or extended services are introduced, and an additional service charge may need to be made, registered providers of social housing should consult with tenants.

■ Housing Associations: Shared Housing

Rachael Maskell:

[\[31467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his policy is on housing associations engaging residents of shared accommodation with the outcome of (a) fire inspections and (b) any requirements that result from those inspections.

Christopher Pincher:

Housing associations must meet the obligations, on all landlords, requiring resident engagement regarding fire inspections. Housing associations who are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing must also meet the regulator's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, ensuring tenants are provided with accessible, relevant and timely information, including on progress of repairs work, and that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the management of their homes.

The Building Safety Bill will ensure that every in scope residential building (18 metres and higher and/or 7 storeys or more), including those belonging to housing associations, must have a resident engagement strategy produced by the Accountable Person. This will provide residents with access to key safety information about their building. Accountable Persons must also establish a formal complaints process for residents to raise concerns - ensuring residents' voices are heard with parity and consistency.

In addition, the Bill requires that the Building Safety Regulator must establish its own process to deal with the safety concerns of residents of high-rise residential buildings, providing a further channel to ensure complaints are handled fairly, and can be escalated effectively.

Finally, the Building Safety Bill will also amend the Fire Safety Order to require Responsible Persons for buildings containing two or more sets of domestic premises to provide residents with comprehensible information about relevant fire safety matters.

This will mean that residents have access to relevant fire safety information to help ensure they feel safe and are safe from fire in their homes.

■ Housing Revenue Accounts

Helen Hayes:

[\[33987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 29857 on Housing Revenue Accounts, what assessment he has made of the impact of (a) fire safety remediation works and (b) carbon reduction retrofitting on the levels of debt of housing revenue accounts.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has made a series of funds available to local authorities in support of necessary fire safety remediation works. This includes the £400 million Social

Sector Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) Cladding Remediation Fund, to fully fund the remediation of unsafe ACM cladding on social sector residential buildings over 18 million in height, including council-owned blocks. All eligible publicly owned buildings have started remediation and 69% have completed.

The Government has also provided support for local authorities carrying out important and necessary carbon reduction retrofitting, including the £3.8 billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), to support local authorities and housing associations to improve the energy performance of social rented homes. In addition, there will be around £160 million total funding for the first wave of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund programme in 2021/22, to make further progress towards delivering the government's commitment to invest in the energy performance of homes.

Helen Hayes:

[\[33989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the abilities of local authorities to renegotiate their housing revenue account debt settlement under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

Christopher Pincher:

In 2012, the Government agreed self-financing settlements with local authorities that held housing revenue accounts. Debt levels were calculated and rebalanced across those local authorities with housing revenue accounts (HRAs), so that authorities could repay loans without jeopardising expenditure on necessary day-to-day expenditure on management, maintenance, and major repairs. There are no current plans to revisit the self-financing settlement.

Authorities are subject to the constraints of the Prudential Code, which means that no authority can borrow more than it can afford to service.

■ Housing Revenue Accounts: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[33988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the level of debt accrued by local authorities in their housing revenue accounts during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps he is taking to support local authorities that have accrued that debt.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has continued to monitor the effect of Covid-19 and consequential pressures on local authorities and their housing revenue accounts.

In the last year, the Government has provided additional support for local authorities by extending the quarterly expenditure deadlines for returning unused Right to Buy receipts for the whole of 2020/21, introducing a lower Public Works Loan Board rate for housing revenue account borrowing, and extending the existing £9 billion Affordable Homes Programme for a year to preserve developments that might otherwise have been lost following site closures and delays.

Authorities are subject to the constraints of the Prudential Code, which means that no authority can borrow more than it can afford to service.

■ Housing: Construction

Owen Thompson:

[\[30399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if the Government will take steps to strengthen consumer redress rules to increase the confidence of buyers of new build homes of the quality of those homes.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is committed to improving redress for new build homebuyers when things go wrong. On the 5 July 2021, the Government introduced the Building Safety Bill into Parliament, which includes provision for the New Homes Ombudsman scheme to provide dispute resolution to, and determine complaints by, buyers of new build homes against developers.

Once arrangements for the scheme have been made, developers will be required to become and remain members of the scheme. Where the ombudsman determines a dispute in favour of the complainant, they may order redress such as paying compensation, and where this is not complied with, the scheme may expel the member.

The New Homes Ombudsman provisions are for new homes built in England. Housing is a devolved matter and within the competency of the devolved legislatures and we are in discussions with the devolved administrations about the New Homes Ombudsman provisions, and they are considering how this policy might be taken forward in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[32372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that in areas where social and affordable housing is built, investment is simultaneously provided to develop local services within the same community.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: I recognise the importance of ensuring new housing development is supported by the provision of infrastructure. Contributions from developers play an important role in delivering the infrastructure and affordable housing to support communities and local economies.

The Planning for the Future White Paper proposes introducing a new 'Infrastructure Levy', to replace the existing system of developer contributions. Through the Levy, local authorities will have greater flexibility to determine how contributions are spent to shape and support both existing and new communities. The Levy will also deliver more of the infrastructure these communities require by capturing a greater share of the uplift in land value that comes with development.

■ Housing: Multiple Occupation

Seema Malhotra: [\[33931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of houses in multiple occupation in England.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department gathers data from local authorities on the estimated number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) annually. According to our most recent data covering 2019-2020, there are an estimated 511,000 HMOs in England.

■ Landlords: Licensing

Jeff Smith: [\[33258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 13th July 2021 to Question 29072 on Landlords: Licensing, which three local authorities currently have schemes under consideration.

Eddie Hughes:

Due to potential commercial and political sensitivities, we are unable to provide the names of councils with schemes under consideration.

■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus

Steve Reed: [\[33937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether officials at his Department informed local authorities that they would be expected to use reserves to balance their budgets as a result of the emergency circumstances of the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

We have been clear throughout the pandemic that all councils would be supported through this crisis, and they have been, with over £12 billion allocated directly to councils.

Steve Reed: [\[33938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has had recent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on levels of reserves held by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

My Department continuously engages Her Majesty's Treasury on local authority reserve levels as part of our routine work on local government finances.

Individual local authorities determine the level of reserves that they hold and are accountable to their electorate for the decisions they make.

■ Local Government Finance: Life Expectancy

Steve Reed:

[\[33939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the findings of a report by the University of Liverpool and published in The Lancet Public Health entitled Local government funding and life expectancy in England: a longitudinal ecological study.

Luke Hall:

In the last year, our focus has been making sure councils continue to get the support they need during the pandemic, driving forward recovery and renewal plans and maintaining critical services. Once the pandemic is through, we will take stock of the demands faced by councils and the resources available to meet them and will decide on the timetable for future funding reform. Final decisions will be taken in the context of this year's Spending Review.

■ Oxford-cambridge Arc

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[34040\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether officials in his Department working on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework have undertaken analysis of varying approaches to the delivery of affordable and social housing by local authorities along the Arc.

Christopher Pincher:

The development of the Spatial Framework is at a very early stage. In preparing the Spatial Framework we are committed to going through a robust process of building our evidence base to understand the most sustainable approach to housing growth for the Arc, and will go beyond the typical local planning horizon by planning to 2050. The Spatial Framework therefore presents the opportunity to set future expectations for affordable housing that can be delivered in a way that meets the needs of local residents.

In February, when we formally launched the process to develop the Spatial Framework, we committed to conducting wide and meaningful engagement to give as many people as possible the opportunity to help shape the Spatial Framework.

Today we launched the first of three public consultations on the Spatial Framework, which will include consulting on the issue of affordable housing and meeting the future housing needs of the area:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-vision-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc>.

We intend to carry out three phases of planned public consultation for the Spatial Framework over a two-year period, so there will be two further opportunities for people to have their say. The next stage of the Spatial Framework consultation, which we hope will take place in Spring 2022, will focus on policy options to deliver sustainable growth in the Arc to 2050, including policy options relating to housing.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[34041\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether officials in his Department working on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework have undertaken analysis of the engagement of representatives of cities and other urban areas along the Arc in the Arc governance bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

When we formally launched the process to develop the Spatial Framework, we announced our intention to work closely with local partners throughout its development. Local authorities will therefore be encouraged to engage in all three public consultations and will have the opportunity to further engage through on-going discussions with government.

We also frequently engage with a wide range of local representatives and partners from across the breadth of the Arc's communities to ensure all local views shape how we unlock the unique potential of the region.

An analysis of stakeholder engagement on the Spatial Framework will be released following the first public consultation this Summer, which was launched today, when we will publish a summary of comments received and our response to the consultation.

■ Permitted Development Rights

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[33952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 1 July 2021, Official Report, HCWS145, whether his Department conducted an impact assessment for the proposed changes in relation to Article 4 directions.

Christopher Pincher:

My Department carried out an analysis of the implications of the changes in the policy for Article 4 directions, in order to comply with the public sector equality duty, as required by s149 of the Equality Act 2010.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[33953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 1 July 2021, Official Report, HCWS145, what discussions his Department has had with the Local Government Association on proposed changes to Article 4 directions.

Christopher Pincher:

My Department did not hold any direct discussions with the Local Government Association on the proposed changes to Article 4 direction policy. The Local Government Association responded to our consultation on proposed changes. Following publication of the new Article 4 direction policy, officials have engaged with the Planning Advisory Service and with individual local authorities on the implementation of the new policy.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[33954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his timescale is for responding to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code: consultation proposals, updated on 8 February 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

We have today published the response to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Model Design Code consultation. The updated NPPF has been published at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework> and the response to the consultation is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>.

■ Planning Permission

Steve Reed: [\[33232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department holds data on the amount of land (a) owned by and (b) optioned by developers or intermediaries in the land market which is yet to be (i) allocated in a local plan and (ii) receive planning permission.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: This data is not held by the Department.

Steve Reed: [\[33233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the number of homes given planning permission and the number of homes constructed in each of the last ten years.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: Annual figures for homes given planning permission and the new homes delivered in England are published within MHCLG's Official Statistics on planning applications and housing supply, available on Gov.uk at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government/about/statistics>

■ Planning: Public Consultation

Ruth Cadbury: [\[32414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of publishing the submissions made to Planning for the Future consultation.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: We received more than 44,000 responses to our consultation on the Planning for the Future White Paper. It is important that we safeguard personal data, and while we do not intend to publish individual responses,

we will produce a summary of the views received when we respond in full to the consultation later this year.

■ Rents: Coronavirus

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[32363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of incidents where tenants have deliberately withheld rent from their landlords on the grounds that they cannot be evicted under the covid-19 regulations.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department does not collect this information. Statistics collected by the Department show that, in October-December 2020 (the latest period for which data is available) the vast majority of tenants were up to date with their rental payments.

The Department has been clear throughout the coronavirus pandemic that tenants must continue to pay their rent and has put in place an unprecedented package of support to assist them in doing so. This includes the furlough scheme and boosting the welfare safety net with billions of pounds, preventing widespread rent arrears. .

Legislation was in place to prevent bailiffs from serving eviction notices and carrying out evictions, except in the most serious circumstances, from 17 November 2020 until 31 May 2021. However, there were exemptions for the most serious circumstances, including serious rent arrears.

Since 1 June, bailiffs have been permitted to enforce valid warrants of possession. This ensures that landlords can exercise their right to justice and reflects the gradual easing of national restrictions. Bailiffs must provide 14 days' notice of an eviction and have been asked to reschedule the eviction appointment if the tenant has coronavirus symptoms or is self-isolating.

■ Sleeping Rough: Housing

Ms Diane Abbott:

[\[32280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department plans to put in place to ensure effective future accommodation pathways can be offered to all rough sleepers currently in emergency accommodation.

Eddie Hughes:

We have taken huge steps working with local authorities and their partners to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic. This work has not stopped, and by the end of January, we had supported over 37,000 people with over 11,000 in emergency accommodation and over 26,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

We are committed to ending rough sleeping within this parliament, and that means making sure as few people supported return to the streets as possible.

