



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 July 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:39 P.M., 22 July 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Animal Experiments

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[33345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the strategies of his Department to increase the number of commercial service providers or research laboratories skilled in New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) data interpretation to deliver the Government's commitment to reduce and replace animal testing.

Amanda Solloway:

We recognise how data from New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) could be used for regulatory decision-making to enable a shift away from using animals in testing.

The commercial capability in this area is increasing and, for example, UK companies such as XCellR8 have developed OECD test guideline compliant NAMs assays for use in skin sensitisation studies.

■ Biofuels

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[35682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department plans to publish a Biomass Strategy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In the Energy White Paper we outlined our plans to publish a Biomass Strategy in 2022. On 20th April this year, we launched a Call for Evidence to inform the strategy. The Call for Evidence is now closed, and we are reviewing the responses received.

■ Companies: Carbon Emissions

Alison Thewliss:

[\[35716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department intends to require large (a) private and (b) public companies to make disclosures on Scope 3 emissions.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government supports the role of corporate transparency as an important part of delivering net zero. Indeed, the UK has led global efforts in introducing measures to increase corporate transparency, and in 2013 was the first country to make it compulsory for quoted companies to include global emissions data for their entire organisation in their annual reports; and in April 2019, these reporting requirements have been extended with the introduction of the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting Regulations, increasing tenfold the number of businesses required to publicly disclose their direct energy use and carbon emissions in annual reports.

Many businesses already measure and report their indirect/Scope 3 carbon emissions information under a range of voluntary schemes, and as part of the recently published consultation on Mandatory Climate-related Financial Disclosures, we sought views on whether Scope 3 emissions reporting should remain voluntary. The consultation closed on 5 May, and we are now considering carefully all of the responses to the consultation and a response will be published by the end of the year.

■ Companies: Climate Change

Alison Thewliss:

[\[35717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to require large private and public companies to produce a scenario analysis on the impacts that climate change will have on their business model and strategy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government recently published a consultation on mandatory climate-related financial disclosures by publicly quoted companies, large private companies and LLPs. This covered our proposals on scenario analysis. This consultation closed on 5 May. We are carefully considering all of the responses to the consultation, and will publish a response by the end of the year.

In November 2020, the Government announced its intention to make Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures-aligned disclosures mandatory across the economy by 2025, and our Roadmap towards mandatory climate related disclosures will help ensure that the right information on climate-related risks and opportunities is available across the investment chain.

■ Deep Sea Mining: Nauru

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[35559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the implications for the UK Government's position on deep sea mining of the trigger by the Government of Nauru of the two year rule on deep sea mining.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Nauru has notified the International Seabed Authority of its intention to apply for approval of a plan of work for deep sea mining exploitation under the terms of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We continue to press for the very highest environmental standards to be agreed and activated by the International Seabed Authority. Until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impacts on deep sea ecosystems and strong and enforceable environmental regulations in place, the UK has committed not to sponsor or support the issuing of any exploitation licences for deep sea mining projects.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Email**Florence Eshalomi:** [\[35976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he or any of the Ministers of his Department use personal email addresses to conduct Government business.

Amanda Solloway:

Ministers will use a range of digital forms of communication for discussions in line with relevant guidance on information handling and security.

Ministers will have informal conversations from time to time, in person or remotely, and significant content relating to government business from such discussions is passed back to officials.

The Cabinet Office has previously published guidance on how information is held for the purposes of access to information, and how formal decisions are recorded for the official record. Ministers are also given advice on the security of electronic communications.

■ Energy: USA**Virginia Crosbie:** [\[35961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to include nuclear power in discussions on clean energy with the US Administration; and what recent assessment he has made of potential areas for co-operation between the UK and US on clean energy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The United States is our closest strategic partner and we regularly discuss clean energy policy with them, including on nuclear energy. For example, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Biden announced a new Strategic Dialogue in advance of the G7 Summit. The Dialogue will build upon our existing extensive co-operation, deepening it in areas such as the development and deployment of innovative, clean energy technologies such as nuclear energy, industrial decarbonisation, energy security and resilience, joint priorities in multilateral energy forums, and shared science, research, and innovation cooperation.