Our work focuses on helping people find longer term accommodation, as well as supporting those new to the street. Our work includes:

- The £433 million Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme to provide 6,000 move-on homes, available as long-term assets, and accompanying support services to those who are rough sleeping or who have a history of sleeping rough.
- £203 million investment through the Rough Sleeping Initiative this year (2021-2022) - an 81% increase from the £112 million provided last year - funding up to 14,500 bed spaces and 2,700 support staff across England. This includes immediate work to support people off the street as well as longer-term housing-led solutions.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Temporary Accommodation**

Layla Moran:

[\[34035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department instructed local authorities as part of funding agreements for the Rough Sleeping Initiative to end the use of hotels and other emergency accommodation for rough sleepers by the end of March 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department did not instruct local authorities to end the use of hotels and emergency accommodation by 31 March 2021. We have been working closely with local authorities throughout this pandemic to ensure that all those accommodated have access to the support that they need, including move-on into longer-term, sustainable accommodation. As part of this we are working with local authorities to gradually reduce dependence on the use of hotels, intended as an interim measure, to save life and before people were supported into longer-term, more sustainable options. By the end of January, we had supported over 37,000 people with over 11,000 in emergency accommodation and over 26,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation. To support this, we have provided:

- £203 million investment through the Rough Sleeping Initiative this year (2021-2022) - an 81% increase from the £112 million provided last year - funding up to 14,500 bed spaces and 2,700 support staff across England. This includes immediate work to support people off the street, moving people on from emergency accommodation as well as longer-term housing-led solutions and more sustainable accommodation such as private rented sector access schemes.
- The £433 million Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme to provide 6,000 move-on homes, available as long-term assets, and accompanying support services to those who are rough sleeping or who have a history of sleeping rough.

We've been clear with councils and partners that everyone helped into accommodation should be offered the tailored support they need to move forwards.

This Government remains committed to ending rough sleeping this parliament, recent data shows that rough sleeping has fallen 43% under this administration, with a 37% fall in the last year alone.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

John Lamont:

[\[31518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with the National Farmers Union of Scotland on the free trade agreement with Australia.

Greg Hands:

Our negotiating strategy is based on the results of one of the largest public consultations in UK history, and we are speaking to businesses and interest groups in every part of the UK to ensure their voice is heard.

On the 19th May I had a one-to-one conversation with NFU Scotland, and on the 26th May I held a joint roundtable with the National Farmers Union (NFU) NFU Cymru, NFU Scotland, and Ulster Farmers' Union.

On the 16th June, I held a further joint roundtable with the regional farmers unions to provide an update on negotiations of the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement, ahead of the publication of the Agreement in Principle document on the 17th June.

■ Trade Agreements: USA

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[33346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans her Department will put in place to ensure a seamless trading relationship with the US after 2035, the target date set by the US EPA to have phased out testing on mammals.

Greg Hands:

The UK and US have a strong and enduring trading relationship. The Government welcomes the decision by the US Environmental Protection Agency to end testing on mammals by 2035 and do not anticipate that this will cause any disruption to UK trade with the US.

JUSTICE

■ Coronavirus Act: Prosecutions

Alex Cunningham:

[\[33912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been prosecuted under Schedule 22 of the Coronavirus Act 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions under the Coronavirus Act 2020, in England and Wales, up to December 2020, in the 'Principal Offence Proceedings and Outcomes by Home Office Offence Code' data tool, available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987731/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2020.xlsx

In order to isolate defendants prosecuted under Schedule 22 of the Act, use the 'Offence Code' filter in the above data tool to select the following offence:

- 168/61 - Offences in relation to events and gatherings (coronavirus)

The number of individuals prosecuted will populate Row 32.

■ Prison Accommodation

Sir John Hayes: [\[31294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the UK's prison capacity is; and how many prisoners there are.

Sir John Hayes: [\[31295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisons are running at or above full capacity.

Sir John Hayes: [\[31296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans the Government has to increase prison capacity.

Alex Chalk:

On Friday 09th July the total prison population was 78,489 and the total useable operational capacity of the prison estate was 81,138.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) publishes monthly individual prison population and capacity information through the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/prison-population-statistics>. There are no prisons operating over their operational capacity in England and Wales. The operational capacity of a prison is the total number of prisoners that an establishment can hold taking into account control, security and the proper operation of the planned regime. It is determined by the prison group directors on the basis of operational judgement and experience.

We have committed over £4 billion towards the delivery of 18,000 additional prison places by the mid-2020s. We will create these 18,000 additional prison places through the construction of four new prisons, the expansion of a further four prisons, the delivery of up to 500 additional places in the women's estate, the refurbishment of the existing prison estate, the completion of our ongoing prison builds at Glen Parva and HMP Five Wells, and other programmes.

■ Prison Sentences

Sir John Hayes: [\[31292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many extended determinate sentences were handed down in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Chris Philp:

725 and 846 individuals received an extended determinate sentence in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Figures for 2021 are not yet available; these are due to be published in May 2022.

Prisoners' Release**Sir John Hayes:**[\[31288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners convicted of sexual offences were released halfway through their sentence in 2020-21.

Alex Chalk:

The attached table shows that between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2020, an estimated 1,782 prisoners convicted of sexual offences were released halfway through their sentence. The number of releases at the sentence halfway point is not routinely produced for statistical purposes and this estimate is based on the type of sentence and the type of release recorded. Data on releases is published quarterly in arrears and no data on releases in 2021 has yet been published.

Most prisoners serve standard determinate sentences (SDS). Until recently, this meant that they were released automatically at the halfway point of the sentence, regardless of the nature of the offence. However, since 1 April 2020, and the implementation of the Release of Prisoners (Alteration of Relevant Proportion of Sentence) Order 2020, anyone given an SDS of 7 years or more for serious sexual or violent offences where the maximum penalty is a life sentence is required to spend two-thirds – rather than half – of that sentence in prison before being released on licence. In the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, we are seeking to extend this to those sentenced to an SDS of between 4 – 7 years for certain serious violent and sexual offences.

Attachments:

1. Table [Copy of PQ 31288_final.xlsx]

Prisoners: Offensive Weapons**Grahame Morris:**[\[33892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the attack on a prison officer at HMP Swansea on 12 June 2021, what assessment he has made of the effect on prison safety of allowing prisoners access to razor blades.

Grahame Morris:[\[33893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the attack on a prison officer at HMP Swansea on 12 June 2021, what steps he is taking to limit access for prisoners to razor blades.

Alex Chalk:

Violence against our hard-working prison officers is unacceptable and will never be tolerated.

A taskforce with a remit to undertake a review of the management of razors and ceramics across HMPPS has now restarted following a pause due to the impact of COVID-19.

Prior to the pandemic we saw a continued decrease in assaults in prisons, and in the 12 months to December 2020, assaults were down 34%.

We work closely with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to bring the perpetrators to justice. We are committed to making prisons a safe place to work and providing prison officers with the right support, training and tools such as PAVA pepper spray and body-worn cameras to empower them to do their jobs safely.

We are also spending £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence and crime behind bars.

■ Prisons: Gender Recognition

Sir John Hayes: [\[31299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many male to female transsexuals there are in female prisons.

Sir John Hayes: [\[31300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to review his policy of allowing male to female transsexual prisoners to be housed in female prisons.

Sir John Hayes: [\[31301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what risk assessment his Department has carried out of the policy of allowing for male to female transsexuals to be housed in female prisons.

Alex Chalk:

On March 31st 2019, the latest period for which data is available, there were 34 transgender prisoners housed in women's prisons. 30 reported their legal gender as female and 4 as male.

The Ministry of Justice and HM Prison & Probation Service will always ensure that transgender individuals are managed safely, with their rights properly respected and in accordance with the law. Although a routine review of the implementation of the policy framework 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender' is underway, it is important to note that the decision of 2nd July 2021 in [FDJ, R \(On the Application Of\) v SSJ \[2021\] EWHC 1746 \(Admin\)](#) confirmed that our policies are lawful.

The policy framework was developed in 2019 following a thorough review and after engagement with a range of stakeholders. It emphasises the importance of considering all known risk factors when managing transgender offenders, including any risk to the person, risk to others and risk of self-harm. This ensures that we are able to strike an appropriate balance between the safety, rights and wellbeing of transgender prisoners, and that of all other prisoners.

■ Prisons: Pregnancy

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[31472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the judgment of 2 July 2021 in the case of *FDJ v Secretary of State for Justice*, what steps he is taking to prevent pregnancy in the female prison estate; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

Sex between prisoners is not permitted. PSI 47/2011 - Prison Discipline Procedures - provides that engaging in sexual activity can lead to disciplinary charges. PSI 30/2013 - Incentives and Earned Privileges - requires prisoners to act 'with decency at all times remembering prisons/cells are not private dwellings (this includes not engaging in sexual activity)'.

In the case that this question references, the HMPPS and MoJ policy 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender' was found to be lawful. This policy sets out the minimum mandatory requirements for managing transgender prisoners and offenders on probation. When managing transgender prisoners and making decisions regarding their location within the prison estate all risk information relating to each prisoner must be considered, including risk from others, risk to others and risk of self-harm. Where appropriate, this includes consideration of a prisoner's sexual behaviours and relationships in a custodial setting and consideration of anatomy. This risk assessment process ensures that the safety, welfare and rights of all prisoners are protected.

Transgender prisoners continue to be managed via local case boards following any decision on prison location. This means that ongoing support can be provided as well as continuous risk assessment and mitigation, with any change in circumstances or risk prompting a re-referral to the Complex Case Board where location decisions can be revisited, as necessary.

■ Prosecutions

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[33849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were prosecuted under the single justice procedure in each month of 2019 by type of offence; and what the plea rates were for offences charged under the single justice procedure in each of those months.

Chris Philp:

Data showing the number of defendants dealt with via single justice procedures (SJP) notices at the magistrates' courts by plea and offence in England and Wales for 2019 can be found in the attached table.

The data supplied is a subset of published information relating to the timeliness of defendants dealt with by SJP notice which is available in Table 1 of the Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly, January to December 2019.

Attachments:

1. Table [PQ 33849 - table.xlsx]

■ Sexual Offences: Sentencing**Sir John Hayes:****[31290]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average custodial sentence length is for prisoners convicted of a sexual offence.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on sentences, in England and Wales, up to December 2020, in the 'Outcomes by Offence' data tool, available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

In the data tool, use the 'Offence group' filter and select '02: Sexual Offences'. Average custodial sentence length for individuals sentenced to immediate custody for an offence within this group will populate Row 54.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Claire Hanna:****[34079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his Statement on 14 July 2021, Official Report, columns 388-402, on the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past, if the consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly will be sought for the proposed legislation.

Mr Robin Walker:

As set out by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 14 July, the Government will bring forward legislation to address the legacy of the Troubles that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of investigations. The Government intends to request legislative consent for its legislative proposals

Claire Hanna:**[34080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to his Oral Statement of 14 July 2021, Official Report, column 388, whether the offence of perjury in respect of Troubles-related incidents will be subject to the proposed statute of limitation.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's oral statement of 14 July - and the command paper published afterwards - formally set out the Government's proposals for dealing with the legacy of Northern Ireland's past.

These proposals are intended to inform ongoing intensive engagement with the Irish Government, Northern Ireland parties and other stakeholders with an interest in this policy.

Further details will be subject to these discussions and will be shared in due course.

PRIME MINISTER■ **Matt Hancock****Mr Mark Harper:****[R] [33868]**

To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28995 on Ministers: Conduct, whether he (a) consulted the Cabinet Secretary on and (b) made an assessment of the potential merits of further investigation into the matters which led to the resignation of the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 26 June 2021.

Boris Johnson:

I refer my Rt Hon Friend to my previous answer. Paragraph 1.4 of the Ministerial Code sets out the process for investigating alleged breaches of the Code.

TRANSPORT■ **Boats: River Thames****Mr Barry Sheerman:****[31313]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with local authority leaders in London on increasing the number of jetties on the River Thames to (a) encourage more sustainable craft using that river and (b) mitigate the number of vehicles on London roads.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London, and the Rivers Thames in London is managed by the Port of London Authority. The number of jetties on the River Thames is the responsibility for the Mayor of London.

■ **Buses: Manufacturing Industries****Sam Tarry:****[34081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his oral contribution of 14 July 2021, Official Report, column 408 on the 900 buses in production, where those buses are being manufactured; and (a) where and (b) when those buses will enter service and c) when these buses will enter service.

Rachel Maclean:

We remain committed to introducing 4,000 zero emission buses and achieving an all zero emission bus fleet. Since February last year, we've made funding available for up to 900 zero emission buses, with over 50 of these already on the roads.

A number of UK bus manufacturers are well placed to benefit from this funding, supporting jobs and a green recovery for the sector.

■ Department for Transport: Re-employment**Andy McDonald:** [\[33940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of 27 April 2021, Official Report, column 86WH, on the Government's policy on the inappropriate use by some employers of fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic, what steps their Department has taken to (a) investigate and (b) discourage the use of fire and rehire negotiation tactics by their Department's executive non-departmental public bodies; and what steps they have taken to communicate the Government's policy on those practices to those bodies.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We work constructively with each non-departmental public body we have responsibility for, including workforce management matters. However each is ultimately responsible for the management of their staff. We expect our public bodies to have constructive relationships with their staff and unions and not to engage in inappropriate negotiation tactics.

■ East West Rail: Trains**Sarah Olney:** [\[34002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how long the new rolling stock on East West Rail is expected to be in operation.

Sarah Olney: [\[34003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to bring in (a) battery powered, (b) hydrogen powered and (c) overhead electric-line powered trains on East West Rail.

Sarah Olney: [\[34004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department made of the potential merits of alternative fuel sourced trains for East West Rail.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

EWR will operate an interim fleet of trains for the first services in Connection Stage 1 – Oxford to Milton Keynes - and Connection Stage 2 – Oxford to Bedford – to ensure the benefits of EWR for those passengers can be realised as soon as possible.

For its long-term fleet, which will be introduced at a later date, EWR Co is currently developing its procurement strategy. The procurement strategy will outline how long the new fleet will be in operation for. To develop this strategy, EWR Co is taking into consideration the feedback received on what future customers of EWR want from their on-train experience at the recently held non-statutory consultation. This will ensure value for money for the taxpayer and an efficient and effective operation for EWR customers.

EWR will be a new, environmentally sustainable way to travel across the region. EWR Co is exploring innovative ways to become a net-zero carbon railway, consistent with the Government's legally binding target of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across the entire UK economy by 2050.

As Government is considering the case for the electrification of EWR, EWR Co is undertaking a review by looking at options including full electrification along the whole route as well as various options for partial electrification using battery / electric hybrid rolling stock, and other sustainable rolling stock options.

The results of this review and steps to be taken will be announced in due course.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Finance

Charlotte Nichols: [\[31559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, by how much was HS2 over budget in July 2019; and what information was shared with hon. Members on HS2 being over budget in 2019.

Andrew Stephenson:

In July 2019, the budget for the project remained £55.7bn (2015 prices). Cost and schedule pressures were known and work was continuing to identify options to ensure the overall affordability of the HS2 project – this is detailed in the National Audit Office's January 2020 HS2 progress report. The independent Oakervee review was formally commissioned in August 2019 to enable government to make properly-informed decisions on the future of the project, including the estimated cost and schedule position. A revised funding envelope was agreed in April 2020 with 6 monthly updates now provided to Parliament to allow full scrutiny of the project.

■ Invalid Vehicles

Rachael Maskell: [\[31458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) charities and (b) other relevant stakeholders which lease mobility scooters to help ensure that they form part of integrated transport strategies in urban areas.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department routinely engages with disabled people and disabled people's organisations in the development of its policies, including those related to highways, streets, and public transport, in line with this Government's published accessibility commitments.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Kent

Daisy Cooper: [\[33337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he taking to help ensure that lorry drivers have access to adequate sanitation and rest facilities in areas of Kent after his

recent decision to reject the application from Kent County Council to extend powers to prohibit lorry parking.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has issued a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework which indicates that the need for sufficient overnight lorry parking should be considered in planning policies and decisions. Highways England is to market test a significant site under its control near Kent.

Building on a 2020 review, my Department will reinvigorate work on lorry parking with trade and driver representatives with a view to working with businesses, Highways England, and via planning to improve the quantity and quality of overnight facilities, as well as access to facilities during the day.

With regards to the Experimental Traffic Order (ETRO) that allowed a “clamp first” approach to illegal HGV parking in Kent, this was introduced to prevent the exacerbation of existing problems of inappropriate lorry parking in Kent, following the end of the transition period. The ETRO was introduced strictly for a period of 6 months and justified by Kent County Council on the grounds that there would be an increased risk of possible turn-backs of HGVs from ports. It was not intended to address longer term problems of lorry parking in Kent. The concerns around turn-backs from the border have not materialised, and so the original justification for the ETRO is no longer applicable.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Costs and Exhaust Emissions**

Rachael Maskell:

[31459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative assessment he has made of the (a) costs to a person and (b) emissions from (i) owning a car and (ii) participating in a car club or shared ownership scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport uses the Electric Car Consumer (ECCo) Model, developed by Element Energy, and the Road Carbon and Fuel Fleet (RoCAFF) Model, to estimate the relative costs and emissions from a range of car types, including petrol and diesel and electric vehicles. The cost and emissions related to each car depends on the powertrain (e.g. petrol or diesel, battery electric etc), size of the vehicle, and the pattern of use.

The frequency of car use by each individual will be the main determinate of whether car ownership, or car sharing is the most cost-effective choice. A recent survey from CoMoUK (partially funded by the Department) found that for car club users, affordability was a reason for joining a car club, and that on average there are 26.5% less emissions for the average car club car compared to the average UK car. The full report can be found here: <https://como.org.uk/shared-mobility/shared-cars/why/>. The Department continues to develop its understanding of trends in car and ride sharing (including public attitudes) to further inform this type of analysis and to identify any policy or regulatory gaps which might need addressing.

■ Northwich Station: Repairs and Maintenance

Mike Amesbury: [\[34042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the eligibility of the part-collapsed Northwich Train Station for the Rail network enhancements pipeline.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The proposals for the rebuild are currently in development. Network Rail is communicating with the local authority and DfT to make sure the rebuild is fit for purpose.

■ Railways: Season Tickets

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[31377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to support flexible season tickets for all rail users travelling between (a) Ipswich and London and (b) Stowmarket and London.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Flexible season tickets are available on both of the specified routes.

For most 2 and 3 day a week commuters, the flexible season ticket will offer savings against buying daily tickets or traditional seasons, provided that they are following this commuting pattern. For those with different commuting patterns, existing tickets such as traditional seasons or dailies may be the best choice.

In all cases a flexible season ticket will offer a minimum 20% discount on an equivalent monthly season ticket.

Passengers should consider which product best suits their travel patterns. This is easier than ever with the updated season ticket calculator

(https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/Season-Calculator.aspx).

■ River Thames: Boats

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[31310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the sustainability of river craft in use on the River Thames.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London, and the River Thames in London is managed by the Port of London Authority.

■ River Thames: Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[31311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with local authority leaders in the City of London to mitigate levels of (a) water and (b) air pollution within and around the River Thames.

Rachel Maclean:

The responsibility for transport in London is devolved to the Mayor of London and Transport for London, and the River Thames in London is managed by the Port of London Authority.

■ **Roads: Safety****Kerry McCarthy:**[\[33865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will publish its response to the consultation on Review of The Highway Code to improve road safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders before the summer 2021 Parliamentary recess.

Rachel Maclean:

The consultation on the review of the guidance in The Highway Code to improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders closed in October 2020 with over 20,000 responses received. We are currently undertaking a full analysis of all replies and expect to publish a response later this year.

■ **Sea Cadet Corps****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[33861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what changes the Government plans for the organising and recruitment of Sea Cadets across the UK in response to the Maritime Skills Commission Cadet Review.

Robert Courts:

The recently published Maritime Skill Commissions report included recommendations specifically targeted at improving the recruitment of cadets. The recommendations are aimed at improving the system to ensure it delivers appropriately skilled seafarers to meet the future needs of an evolving global industry.

Officials at the Department for Transport, including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, will now work with its stakeholders to implement these recommendations. They will set up a 'Seafarers Reform Oversight Group' to oversee these changes to ensure they move forward with the urgency required to address any shortfalls within the sector.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus****Catherine West:**[\[31492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he is having with Cabinet colleagues on recognising foreign certification of covid-19 vaccination for the purpose of travel to the UK.

Robert Courts:

We are working closely with medical and public health experts and international partners and will provide an update in due course on how we will approach vaccinated individuals from other countries.

■ Travel: Quarantine**Neale Hanvey:**[\[34071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to allow UK citizens who have been fully vaccinated whilst working overseas, irrespective of location, to return to their families in the UK without requiring a hotel quarantine.

Robert Courts:

Anyone travelling to the UK from a red list country will be required to quarantine in a managed quarantine service, irrespective of vaccination status.

TREASURY**■ Carbon Emissions****Geraint Davies:**[\[33842\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July 2021 to Question 902805 on carbon tax in the transition to net zero, what other potential measures the Government is assessing to mitigate the risk of carbon leakage.

Kemi Badenoch:

As discussed in the Net Zero Review Interim Report and the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, a range of approaches could be used to help address the risk of carbon leakage.

Currently, the UK addresses carbon leakage risk primarily through the provision of free UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) allowances. Our approach to the provision of free allowances is being reviewed and we aim to consult later this year to ensure the system continues to be fair, equitable and to incentivise decarbonisation. In addition, there are further relief schemes to reduce the cumulative impact of some energy and climate change policies on industrial electricity prices for eligible energy intensive industries (EIIs), on which a separate consultation is currently open.

■ Carbon Emissions: VAT**Alex Norris:**[\[32484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, under what circumstances low carbon investments pay (a) 20 per cent and (b) five per cent VAT.

Jesse Norman:

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. While there are exceptions to the standard rate, these have always been limited by both legal and fiscal considerations.

One such exception is the reduced rate of VAT of 5 per cent for the installation in residential accommodation of certain energy-saving materials such as ground source heat pumps, air source heat pumps and solar panels that help to reduce carbon

emissions. Detail about the circumstances in which such reliefs apply can be found in Energy-saving materials (VAT Notice 708/6).

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[34068\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to conduct a retrospective review of claims under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; and whether he plans to take steps to prevent companies that claimed under that scheme in good faith being retrospectively penalised.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC will subject CJRS claims to scrutiny and use their usual compliance tools to carry out proportionate risk-based compliance checks before and after payment to test the veracity of CJRS claims. In doing so, HMRC will protect essential public services and the livelihoods at risk during these challenging times.

It is vital the Government supports businesses to recover by ensuring a level playing field so the compliant majority cannot be undercut by a minority who are trying to cheat the system.

HMRC know that some people will have made honest mistakes and are taking a proportionate approach to recovering overclaimed grants. HMRC also know that many businesses claimed while under considerable pressure and may not have fully appreciated what work was, and was not, allowed.

No-one who has tried to do the right thing but made an honest mistake has any need to be concerned, as long as they work with HMRC to put it right. HMRC can correct a mistake without a penalty within 90 days of receiving the grant or their circumstances changing.

The Government is also taking tough action to tackle fraudulent behaviour. Anyone who keeps furlough money despite knowing they were not entitled to it faces having repay up to double the amount they received, plus interest and potentially criminal prosecution.

■ Corporation Tax

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[33878\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made, applying the Laffer curve, of the potential effect on tax revenues of a reduction in corporation tax.

Jesse Norman:

The fiscal and economic impact of changes in the rate of Corporation Tax (CT) have been set out in the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR's) Economic and Fiscal Outlooks which are published alongside fiscal events.

The most recent forecast, published in March 2021, includes the revenue raised from the announcement made at Budget 2021: that the main rate will increase to 25% from April 2023, which is forecast to raise over £45 billion across the next 5 years.

This forecast incorporates adjustments to reflect behavioural responses from businesses to changes in the rate of CT.

■ Free Zones: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[33863\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to inform port operators in Northern Ireland which locations are to be considered for free port status.

Steve Barclay:

Freeports will be national hubs for international trade, innovation and commerce, regenerating communities across the UK by attracting new businesses, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity to towns and cities throughout the country.

We want to ensure that the whole of the UK can benefit. We continue to work with the Northern Ireland Executive to establish at least one Freeport in Northern Ireland as soon as possible.

■ Heating: VAT

Alex Norris: [\[32485\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much VAT revenue has been raised through the sale of heat pumps in the last 12 months.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold information on VAT revenue from specific products or services.