■ Football Association Premier League: Competition**Chi Onwurah:** [\[35633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July 2021 to Question 31400 on Monopolies, what assessment (a) his Department and (b) the Competition and Markets Authority has made of (i) the level of competition in the Premier League and (ii) the barriers to entry for new owners of football clubs.

Paul Scully:

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

Responsibility for investigating individual and market-wide competition issues falls to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the UK's competition authority. As an independent authority, it is for the CMA to decide which cases to investigate, which it does according to its prioritisation principles. The CMA may also carry out detailed examinations of why particular markets may not be working well and take remedial action to address features of markets which restrict competition. It is for the CMA to determine the information to be published regarding the discharge of its regulatory functions.

■ Heating**Alison Thewliss:**[\[35718\]](#)

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

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out in the BEIS Select Committee on 20th July 2021, 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.

■ Hinkley Point C Power Station**Alan Brown:**[\[35750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 July 2021 to Question 29075 on Hinkley Point C Power Station, what the latest date estimate was from EDF for unit 1 to be commissioned beyond the revised target date of June 2026.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

On 27 January 2021, the developer of Hinkley Point C (HPC) announced Reactor One has moved from December 2025 to June 2026. There is a risk that Reactor 1 will be delayed by a further 15 months and Reactor 2 by a further 9 months. This risk of delay has been consistent since it was first reported in July 2017. We understand that the developer is currently managing the schedule for the construction of Unit 2 to follow approximately one year behind that of Unit 1.

■ Hospitality Industry and Leisure: Debts

Seema Malhotra:

[\[35659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the level of debt in the (a) hospitality, (b) leisure and (c) culture sectors.

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 and we regularly review financial and economic impacts data for sectors. 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. We are also working on new rules to ringfence COVID-19 commercial rent arrears and guide tenants and landlords to agree repayment plans.

■ Hospitality Industry: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[\[35661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment has he made of the potential effect of proposed vaccine passports on employment opportunities in the hospitality sector for people aged 16 to 30 who have not received covid-19 vaccinations.

Paul Scully:

The Department is in regular contact with representatives from the Hospitality sector to discuss how to help the sector recover. So far, in England 65% of 18-30-year-olds have taken up the offer of the vaccine and received at least one dose. For the remainder we would encourage them to take up the offer of a vaccine to protect themselves and others.

■ Hydrogen

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[35681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the reasons are for the delay in publication of the Hydrogen Strategy; and when that strategy will be published.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The first ever UK Hydrogen Strategy will be published shortly and will set out the key steps needed in the 2020s to deliver our 5GW production ambition and set the context for further scale up on the way to net zero.

■ Merchant Shipping: Pensions

Matt Rodda:

[\[33324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 24 June 2021 to Question 18566, on Merchant Navy Officers Pension Fund Scheme, what estimate he has made of the projected average entitlement for members of the Merchant Navy Ratings Pension Fund pension scheme through the Natural Environment Research Council and British Antarctic Survey.

Amanda Solloway:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 24 June 2021 to Question 18566.

■ Nuclear Power: Economic Growth and Employment

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[35959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of nuclear energy on (a) long term economic growth and (b) the number of high value regional jobs.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

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.

The Nuclear Skills Strategy Group – of which BEIS is a member – published the Nuclear Workforce Assessment 2019 and estimated that the sector employed approximately 89,000 full-time equivalents across the UK. This Group is expecting to update its assessment later this year.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[35634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a long-term Research and Development funding plan setting out how the Government will meet its commitment of spending £22 billion per year by 2024; and what steps his Department is taking to support science organisations as part of that plan.

Amanda Solloway:

Last year, we published our ambitious Research and Development Roadmap, setting out our long-term vision for the R&D system, including cutting unnecessary bureaucracy, embracing diversity in the R&D workforce, levelling up across the UK, embracing innovation, and boosting international collaboration.

This year we are investing £14.9 billion in research and development in 2021/22 across government, putting UK Government R&D spending at its highest level in four decades.

The next Spending Review will set out plans for future R&D funding. Our investment in R&D will support our Roadmap commitments and helps consolidate our position as a science superpower, as we build towards increasing public expenditure on R&D to £22bn and delivering on our target to increase total UK R&D investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

■ Unpaid Work

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [\[35745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to assess the potential merits of banning unpaid work trials at the outset of employment.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [\[35746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will bring forward legislation banning the use of unpaid work trials at the outset of employment.