This is because businesses are not required to provide figures at a product level on their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[34067\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason the value of the fifth Self Employment Scheme grant is set as a percentage of three months' profits; and what the evidential basis is for that policy.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced at Budget 2021 that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) will continue until September, with a fourth and a final fifth grant.

The fifth and final SEISS grant, covering May to September, will include a turnover test, known as a 'Financial Impact Declaration'(FID) in order to ensure that the most generous support is targeted at those who need it the most. This will determine whether claimants receive a grant worth 80% of three months' average trading profits, and capped at £7,500 or a grant worth 30% and capped at £2,850.

Previous SEISS grants provided support for a period that was subject to restrictive measures across the UK to tackle the virus. As restrictions continue to be lifted, it is right that the government begins to tailor the level of support provided.

■ Tax Evasion**Stuart Anderson:** [\[32515\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to tackle tax evasion.

Jesse Norman:

Since 2010, the Government has introduced over 150 new measures to tackle tax avoidance, evasion and other forms of non-compliance, and has secured and protected over £250 billion in tax revenues that would have otherwise gone unpaid. These efforts have helped to reduce the tax gap to a record low of 4.7% for the year 2018-19.

At Spring Budget 2021, the Government announced a further 14 measures to tackle tax non-compliance, forecast to raise £2.2 billion over the next five years. The Government remains committed to reducing the tax gap and will bring forward further measures in the autumn.

■ Taxation: Self-assessment**Ruth Cadbury:** [\[31429\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions his Department has had with officials at HMRC on processing self-assessment repayment requests.

Jesse Norman:

HMT officials are in regular contact with HMRC on a range of important issues, including matters relating to Self Assessment. The Government is committed to processing Self Assessment repayment requests promptly, while ensuring that the necessary checks are completed to guard against fraud.

■ Treasury: Re-employment**Andy McDonald:** [\[33944\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of 27 April 2021, Official Report, column 86WH, on the Government's policy on the inappropriate use by some employers of fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic, what steps their Department has taken to (a) investigate and (b) discourage the use of fire and rehire negotiation tactics by their Department's executive non-departmental public bodies; and what steps they have taken to communicate the Government's policy on those practices to those bodies.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has been very clear that threatening fire and rehire as a negotiating tactic is completely unacceptable. We always expect employers to treat employees fairly and in the spirit of partnership working with trade unions, where relevant, constructively. We are confident that all non-departmental public bodies are aware of the Government's position on this matter.

We work constructively with each non-departmental public body which the Department has, including on workforce management matters, however each non-departmental public body is ultimately responsible for the management of their staff.

WALES

■ Internet: Harassment

Ruth Jones: [\[34044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Welsh Government and (b) social media platforms on tackling abuse online.

Simon Hart:

The Government is wholeheartedly committed to tackling abuse online and we continue to press social media platforms to take a much tougher approach in their response to such abuse. UK Government officials have been working closely with officials in the Welsh Government, throughout the development of the Online Safety Bill, and will continue to engage throughout the legislative process.

Similarly, UK Government Ministers, including the Home Secretary, and officials regularly meet social media companies to discuss the steps that they are taking to address harmful content on their platforms, including hate crimes and racist abuse.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Complaints

Peter Kyle: [\[33986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints her Department has received about the access to work scheme in each of the last five years.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department has received 621 complaints about Access to Work scheme in each of the last five years, comprising of:

16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	TOTAL
197	121	117	135	51	621

Please note, this data is for internal use and is not within the public domain.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Re-employment

Andy McDonald: [\[33941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and

Industrial Strategy of 27 April 2021, Official Report, column 86WH, on the Government's policy on the inappropriate use by some employers of fire and rehire as a negotiation tactic, what steps their Department has taken to (a) investigate and (b) discourage the use of fire and rehire negotiation tactics by their Department's executive non-departmental public bodies; and what steps they have taken to communicate the Government's policy on those practices to those bodies.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has been very clear that threatening fire and rehire as a negotiating tactic is completely unacceptable. We always expect employers to treat employees fairly and in the spirit of partnership working with trade unions, where relevant, constructively. All non-departmental public bodies are expected to follow Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) lead in reflecting best employment practices. We are confident that they are aware of the Government's position on this matter.

We work constructively with each non-departmental public body we have responsibility for and this includes when it comes to workforce management matters. The senior officials responsible for Human Resources practices in the executive non-departmental public bodies meet regularly with DWP however each is ultimately responsible for the management of their staff.

The Department provides robust oversight of its public bodies through Quarterly Accountability Reviews and the Annual Report and Accounts process.

■ **Industrial Health and Safety: Batteries**

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[31537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with the Health and Safety Executive to ensure effective regulation of proposed new battery developments on the Cambridgeshire-Suffolk Border and in Kent.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive considers that the current regulatory framework is sufficient and suitably robust in relation to lithium-ion batteries and battery energy storage systems.

Of particular relevance are the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations which set minimum requirements for the protection of workers and others from fire and explosion risks; the Electricity at Work Regulations which require precautions to be taken against the risk of death or personal injury from electricity in work activities; and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations which require risks to be assessed and appropriately managed. In addition, for large scale battery storage, there are statutory requirements to notify the Fire and Rescue Service to inform their emergency response planning.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Stress

Daisy Cooper: [\[31547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will undertake a public consultation on amending the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 to require businesses to report long term sickness due to stress as a health and safety issue.

Mims Davies:

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) are made under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and apply to all sectors and workplaces in Great Britain.

The 2013 regulations clarified and simplified the list of reportable ill-health conditions (occupational diseases), as a result of a recommendation made by Professor Löfstedt in his report “ [Reclaiming health and safety for all: An independent review of health and safety legislation](#) ”, published in 2011.

The Health and Safety Executive keeps the regulations, including the specified injuries and reportable diseases under review. The list of current reportable occupational diseases will be considered as part of the next formal post-implementation review of RIDDOR, which is due to report in 2023. Stress is not always work-related but can be connected to many other issues outside of the workplace and as such it would not be appropriate to require stress to be reported under RIDDOR.

■ Job Entry Targeted Support: Scottish Borders

John Lamont: [\[31519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent progress her Department has made on the roll-out of the Job Entry Targeted Support scheme in the Scottish Borders.

Mims Davies:

We do not hold data confirming the number of Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) in Scotland starts for the Scottish Borders area. However, so far 6,000 people have started the programme and are being supported to find work across Scotland.

JETS in Scotland successfully went live 25 January 21, delivering a service across Scotland including the Scottish Borders, to support those unemployed more than 13 weeks, primarily impacted by COVID-19, back into employment.

■ Pension Credit

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[33862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people entitled to pension credit are not claiming pension credit; and what estimate she has made of the annual cost to the public purse of that benefit.

Guy Opperman:

The DWP publishes annual take-up statistics for income related benefits, including Pension Credit for Great Britain.

The latest estimates relating to the year 2018/19 can be found in the following publication: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2018-to-2019>

The DWP publishes bi-annual benefit expenditure and caseload figures for its benefits, including Pension Credit for Great Britain.

The latest estimates published in March 2021 can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/969971/outturn-and-forecast-spring-statement-2021.xlsx

Personal Independence Payment**Drew Hendry:****[33963]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the consent order in K v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions CO / 4263 / 2020, what steps her Department is taking in response to that consent order to ensure that people who received on the spot benefit calls and as a result accepted a lower Personal Independence Payment (PIP) payment than they were legally entitled to are (a) contacted and (b) have that PIP payment (i) corrected and (ii) fully backdated.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department's aim is to ensure that claimants are paid the correct amount of benefit at the earliest opportunity. Accordingly, if new evidence or information becomes available after an appeal has been lodged, it is right that decisions are reviewed and claimants put in the best position where they can choose either to continue with their appeal, or have the decision revised. At the same time claimants have, and have always had, a right of appeal against the revised decision, and to have their payments fully backdated if successful at appeal. Claimants are notified of this right of appeal in their revised decision letter.

Personal Independence Payment: Long Covid**Drew Hendry:****[33964]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2021 to Question 28245 on Personal Independence Payments: Long Covid, how many people have applied for personal independence payments with covid-19 as a primary disability since March 2021.

Justin Tomlinson:

In the application process for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), a claimant's main disabling condition is only recorded centrally on Departmental computer systems at assessment. Disabilities are not recorded centrally at the point of application. The Department does not therefore hold data on the number of

applicants to PIP with particular conditions. Only those who have a disability assessment determination decision will have a main disabling condition recorded for them.

The latest available data on the number of people who have “Coronavirus COVID-19” recorded as their primary disability following assessment for PIP each month can be found on Stat-Xplore: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>. As described in my response to Question 28245, this disabling condition has been available to record for PIP assessments following a computer system change in March 2021. Due to the nature of the qualifying period for PIP claims, these cases will all be “long COVID” or “post-COVID syndrome” cases rather than initial COVID-19 infections.

Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here:

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

■ Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[31454]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people living in (a) relative and (b) absolute poverty in (i) England, (ii) Yorkshire and (iii) the city of York.

Will Quince:

National Statistics on the number and percentage of individuals in low income are published annually in the “Households Below Average Income” publication. Data for the city of York is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the number of people who are in low income in England and Yorkshire and the Humber, covering 2019/20, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020> in population-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables data table 3.18ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs) and in data table 3.20ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs).

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending £111 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2020/21. This included around £7.4 billion of Covid-related welfare policy measures.

■ Restart Scheme

Jonathan Reynolds:

[33909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit claimants have found work through the Restart scheme to date.

Mims Davies:

The Restart Scheme is still in its initial stages. Conversations with claimants about the Restart Scheme began on the 28th June 2021, and referrals to providers started on the 12th July 2021.

Restart Scheme providers will deliver an intensive and tailored support offer to Participants, aimed at helping them to get into sustained work. With each Participant having a unique set of needs and aspirations, we can expect transitions to employment to happen at different points in their journeys.

■ Statutory Sick Pay

Dame Angela Eagle: [\[33851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to abolish the lower earnings limit for those who are eligible for statutory sick pay.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is just one part of our welfare safety net and our wider government offer to support people in times of need. Many of those earning below the Lower Earnings Limit of £120 per week, who are not eligible for SSP, are already in receipt of benefits. Those who are not already in receipt of benefits may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on their personal circumstances, to support them when they are unable to work.

The Government published a consultation in which we sought views on a range of proposals to reform Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). A response will be published shortly.

■ Universal Credit

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[32385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the £20 uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on the in-work progression of universal credit claimants.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: No such assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap. Our focus now is on our multi-billion Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

To note further, we will consider the recommendations of the In-Work Progression Commission's report and respond later in the year.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[32386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the £20 uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on levels of parental employment.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap. Our focus now is on our multi-billion Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

The Department is fully committed to supporting parents with moving into work and improving their earnings once employed. Universal Credit childcare costs provides more generous childcare support than was available under Tax Credits, reimbursing up to 85% of eligible childcare costs up to a monthly cap as opposed to 70% under tax credits

Jonathan Reynolds:

[33219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on rent arrears accrued by universal credit claimants.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap. Our focus now is on our multi-billion Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

For those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments are available. They are flexible and can be considered where, in the local authority's opinion, further financial assistance towards housing costs is required.

Local Housing Allowance rates for private renters on Universal Credit or Housing Benefit were increased to the 30th percentile of market rents last year, and have been maintained in cash terms in 2021/22.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[33221]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on food bank usage.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap. Our focus now is on our multi-billion Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level.

We recognise the data limitations in this area, so from April 2021 have introduced a set of questions into the Family Resources Survey (FRS) on food bank usage. The first results of these questions are expected to be published in March 2023 subject to usual quality assurance.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[33908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on the financial security of young universal credit claimants.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap. Our focus now is on our multi-billion Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

■ Universal Credit: Carers

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[33905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the temporary uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on the financial security of unpaid carers.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap.

We recognise the vital role unpaid carers play. A role that has perhaps been more important than ever during the pandemic. The Government's focus on supporting carers during the pandemic has included prioritisation for vaccines, funding for organisations that support carers and exemptions from certain regulations. The Government is committed to continuing to support carers to provide care as they would wish, and to do so in a way that supports their own health and wellbeing, employment and other life chances. The Care Act requires local authorities to deliver a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services, this includes support for carers.

The benefit system also supports carers and not just through Carer's Allowance. Over 300,000 carer households receiving Universal Credit can receive around an additional £1950 a year through the Carer Element.

■ Universal Credit: Disability**Jonathan Reynolds:** [\[33906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on the financial security of disabled universal credit claimants.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap.

Universal Credit claimants with health conditions or disabilities who, following the outcome of a work capability assessment, are determined to have limited capability for work and work related activity – meaning they are not required to look for work or to prepare for work – are awarded an additional amount of benefit, currently £343.63 per month.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[33907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of removing the uplift to the universal credit standard allowance on the financial security of universal credit claimants with disabled children.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and we announced the temporary uplift as part of a £400 billion package of measures put in place that will last well beyond the end of the roadmap. Our focus now is on our multi-billion Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

Universal Credit claimants who are responsible for a child or a qualifying young person may be entitled to a Disabled Child Addition for each eligible child. This addition is available for all eligible children, regardless of the total number of children in the household.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Climate Change: Finance

Emma Hardy:

[\[26156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to identify innovative sources of finance for funding climate-related loss and damage.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 July 2021. The correct answer should have been:

James Duddridge:

~~The UK seeks to enable action to avert, minimise and address loss and damage, particularly in countries most vulnerable to impacts of climate change. As incoming COP 26 Presidency the UK is pressing donors to meet and surpass their commitment to provide \$100 billion in climate finance to developing countries. The UK has increased its International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion over five years. This includes finance for adaptation relevant to averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage.~~

~~The UK supports innovative approaches in a number of areas, including disaster risk reduction and support for regional insurance schemes. Most recently, at the G7 Summit, the UK announced £120 million of support with Germany committing €125 million of funding to regional disaster protection schemes across Africa, South East Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific, to protect the lives and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people against climate risks. This new funding contributes to the Risk Informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) target of making 1 billion people safer from disasters by 2025.~~

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target of making 1 billion people safer from disasters by 2025. Our commitment to spend £3bn of our ICF on nature also recognises the importance of healthy ecosystems and the role of nature-based solutions in building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng): **[\[HCWS220\]](#)**

The National Security and Investment Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April and provides for a new investment screening system to help protect our national security. Today I am publishing three sets of documents related to the Act: a consultation on the draft statement on the use of the call-in power (made under section 3 of the Act), the draft notifiable acquisition statutory instrument and guidance documents on the Act.

I am announcing today that the commencement date for the sections of the Act not already commenced will be 4 January 2022.

Statement on the use of the call-in power

This statement (a draft of which was previously published as the “Statement of Policy Intent”) sets out how the Secretary of State expects to use the call-in power under the Act. The call-in power enables the Government to screen qualifying acquisitions for national security risks. During the Parliamentary passage of the Act, the Government committed to consult on this statement and I am launching the consultation today. The consultation is available on Gov.uk and will be open until 11.59pm on 30th August.

Draft notifiable acquisition statutory instrument

The draft notifiable acquisition statutory instrument sets out the proposed descriptions of the 17 sectors of the economy that would be captured under the mandatory notification requirements set out in the National Security and Investment Act 2021. The Government has previously consulted on the mandatory notification sectors and published a response in March 2021. The draft sector definitions have been refined in response to stakeholder feedback and the draft statutory instrument has been published today on gov.uk to update businesses and investors about mandatory notification requirements.

Guidance

I have today published the first set of guidance documents on the Act. The guidance will build understanding and awareness for all parties who may be affected by the Act and who may need to comply with its provisions. The Government has tested and refined these documents with an expert panel of industry representatives, which includes business representative organisations, higher education bodies, investment associations and other stakeholders, who provided important feedback.

These guidance documents are: an overview of the Act, explaining what types of acquisitions are covered, whether parties need to tell the Government about an acquisition and how the Government will investigate an acquisition; the extraterritorial application of the Act; how the Act works alongside other regulatory bodies and market

practices; and guidance for Higher Education Institutions and other Research organisations.

I will place copies of the Section 3 Statement for consultation, the Section 3 Statement consultation document and Draft Notifiable Acquisitions SI the Libraries of the House.

■ Consumer Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):
[\[HCWS217\]](#)

Today I will lay before Parliament two consultation papers on competition issues which respond to proposals that have been put to Government in recent years from a variety of stakeholders. This includes those directly commissioned by Government from Jason Furman, John Penrose MP, Lord Tyrie and the Competition and Markets Authority. The consultation periods will end on Friday 1st October.

The first document, entitled “Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy - Driving growth and delivering competitive markets that work for consumers” sets out the Government’s vision for the future of competition and consumer policy. We aim to create a competition regime that reflects the Government’s strategic priorities and intervenes quickly and effectively when markets are not working, and consumers are being harmed. It also updates consumer rights so that consumers can navigate changing and new markets with confidence. Our proposals also aim to provide easier routes for consumers and traders to resolve problems amicably on their own and ensure the Competition and Markets Authority and regulators have the powers they need to fix consumer problems, delivering our manifesto commitment to give the Competition and Markets Authority enhanced powers to tackle consumer rip-offs and bad business practices.

These proposals will create a prosperous economy where vigorous competition drives growth and productivity, where businesses that do the right thing are rewarded with greater market share so that consumers can engage in markets with full confidence they will get a good deal.

The second publication called “A New Pro-Competition Regime for Digital Markets” is a joint publication with my Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. I will invite him to provide further detail on this consultation.

Both consultations invite views from consumers, businesses, civil society, think tanks, academics, public authorities, and the devolved administrations to ensure our new approach works for the UK economy and supports growth and productivity in markets in every part of the country.

Subject to the outcomes of the consultations, the Government will bring forward legislation to implement reforms.

■ Energy Update

UK International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for the COP26 Presidency and Minister of State (Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change) (Anne-Marie Trevelyan): [\[HCWS219\]](#)

We today publish the Government's combined response to the March 2021 final report of the Magnox Inquiry and the June 2021 Departmental Review into the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. The response has been co-authored by BEIS, the Cabinet Office and UK Government Investments. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority has developed its own combined response to both the Magnox Inquiry final report and the Departmental Review, which is also being published today.

Since it was established under the Energy Act 2004, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority has driven a significant step change in the decommissioning of the UK's legacy nuclear sites. The organisation's portfolio includes 17 licenced nuclear sites, with over 15,000 people across its estate, and contributes very significantly to the Government's levelling up agenda. However, there is an ongoing need for the organisation to evolve to become a more resilient, efficient and effective organisation that continues to drive transformation on the ground and deliver value for money for the taxpayer.

The Magnox Inquiry was an independent, non-statutory inquiry commissioned by the then [Secretary of State](#) for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Rt Hon Greg Clark [MP](#) in 2017. Its purpose was to review the procurement and subsequent termination of a management contract for decommissioning the Magnox nuclear power stations. An interim report was published in October 2017 with a number of initial findings and the March 2021 final report contained a total of 57 recommendations. These recommendations centred around future commercial assurance, oversight of governance procedures and organisational culture change.

The Departmental Review into the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, conducted by an independent team within BEIS, was published in June 2021, with a total of 26 recommendations. These centred around the form and function of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, its oversight by Government and its internal governance, organisational health and operational effectiveness.

I am grateful to Mr Holliday and his team and to the independent Departmental Review team for their comprehensive and rigorous work, which is reflected in the reports.

Since the publication of the Magnox Inquiry interim findings, significant progress has already been made to strengthen and simplify the organisation of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority estate. This includes the replacement of management contracts with direct subsidiary arrangements to support improved efficiencies across the estate and improvements to the governance of assurance and approval decisions, especially in the area of commercial assurance. There has been a complete overhaul of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority leadership team since the 2017 Magnox procurement and the Government has also enhanced its oversight arrangements for the organisation. The recommendations from the reviews complement the progress made and propose further improvements.

Both reviews that are being responded to today contain further valuable lessons for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and for the Government. We take the recommendations very seriously and have considered them with great care. The responses will give stakeholders confidence of the depth of reach and robustness with which the learnings from the reports will have an impact on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

The Government and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority will prioritise the implementation of the commitments within these responses as we continue to deliver against the UK's critical nuclear decommissioning challenges.

■ **Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan 2021 and UK's first Energy Digitalisation Strategy**

UK International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for the COP26 Presidency and Minister of State (Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change) (Anne-Marie Trevelyan): [\[HCWS203\]](#)

I am pleased to announce the latest steps the government is taking to decarbonise our electricity system, to meet our net zero target by 2050, delivering on commitments made in the Energy White Paper.

Firstly, the government has today published a new Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan, jointly with Ofgem. Technologies such as energy storage, interconnection and smart charging of electric vehicles are essential to balance supply and demand as we deploy more intermittent renewables to power our buildings and vehicles. Flexibility reduces the amount of generation and network we need to build, and costs for energy consumers – flexibility could reduce the cost of the system by up to £10bn by 2050. It is critical for energy security as we shift away from unabated gas over the next decade. System flexibility is therefore fundamental in reducing emissions to net zero by 2050.

The transition to a smarter and more flexible energy system is also an opportunity. It will be delivered by UK businesses and will benefit consumers across the country. It will create nationwide jobs, potentially 24,000 by 2050, and drive investment across the UK. The UK is a global leader in smart systems and there is significant export potential – which could contribute as much as £2.7bn per year to the UK economy by 2050 – for the solutions that we will need to deploy at home. As nations confront the challenge of climate change, markets for new green products and services will spring up around the world. Taking action now will help position UK companies and our world class research base to seize the business opportunities which will flow from it, creating jobs and wealth for our country.

The new Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan sets out how we will drive flexibility across the system, including a vision, analysis and suite of actions, focusing on:

- Facilitating flexibility from consumers
- Removing barriers to flexibility on the grid
- Developing markets for flexibility, and

- Improving monitoring of flexibility.

Secondly, the government has published the UK's first Energy Digitalisation Strategy, jointly with Ofgem and Innovate UK. Energy system digitalisation is essential to enabling millions of assets – including solar panels, heat pumps, batteries and electric vehicles – to be optimised across our energy networks. A digitalised system will spur innovation, remove barriers to new entrants, facilitate new consumer offers and services, and enable system flexibility.

The Energy Digitalisation Strategy sets out a vision and suite of actions to achieve this, focusing on:

- Providing leadership and co-ordination to the sector
- Incentivising the sector to digitalise, and
- Supporting the development of digital tools and infrastructure.

These documents have been produced in close co-ordination with the energy sector.

Thirdly, the government has published a call for evidence on de-risking large-scale, long-duration electricity storage. Large-scale and long-duration storage can provide additional benefits to other forms of flexibility, in particular by storing energy over long periods of low wind. Government have developed a call for evidence from industry, investors and other stakeholders on the barriers and financing challenges that this type of storage faces, and how these barriers might be mitigated whilst minimising distortions in the market. This is the first stage in deciding whether a bespoke de-risking mechanism, such as a 'cap and floor' regime is needed to accelerate deployment of this technology on the system.

Fourthly, the government has published a call for evidence on the barriers to widespread deployment of vehicle-to-grid (and similar) technologies. Vehicle-to-grid technologies enable electric vehicles to balance the system with by exporting electricity in return for payment when electricity is scarce – and reimporting it when it is abundant. Government have developed a call for evidence to gain wider market views on the timescales, opportunities, and barriers as well as invite discussion on potential solutions to the widespread deployment of these technologies. The feedback will aid in creating a policy strategy for this area, help to design future innovation competitions and show government's ongoing commitment to an area where the UK is a global leader.

I will place copies of the 2021 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan and its appendices; Appendix I: Electricity System Flexibility Modelling, and Appendix II: Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan - Monitoring Framework, the Energy Digitalisation Strategy, the call for evidence on facilitating the deployment of large-scale and long-duration storage and the call for evidence on the role of vehicle-to-X technologies in a net zero energy system in the Libraries of the House.

■ The Future System Operator and Energy Codes Reform

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):
[\[HCWS202\]](#)

I am pleased to announce the launch of the consultations on the future system operator (FSO) and the energy codes governance reform. This is a key step that will contribute towards helping us achieve the government's net zero targets and our commitment in the Energy White Paper "to ensure that the institutional arrangements governing the energy system are fit for purpose for the long term, consulting in 2021 over organisational functions, including system operation and energy code governance".

Net zero is an unprecedented challenge for our economy and society – and the energy system at its heart. It has created the need for new technical roles and responsibilities in the electricity and gas systems to drive decarbonisation while minimising costs and maintaining resilience. We will require an organisation with the mandate, whole-system perspective, and engineering capability to fulfil the new and enhanced roles effectively, and the organisational design, incentives, and accountability to fulfil them impartially in the best interests of consumers.

The future system operator (FSO) consultation sets out the case for an expert, impartial, cross-vector FSO to ensure the energy system drives progress towards net zero. The system operators are in a unique position at the heart of their respective systems, both to keep each system operating in real time day to day and to be forward-looking. To help us achieve net zero, we propose bringing the Electricity System Operator (ESO) and the forward-looking elements of the Gas System Operator (GSO) together in a new entity, which will enable the systems to be transformed. The consultation also sets out the potential roles that could fall to the new organisation and presents two potential organisational templates which might be adopted. Finally, it sets out considerations on implementation.

Today, we are also launching a consultation on the design and delivery of the energy codes reform. The energy codes are the detailed technical and commercial rules of the gas and electricity system, which cover wholesale, transmission, distribution, and retail. Many of the codes were designed pre-privatisation which has resulted in a code governance framework that is complex, fragmented and lacks incentives to innovate, despite our urgent need for a more unified, flexible and dynamic approach.

Building on a consultation from 2019, we have now developed two governance models further and will be consulting on our preferred option of designating Ofgem as a strategic body over the energy codes, alongside separate code managers. As the strategic body, Ofgem would assess and respond to relevant government policy and priorities to ensure these are reflected in codes. It would also select and license code managers, who would replace the existing code administrators and take on most of the roles that are currently held by industry-led code panels. However, crucially, we expect that industry input will remain key to the code change process, including through new stakeholder advisory forums.

To help us develop our view on these reforms, we are seeking views on where improvements could be made to existing arrangements. Our final position will be shaped by the outcomes of these consultations.

These energy system governance reforms are intended to apply only to England, Scotland and Wales. Energy is generally devolved in Northern Ireland and so the scope of the review and proposed reforms do not apply to NI's energy system governance, system operator or energy regulator.

I will place copies of both the Future System Operator Consultation and Energy Codes Consultation in the House Libraries.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Statutory Review of the Debt and Fraud Powers of the Digital Economy Act 2017**

Parliamentary Secretary (Julia Lopez):

[\[HCWS214\]](#)

My noble Friend, the Minister of State for Efficiency and Transformation (Lord Agnew of Oulton), has today made the following written statement:

My Hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Secretary in the Cabinet Office (Julia Lopez MP) and I are announcing the statutory review of Chapters 3 and 4 of the Digital Economy Act 2017. Chapters 3 and 4 provide legal gateways which enable specified public authorities (and persons providing services to public authorities) to disclose information for the purposes of reducing debt owed to the public sector and combating fraud against the public sector respectively.

Cabinet Office ministers are under a legal duty to review the operation of both Chapters as soon as is reasonably practicable after the end of three years beginning with the day on which the Chapters came into force (1 May 2018) for the purposes of deciding whether they should be amended, repealed or retained in their current form.

To commence that review, we are today publishing the criteria by reference to which that determination will be made, in accordance with sections 53 and 61 of the Act. Those criteria are set out below.

To determine if the debt and fraud powers of the Digital Economy Act (2017) should be amended, repealed or retained in their current form, the following criteria will be used:

- a) What has been achieved in the three years since commencement and how has the risk of fraud and debt changed?
- b) Have the powers been effective in managing and reducing debt owed to the public sector and in combating fraud against the public sector?
- c) What positive and negative impacts (including societal impacts) have the DEA powers had? Due to their different characteristics, separate criteria will be used for fraud and debt:
 - i) For Debt: have the powers led to improved management and recovery of debt owed to government authorities, increased fairness and better approaches to vulnerable debtors

among such authorities and sustainable Business-as-Usual processes which allow recovered money to flow into the public purse?

ii) For Fraud: have the powers led to improved identification, prevention and recovery of fraud committed against government authorities and sustainable Business-as-Usual processes which allow the prevention of fraud and recovered money to flow into the public purse?

d) Have the powers contributed to the effective delivery of Government policy, helped support manifesto pledges and supported the maintenance of the integrity of the Union and devolved administrations?

e) Have the powers enhanced the willingness of public authorities to engage with and utilise data sharing powers, reduced or created burdens for public authorities and/or given rise to any privacy concerns (such as in relation to reductions in privacy or the misuse of data)?

f) Are there changes that can be made that would improve the effectiveness of the debt and fraud powers' operations?

As part of this review, the Cabinet Office will include a consultation to obtain the views of all interested parties.

A copy of the Review Criteria is being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Update to the Border Operating Model

Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt):

[[HCWS205](#)]

My noble Friend, the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office (the Rt Hon Lord Frost CMG), has today made the following written statement:

Today, the Government will publish an updated Border Operating Model. This will reflect the revised timetable for introduction of the next stage of UK import requirements as well as including additional detail on policies and processes.

This updated Border Operating Model will continue to help businesses, which trade with the EU, to understand the approaching new requirements as well as those which are already in effect. We are also encouraging businesses to go to gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-if-your-business-trades-with-the-eu to gain access to the host of resources the Government has created to assist traders.

A copy of the updated Border Operating Model has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ A new pro-competition regime for Digital Markets**

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Oliver Dowden):

[\[HCWS218\]](#)

Following the announcement of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy today, I would like to further update the House on the consultation on “A New Pro-Competition Regime for Digital Markets”.

The consultation sets out our proposals for a new pro-competition regime for digital markets which will tackle the unique sources of market power in fast-moving digital markets. The new regime will drive a more vibrant and innovative economy, across the UK.

The proposals include new rules that will ensure consumers and businesses are treated fairly and will help to level the playing field so that new and innovative tech firms can flourish. Alongside these rules, new measures will be put in place to tackle the sources of market power, injecting much needed competition into digital markets and spurring growth and innovation across the economy.

The new regime will be overseen by the Digital Markets Unit that will proactively shape the behaviour of the most powerful tech firms and protect those who rely on them. The Digital Markets Unit will be given robust powers to enforce the regime and the most powerful tech firms will face tough new fines if they do not comply.

The consultation builds on the Furman Review, which highlighted the specific characteristics which make some digital markets susceptible to competition issues and made the case for a more targeted and forward-leaning regime to address these competition issues. It also draws on advice from the Digital Markets Taskforce on the design and implementation of the regime.

This [consultation](#) invites views from businesses, civil society, think tanks, academics, public authorities, and the devolved administrations to ensure our new approach works for the UK economy and supports growth and productivity in markets in every part of the country.

■ Appointment of adviser on concussion in Sport

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Tourism (Nigel Huddleston):

[\[HCWS215\]](#)

I wish to inform the House that the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has appointed Laurence Geller CBE as a Ministerial adviser on concussion in sport.

Mr Geller is a leading expert in dementia care and is a pioneer in bringing the latest research and technology to bespoke dementia care facilities. He has a background in the business, hospitality and charity sectors.

The Secretary of State and I have made the issue of concussion in sport a priority. Mr Geller is an advocate on improving the safety of players across a wide range of contact sports and attended the two ministerial roundtables held on the subject earlier this year (attended by players and the National Governing Bodies of sport).

Mr Geller will work with DCMS officials to improve understanding of head injuries in sport and coordinate action to address it. Mr Geller's experience in this area will be invaluable in increasing safety standards in sport to the benefit of individual players and sport as a whole.

This role is not remunerated.

EDUCATION

■ SEND Update

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (Vicky Ford):
[\[HCWS212\]](#)

On 20th July, the Department for Education confirmed it will be continuing the extended powers given to the SEND Tribunal to hear appeals and make non-binding recommendations about health and social care aspects of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, provided those appeals also include education elements.

These extended powers are currently being tested under a National Trial, which began in April 2018. The Trial will end on 31 August 2021 and the powers will continue.

Our ambition is for every child, no matter what challenges they face, to have access to a world-class education that sets them up for life. It will enable the Tribunal to continue to take a more holistic view of the needs of the child across education, health and care while the cross-government SEND Review completes its important work.

Full details of this announcement have been published on the Department for Education section on the GOV.UK website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extended-powers-send-tribunal-national-trial>

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ EEA EFTA Separation Agreement Joint Committee Meeting, 27 May 2021

Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas (Wendy Morton):
[\[HCWS207\]](#)

The EEA EFTA Separation Agreement, which was agreed with Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, and signed on 28 January 2020, covers citizens' rights and other separation provisions. These provisions wind down certain arrangements that the UK had with the EEA EFTA States by virtue of their participation in the Single Market and other EU-led initiatives. The Separation Agreement established a Joint Committee whose primary role is to supervise and facilitate the implementation and application of the

Separation Agreement, with the power to make decisions. The Joint Committee has a rotating chair which is currently held by Iceland. The second meeting of the Joint Committee took place on 27 May 2021, by video conference. Each of the Parties gave an update on implementation and application of the Separation Agreement, and reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the citizens' rights provisions are upheld for those in scope. The Independent Monitoring Authority and the EFTA Surveillance Authority also attended to give updates on their monitoring and complaints handling functions required by the Separation Agreement.

The Joint Committee adopted a Decision to amend Part I of Annex I of the Separation Agreement to reflect decisions taken by the EU's Administrative Commission for the Coordination of Social Security Systems that have also been incorporated into the EEA Agreement. The Decision of the Joint Committee ensures the Separation Agreement reflects the latest position under the EEA Agreement. These decisions concern the interpretation of relevant social security coordination, including on data processing and exchange. They do not impact the rights provided for in the Separation Agreement. Full detail on and copies of this Decision have been deposited in the House of Libraries

The Joint Committee will meet at least annually, with Liechtenstein holding the next rotating chair. The next meeting is expected to take place in 2022. I commit to updating parliament immediately following future meetings of the Joint Committee where Decisions are taken.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Development of the mandatory validation regime for COVID-19 tests on UK Market Impact Assessment.

Minister of State (Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health) (Ms Nadine Dorries): [\[HCWS208\]](#)

This statement sets out the analysis used to support the development of the mandatory validation regime for COVID-19 tests before they can enter the UK market. This goes alongside the full Impact Assessment, which we have published.

Testing will continue to form a crucial part in the response to COVID-19. Consumers must have confidence in the performance of tests they use. That is why the Government is bringing in draft legislation under the Medicines and Medical Devices Act, which will require all antigen and molecular COVID-19 tests to undergo mandatory validation to assess their performance before being permitted for sale on the UK market. This will ensure that any COVID-19 test on the UK market meets a minimum standard – the same standards as those met by COVID-19 tests procured for the NHS.

We have engaged with the Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC) throughout our work to ensure that our analysis meets the high standards the Committee upholds. We thank them wholeheartedly for their constructive feedback and for working at pace to meet an unusually tight legislative timetable.

While the Department is working to produce a revised Impact Assessment, we intend to publish the current draft in the interim for transparency. In developing this assessment, we brought together regulatory knowledge in an area where we have not innovated policy for decades, alongside the ongoing challenges of modelling both economic and epidemiological predictions. We were unfortunately red rated in one key area which has resulted in a red rated IA. While I am obviously disappointed in this rating, we remain committed to working closely with the RPC to ensure that we produce a final IA that we are all satisfied with and proud of, making use of the latest data from a nascent and rapidly evolving market.

The analysis to date strongly supports our planned policy intervention. This is a necessary regulation to protect consumers and give reassurances to producers. While we do recognise the potential profit loss for companies whose products do not meet the required standards, this is a necessary move to ensure the highest quality tests are available to protect consumers and public health. We have looked carefully at this and are committed to work closely with these producers to ensure they understand the requirements and can work to achieve them. Furthermore, the potential profit loss needs to be set against the additional profits that manufacturers who are producing high-quality tests that meet the validation standards could potentially gain, and the benefit to society of removing poorly performing tests and associated public health impacts.

The RPC has identified areas for further development, which include:

- The need to enhance our analysis of the latest evidence of the share of the market for COVID-19 tests which are accounted for by businesses based in the UK. This determines whether business impacts are reflected in the Equivalent Annual Net Direct Cost to Business (for businesses based in the UK) or as trade impacts (for businesses based elsewhere).
- The need to test with stakeholders (or otherwise confirm) our assumptions about the proportion of devices presenting for validation (currently assumed to be 60 per cent) - this affects profit/EANDCB/trade impacts since products not validated will be removed from the market) and the life cycle of devices (currently assumed to be 1-5 years - this affects programme costs in determining how frequently manufacturers need to submit devices for validation)
- The need to explain further how we have:
 - o extrapolated from third party estimates of the future size of the private testing market size;
 - o established and treated stakeholders' estimates of market profit margins; and
 - o estimated familiarisation and transition costs, including the use of any non-wage uplifts.
 - The need to add new content (and test with stakeholders – or otherwise confirm) to address:
 - o familiarisation costs incurred by retailers; and
 - o how devices online will be monitored and enforced.

The RPC fulfils a crucial role in ensuring that analysis and evidence in regulations are robust and assessed to an extremely high standard. The Government is committed to this process and in relation to this policy, we are determined to ensure the Impact Assessment we complete includes the best possible research and evidence available.

The Impact Assessment is a living document, used to support the process of policy design and implementation. We plan to make further iterations of this Impact Assessment publicly available ahead of the next Statutory Instrument we intend to lay in the Autumn, which will introduce a second element of laboratory validation.

HOME OFFICE

■ Deaths in Police Custody – Government Update 2021

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): [\[HCWS206\]](#)

On 23 July 2015, the Home Office announced a major review into deaths and serious incidents in police custody, to be carried out by the Right Honourable Dame Elish Angiolini QC. On 30 October 2017, Dame Elish's review was published, alongside the Government's substantive response. In December 2018, a progress update was published focusing on three main themes: supporting families, strengthening accountability and preventing deaths.

The Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody has continued to oversee and drive progress work resulting from the recommendations in the Angiolini Review. Today, as co-chair of the Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody, I report on the progress made in delivering this work programme since the last update.

There has been significant progress made in response to the recommendations made by Dame Elish. Of the 110 recommendations, 65 have been completed fully, with a further 20 completed in part. The Government update addresses in detail each of Dame Elish's twelve thematic areas covered in her report: restraint, custody environment, health and wellbeing, funding for families and family support, communications, investigations, coroners and inquests, accountability, training, learning, statistics and research.

Since 2018, the Home Office has substantially reduced the use of police custody as a place of safety for people undergoing a mental health crisis and introduced a major package of reforms to improve the effectiveness of the police complaints and discipline systems in order to increase accountability and help reduce delays. The Department for Health and Social Care has rolled out NHS England and NHS Improvement-commissioned liaison and diversion services to ensure when vulnerable people are in custody that their needs are identified and addressed and introduced the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act 2018 (Seni's Law) to increase the oversight and management of the use of force in mental health units, so that force is only ever used as a last resort.

The Ministry of Justice has undertaken a range of work to make inquests more sympathetic to the needs of bereaved people, including updating materials to aid families throughout the coronial process, publishing a protocol on how Government will act when

it has interested persons status and encouraging local authorities to provide areas in coroners' courts that are suitable to family needs.

The College of Policing has published guidelines on conflict management, including de-escalation and negotiations to promote safer resolutions to conflicts, updated their training to cover acute behavioural disturbance and introduced guidance on the role of a safety officer to monitor the use of restraint. Agencies, including the coroner's services and Independent Office for Police Conduct, are continuing to ensure the voices of bereaved families and victims are part of their training, harnessing their knowledge to ensure they receive appropriate support and that no one else endures the same experience.

Since becoming Policing Minister, I have met a number of key stakeholders to develop my future priorities to tackle deaths in police custody in line with the spirit of Dame Elish's recommendations. These include supporting police chiefs and PCCs to continue to drive forwards a zero-tolerance attitude to deaths in state custody, to treat each death as a serious tragedy and to learn quickly from deaths that do occur; ensuring detainees receive the response most appropriate to their needs as soon as possible and that appropriate health and social services are available; improving data collection to fully understand the extent to which protected characteristics impact detainees' experience and use of powers within police custody and consideration of support for detainees judged at risk of post-custody suicide.

I am committed to keeping our work in this vital area transparent, and will ensure that regular updates on work to prevent deaths in police custody will be included in the published annual progress updates of the Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody.

Every death in police custody is a tragedy. The impact is devastating on their loved ones. Dame Elish Angiolini's report has been and remains a catalyst for change, and I am determined that we continue to prioritise preventing deaths in police custody and, in the tragic instances that they do occur, holding organisations to account and improving support for families to demonstrate how seriously we take these incidents.

I am placing a copy of our progress update in the Libraries of both Houses and on www.gov.uk.

■ **Publication of the 4th Annual Report of the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group**

The Minister of State for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): [\[HCWS210\]](#)

My Noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

I am pleased to announce the publication of the 4th annual report of the Biometrics and Forensic Ethics Group on 20 July 2021. The Group provides Ministers with independent advice on matters relating to ethical issues in forensic science and biometrics and considers issues in data ethics.

I would like to thank the Group for their advice concerning the use and retention of biometric identifiers and for their advice on the development and testing of biometric technologies.

The BFEG have published two reports this year; on the feasibility of using genetic genealogy techniques to assist with criminal investigations by UK law enforcement; and on the ethical issues arising from public-private collaborative use of live facial recognition technology. The group have also updated their ethical principles for the development and use of biometric and forensic technologies and the use of large datasets.

The group continue to provide valuable advice and guidance: on policy changes relating to the use of the National DNA Database; in support of the Home Office Biometrics programme; and for projects involving large data sets or machine learning applications. The group also provided advice on a leaflet for arrestees explaining their rights regarding deletion of custody images.

The Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group annual report can be viewed on the website of the Group at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/biometrics-and-forensics-ethics-group> and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Beautiful Places

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): [\[HCWS216\]](#)

The Government has set out to put beauty and design, for the first time, at the heart of the local planning system. To that end, we are changing the system so that local people are empowered to set standards for beauty and design in their area through local design codes. These codes will reflect their area's unique aesthetics, culture and heritage, with tree lined streets accompanying new developments.

The Government is publishing today the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the new National Model Design Code and the Government's response to the consultation on both. The consultation on the draft Framework and National Model Design Code ran from 30 January to 27 March and the Government is grateful to all who responded. In light of comments received, the Government has made important changes to this Framework and National Model Design Code.

The new Framework is fundamental to ensuring local authorities and communities can shape and deliver beautiful places to live and work, with a greater emphasis on quality, design and the environment than ever before.

The changes we have made take forward the recommendations of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission that national policy should place a stronger focus on the creation of beautiful buildings and beautiful places. The Framework will ensure that communities are more meaningfully engaged in how new development happens, that local authorities are given greater confidence in turning down schemes which do not meet

locally set standards, and greater certainty to those schemes that do. This is part of the Government's programme of improving the planning system to put high quality, environmentally friendly design front and centre of new development.

Our policy changes will ensure the system helps to create buildings that fit in with places, while maintaining the Framework's existing strong focus on delivering the homes and other development which communities need. The changes:

- Make beauty and place-making a strategic theme in the Framework
- Set out the expectation that local authorities produce their own design codes and guides setting out design principles which new development in their areas should reflect
- Ask for new streets to be tree-lined
- Improve biodiversity and access to nature through design
- Put an emphasis on approving good design as well as refusing poor quality schemes

We have also made a number of environment-related changes, including on flood risk and climate change. These changes are an initial response to the emergent findings of our joint review with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) of policy for building in areas of flood risk. For instance, highlighting the opportunities from improvements in green infrastructure and natural flood management techniques. We are also amending guidance on flood risk to emphasise that checks done by local authorities should steer new development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source.

Our changes also include:

- emphasis of the importance of retaining and explaining the historic and social context of historic statues, plaques, memorials or monuments rather than removing them
- an update on the use of Article 4 Directions
- an expectation that local planning authorities take a proactive approach to engaging with key delivery bodies and other stakeholders at the pre-application stage of local plan making

Alongside the National Planning Policy Framework, the Government is also publishing the National Model Design Code. This provides detailed guidance on the production of local design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on the ten characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide, which reflects the Government's priorities and provides a common overarching framework for design. The National Model Design Code forms part of the Government's planning practice guidance. Creating more beautiful places requires a greener approach that supports progress towards our 25-year environment plan goals. The National Model Design Code sets a baseline standard of quality and practice which local planning authorities are expected to take into account, including the approach to landscape, green infrastructure, biodiversity and tree lined streets.

The National Model Design Code should be used as a toolkit to guide local planning authorities on the design parameters and issues that need to be considered when producing design codes and guides. It also sets out methods to capture and reflect the views of the local community from the outset, and at each stage in the process. Design codes are important because they provide a framework for creating healthy, environmentally responsive and sustainable places, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design. This will provide greater certainty for communities about the design of development and bring conversations about design to the start of the planning process, rather than the end.

Our changes will ensure that new homes in England are built to a dramatically higher standard, embedding the work Sir Roger Scruton, Nicholas Boys Smith and everyone involved in the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission began. And we are now establishing the Office for Place within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), advised by a board led by Nicholas Boys Smith, who will look to help local authorities across England create user-friendly but effective design codes for their communities. 14 councils across England are now testing this new approach and we will undertake further pilots over the course of the year.

JUSTICE

■ Consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):
[\[HCWS209\]](#)

Today I am launching a public consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney.

There are things we take for granted until we no longer have them – our ability to make decisions, our ability to express ourselves, our ability to choose. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) led to the implementation of lasting powers of attorney (LPA) in 2007. An LPA gives people the opportunity to appoint someone they trust to make decisions on their behalf, in the event those abilities are taken from them, whether through accident, disease or illness.

The MCA also created the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice. OPG is responsible for registering LPAs. This must be done before an LPA can be used. The OPG is also responsible for taking action where there are concerns about an attorney's use of the LPA.

When the LPA was introduced in 2007, the safeguards put in place were appropriate for the time, but technology and society have moved on. Society's attitudes to fraud and abuse, and the expected protections against them, have also changed. Technology now offers new ways for OPG to protect its users through identity and information verification.

An LPA must be printed out so that it can be signed and witnessed on paper, no matter how the LPA documentation is completed. In the 14 years since LPAs were introduced, technology has advanced and become more widely available. People increasingly expect

to be able to access government services online and many donors and attorneys have told us the paper-based LPA is cumbersome, bureaucratic and complex.

Due to LPAs being paper-based, the OPG is required to handle a large amount of paper, which is costly and inefficient for the organisation, creating an ever-increasing need for staff, equipment and storage. OPG's operating costs are funded entirely by the income from the fees it charges. If the LPA service is not made more efficient, either fees will have to increase or the way OPG is funded will become unsustainable.

We need to respond to these challenges and look at how technology can make it easier for people to make and register an LPA. We must also fully consider concerns about security - finding the right balance between ease of use and protection against abuse. Ease of access and protections must also be ensured for those who cannot use digital services or do not want to.

We believe that a move towards automating OPG's services will improve efficiency and reduce costs. It will also allow resources to be moved to improving other OPG services that provide more benefits for users.

It is for these reasons that I am launching this consultation on modernising lasting powers of attorney - to consider how to increase safeguards, whilst ensuring accessibility and OPG sustainability, and any changes to primary legislation may be needed to facilitate this.

To develop the proposals put forward in this consultation, we have undertaken user research, interviews and surveys to gather the views of the public and professionals. We have engaged stakeholders from a range of sectors, including finance, legal, charity and social care. We now want to gather evidence from a much wider group and are asking for views on the following:

- The role and value of witnessing on LPAs and how to keep that value
- The role of applying to register an LPA and who can apply
- Changes that may be needed to OPG's remit
- Changes to how people can object to the registration of an LPA
- Changes to when people can object
- The speed of the LPA service and whether a dedicated faster service should be introduced for people who need an LPA urgently
- How to ensure that solicitors have access to the service

The consultation is available in full at: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/opg/modernising-lasting-powers-of-attorney> and a copy has been presented to parliament.

TREASURY

■ Cash Ratio Deposit Scheme Review

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[\[HCWS211\]](#)

Cash Ratio Deposits (CRDs) are non-interest bearing assets deposited with the Bank of England (“the Bank”) by banks and building societies. They are invested in gilts by the Bank and the income is used to finance its policy functions, in particular its efforts to secure price stability and the stability of the financial system in general, from which these institutions are key beneficiaries.

The CRD scheme was extended to include building societies, and was placed on a statutory basis, when the Bank of England Act became law in 1998. At the last review, the Government committed to review the scheme within five years. The last review was in 2018 and resulted in the CRD ratio being moved from a single fixed ratio, to a variable ratio indexed to gilt yields, re-indexing the ratio to prevailing gilt yields every six months. The Treasury, working closely with the Bank, will now begin the next review.

The review will include an assessment of the detailed arrangements of the scheme as well as the continuing suitability of the scheme itself compared to alternative sources of funding. It will also address the impact of the scheme on eligible institutions and involve a public consultation.

■ Finance Bill 2021-22: draft legislation and tax documents

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):

[\[HCWS204\]](#)

In line with the tax policy-making framework, the Government is publishing draft legislation to be included in Finance Bill 2021-22. This allows for technical consultation and provides taxpayers with predictability over future tax policy changes. Alongside this, the Government is making announcements in a number of areas of tax policy.

Publication of draft legislation

The Government is publishing draft legislation and associated documents, further to previous announcements, including at Budget or in *Tax Policies and Consultations* (CP 404, published on 23 March 2021):

- **Sanctions to tackle tobacco duty evasion** : The Government is publishing a summary of responses to the consultation on ‘sanctions to tackle tobacco duty evasion’ alongside draft legislation. Respondents to the consultation indicated broad support for tougher sanctions to tackle small scale repeated tobacco duty evasion and for the concept of extending the use of these new sanctions to Trading Standards authorities. The draft legislation will introduce a package of sanctions, including a new penalty of up to £10,000 for repeated contraventions. The legislation will also grant HMRC the power to make future regulations for the operation of these sanctions, including provisions to extend their use to Trading Standards.

- **Clamping down on promoters of tax avoidance** : As announced in November 2020, the Government is bringing forward a package of measures to clamp down on promoters of tax avoidance. Proposals include ensuring HMRC can protect their position by freezing a promoter's assets so that the penalties they are liable for are paid, tackling offshore promoters and the UK entities that support them, closing down companies that promote avoidance schemes, and supporting taxpayers to identify and exit avoidance schemes. This package of measures builds on the Promoters Strategy, announced at Budget 2020, and the measures to strengthen existing anti-avoidance regimes which were legislated for in Finance Act 2021.
- **Hybrid and other mismatches**: The draft legislation will make a technical change to the rules governing hybrid and other mismatches. The change will ensure that the legislation applies to certain types of entities that are seen as transparent in their home jurisdictions, including US Limited Liability Corporations, in the same way as it does to partnerships.
- **Capital Allowances – Technical amendment to allowance statement requirements for Structures and Buildings Allowance (SBA)** : The draft legislation will amend the requirements for SBA allowance statements, to include the date qualifying expenditure is incurred or treated as incurred when the allowance period commences from this date. Without this change, subsequent owners of an asset on which SBA is being claimed may sensibly assume the date the allowance period commences is the date the asset is brought into use. Clarity for businesses on the remaining length of the allowance period means they will not be adversely affected by failing to claim the full relief to which they are entitled.
- **Powers to tackle electronic sales suppression (ESS)** : This draft legislation will introduce new powers to tackle electronic sales suppression. The new ESS-specific powers and penalties will make offences of possessing, making, supplying and promoting ESS software and hardware. There will also be ESS-specific information powers allowing HMRC investigators to identify developers and suppliers in the ESS supply chain; and access software developers' source code and the locations of code and data.
- **Scheme Pays Deadlines**: The draft legislation will extend the reporting and payment deadline for individuals to ask their pension scheme to settle their annual allowance charges from previous years by reducing their future pension benefits in the process known as 'Scheme Pays'. This will resolve a technical issue that arises within the pension tax framework as a result of the Government's planned remedy for addressing the age discrimination found in the 2015 public service pension reforms (the 'McCloud Case'). The Government will make further technical updates to pension tax rules as necessary to remove any other anomalies as a result of the remedy.
- **Increasing Normal Minimum Pension Age (NMPA)**: The draft legislation will increase the normal minimum pension age from 55 to 57 in April 2028. This is the age at which most members of registered pension schemes can draw benefits without incurring unauthorised payment charges. Members of uniformed public

service pension schemes and those with unqualified rights to take their pension below age 57 will be protected from these changes. After considering consultation responses, individuals will be able to keep their protected pension age if they transfer their pension.

- **Notification of an uncertain tax treatment by large businesses:** The Government is publishing a summary of responses and draft legislation to implement a new requirement for large businesses to notify HMRC where they have adopted an uncertain tax treatment. This will apply to returns due to be filed on or after 1 April 2022. This requirement to notify will provide HMRC with accurate and timely information to encourage earlier identification and resolution of uncertain tax treatments. This will help address the legal interpretation portion of the tax gap, estimated to be £4.9bn in 2018-19. The Government will also publish accompanying draft guidance in due course.
- **Tax treatment of asset holding companies (AHCs):** The Government is responding to its second stage consultation on, and publishing initial draft legislation relating to, the tax treatment of AHCs. These targeted reforms are designed to enhance the UK's attractiveness as a location for AHCs, and represent a balanced approach in response to stakeholder representations.

The Government is also publishing draft legislation and associated documents in the following areas which have not been previously announced:

- **Basis Period Reform:** Under the current system, tax returns filed by the self-employed and partnerships are based on a business's set of accounts ending in the tax year. A set of complex rules can apply to allocate the profits of those businesses to a tax year, which can cause confusion and error. The Government has announced a reform and consultation on how to simplify the system.
- **Location of Risk regulation:** Under current legislation, the determination of the location of a risk for Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) purposes is unclear. The Government has therefore published draft legislation to clarify the rules for determining the location of a risk by placing the criteria into the primary legislation governing IPT. This will ensure clarity for taxpayers and HMRC, and retain the principles initially set out in legislation in 2001.

All draft legislation is accompanied by a Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN), an Explanatory Note (EN) and, where applicable, a summary of consultation responses document.

Policy announcements

- **London Capital & Finance compensation payments :** The Government will legislate in the Autumn to ensure that payments made by the London Capital & Finance Compensation Scheme will not be subject to Capital Gains Tax. This will provide certainty to bondholders that these payments will be free from income tax and Capital Gains Tax. This measure will apply retrospectively from the date payments are made. The Government will also ensure that the Compensation Scheme terms

enable bondholders who receive compensation in respect of a subscription to an ISA to return the money to an ISA without it contributing to their annual subscription limit.

- Income tax exemption of new social security payments in Scotland : The Government will legislate in the Autumn to ensure that two new social security payments made by the Scottish Government will not be subject to income tax (as provided for in the 2016 Fiscal Framework). This legislation will apply to the Child Winter Heating Assistance (introduced in November 2020) and the Short-Term Assistance (introduced in July 2021). The legislation will be retrospective, from November 2020 and July 2021 respectively. HM Revenue and Customs will not collect any income tax that may have been due on payments made from November 2020 to the date the legislation takes effect.
- Covid Local Grant scheme payments : The Government will legislate in the Autumn to ensure that payments made by Local Authorities to families through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme and Covid Local Grant Scheme, and similar schemes operated by the Devolved Administrations, are not subject to income tax. This will provide certainty to those who have benefited from the additional funding provided to Local Authorities. The legislation will be retrospective and cover payments made from 2020-21 onwards.

Other publications

The Government is also publishing summaries of responses to the following consultations:

- ‘Modernisation of the stamp taxes on shares framework’
- ‘VAT Grouping – Establishment, Eligibility and Registration’
- ‘VAT and the Public Sector: Reform to VAT Refund Rules’
- ‘VAT and the Sharing Economy’
- ‘VAT and value shifting’

Finally, the Government is also publishing a research report titled ‘Impact of Making Tax Digital for VAT’. This considers the impact of Making Tax Digital (MTD) across those taxpayers that have been required to operate it for VAT from April 2019 and further demonstrates that taxpayers are experiencing benefits in operating MTD.

All publications can be found on the GOV.UK website. The Government’s tax consultation tracker has also been updated.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Improving Support for Disabled People and People with Health Conditions

Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work (Justin Tomlinson):

[\[HCWS221\]](#)

I am pleased today to update the house on the publications of *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper* and the *Health is everyone's business consultation response*.

The Government has a clear objective to make sure that disabled people and people with health conditions can lead the fullest, most independent lives possible, reaching their potential. As part of this, we remain committed to our ambition to see one million more disabled people in work by 2027.

Today's publications and the work that follows will help us take an important step towards improving the way we help disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work.

In 2021/22 we are forecast to spend a record £58 billion on benefits for disabled people and people with health conditions, and we have witnessed record levels of disability employment. We must now build on these achievements, unlock new opportunities and consider how support can be made sustainable for the future, so we can continue to help those most in need.

The consultation launched by today's publication of the Green Paper will help us do this. It focuses on issues that disabled people and people with health conditions have told us they would like to see improved. This includes:

- Testing new advocacy support, drawing on support already being provided by partners, so we can test and develop new ways to support the most vulnerable people who need extra help accessing and using the benefits system and who don't have families, friends or trusted networks to support them;
- Making changes to the way we deliver health assessments, including considering future use of telephone and video assessments where that is right for the individual and exploring how we can improve the decision making process, including the evidence we take into account;
- Reducing the number of assessments that we undertake by exploring the extension of the principles of the Severe Conditions Criteria;
- Exploring ways to strengthen the process people follow if they think the decision from a health assessment is wrong, building on the changes we have already introduced at the Mandatory Reconsideration Stage; and
- Building on our commitment to reform the Work Capability Assessment, following work with disabled people and people with health conditions to consider future changes to assessments.

It is essential that any changes we make are shaped by disabled people and their representatives. This is why the Department and I have hosted a series of engagement events across the country, to hear about disabled people's experiences of DWP services and priorities for future changes. This has also included a number of sessions with Members of Parliament who have held sessions in their constituencies, sessions I am thankful to have held. These experiences have directly shaped the Health and Disability Green Paper.

The consultation started by the launch of this Green Paper will last for 12 weeks. Following the consultation, detailed proposals will then be brought forward in a White Paper in mid-2022.

Taking action to better support people in work is another crucial element of our agenda, and with the publication of the Health is everyone's business response, we are setting out the further action this Government intends to take to tackle ill-health related job loss. I am grateful to the almost 500 respondents to the consultation.

Reducing health-related job losses is as important as helping people into work. Whilst most people return to work following a period of long-term sickness absence, disabled people have a heightened risk of falling out of work, an estimated 300,000 disabled people falling out of work a year prior to COVID-19. The initiatives set out in the Health is everyone's business response will work to address this challenge. They are designed as a package that both increases employer responsibilities in managing employee health at work, whilst also improving employer access to Occupational Health (OH) advice and government support.

Employers have an important role to play in creating inclusive and healthy workplaces. Government recognises that employers need both more clarity on their existing responsibilities and clearer information to enable them to have the right guidance to support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to remain in work or return to work following sickness absence.

Cross-Government collaboration will continue as we enact proposals, ensuring we are well equipped to meet the challenges ahead. We will also continue working with key stakeholder organisations, employers and employees to deliver the proposals into the future. This will reduce the chance that certain individuals or groups are left behind and complement existing initiatives to help employees manage the employment impact of their condition, such as integrated Employment Advice provision in the NHS's Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services in England.

I am hugely excited by this work. It is a real opportunity to deliver a more effective health and disability system and unlock every disabled person's potential. This Green Paper will deliver ambitious policy reforms to improve the lives of disabled people, whilst the package outlined in the Health is everyone's business response will ensure all employers are equipped to do the right thing for their employees, helping disabled people and people with health conditions stay in and thrive in the new world of work. The Health and Disability Green Paper and Health is everyone's business response, alongside the forthcoming National Disability Strategy, will set out holistic approach to enable disabled

people and people with health conditions to thrive in work and live more independent lives.

■ **Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) Annual Report and Accounts 2020-2021**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Pensions & Financial Inclusion (Guy Opperman): [\[HCWS213\]](#)

My Noble Friend, The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions (The Baroness Stedman-Scott) has made the following Written Statement

Later today I will lay before this House the Office for Nuclear Regulation Annual Report and Accounts 2020-2021. These documents will also be published on the ONR website.

I can confirm, in accordance with Schedule 7, Section 25(3) of the Energy Act 2013, that there have been no exclusions to the published documents on the grounds of national security.