Paul Scully:

Unpaid work trials that are exploitative are already against the law. When recruiting, an employer can ask an individual to carry out a short unpaid work trial to demonstrate that they have the skills required for the job. But if a work trial is excessively long, or not part of a genuine recruitment purpose, employers must pay participants at least the legal minimum wage.

The Government is committed to ensuring that anyone entitled to be paid the minimum wage receives it. Since 2015, we have ordered employers to repay £100 million of unpaid wages to 1 million workers.

The existing legislation and enforcement are sufficiently robust to ensure that no worker undertakes an exploitative unpaid work trial. It is the responsibility of all employers to ensure they are paying their staff correctly and we will continue to take robust enforcement action against employers who fail to pay the minimum wage.

CABINET OFFICE

■ 11 Downing Street: Repairs and Maintenance

Angela Rayner: [\[35680\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Cabinet Office's Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21, published on 15 July 2021, what the total value is of the additional invoices for the refurbishment work undertaken on the No 11 Downing Street residence referenced on page 209 of that report.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[35840\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 209 of the Cabinet Office's Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21,

published on 15 July 2021, what the total amount is that the Cabinet Office recharged to the Conservative Party in July 2020 for the refurbishment work that was undertaken on the No 11 Downing Street residence.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[35841\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Cabinet Office's Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21, published on 15 July 2021, what total amount was refunded by the Cabinet Office to the Conservative Party for the work undertaken on the No 11 Downing Street residence in March 2021 as referred to on page 209 of that report.

Julia Lopez:

Other than works funded through the annual allowance, the costs of the wider refurbishment of the residence are not being financed by taxpayers and have been settled by the Prime Minister personally.

Interim support provided by the Conservative Party is a matter for the party.

■ Business: Ventilators

Jack Dromey: [\[35595\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21, page 131, published 15 July 2021, which companies were covered by the constructive losses incurred on the Ventilator Challenge Programme.

Julia Lopez:

Throughout the pandemic, we have done whatever it takes to protect the NHS and save lives. This included launching the Ventilator Challenge, which saw more than 15,000 new machines delivered to the NHS, meaning every patient who needs a ventilator has been able to access one.

The Ventilator Challenge was run during the height of the pandemic and the Cabinet Office accepted the higher levels of risk that come with Research and Development projects where time is of the essence, entering into development contracts with a wide variety of vendors. An initial screening of the projects by a Technical Design Authority (comprised of clinicians, the regulator, external experts and officials) identified which ventilators design concepts were most likely to both pass validation and be manufacturable in volume.

Those design teams were issued conditional letters of intent to cover reasonable costs until the next (clinically informed) TDA, when work on the devices considered to be non-viable was stood down. In this way the list of potentially viable designs was whittled down to those that did pass the required validation tests, some of which were then taken into manufacture. There were therefore costs incurred in supporting designs that did not turn out to work, but it was not knowable at the outset which design concepts would and would not be successful.

As highlighted in the NAO report, even including the R&D costs expended on designs that did not progress, the average unit cost of the ventilators developed and manufactured compared favourably with that of the ventilators purchased in the market. Moreover the NAO report into the ventilator challenge remarked that given its overall approach, the Cabinet Office took reasonable steps to control the programme's costs where it could.

■ Cabinet Office: Email

Fleur Anderson: [\[35924\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he or any of the Ministers of his Department use personal email addresses to conduct Government business.

Julia Lopez:

Further to the [answers](#) given on 8 July 2021, Cabinet Office [Guidance to departments on the use of private emails](#) provides guidance on this issue.

■ Cabinet Office: Written Questions

Emily Thornberry: [\[35572\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to answer Questions 20306 and 20307, tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 26 June 2021.

Julia Lopez:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to [PQ 20306](#) and [PQ 20307](#) on 20 July 2021.

■ Coronavirus: Young People

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[35567\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people under the age of 30 without pre-existing medical conditions who died from covid-19.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[35568\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people under 30 with pre-existing conditions who died from covid-19.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ35567, 35568 [PQ35567_35568.pdf]

■ Manufacturing Industries: Protective Clothing

Jack Dromey: [\[35596\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to page 131 of the Cabinet Office's Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21, who provided the machines for the manufacture of face coverings whose value has been written off by his Department.

Julia Lopez:

The write down in the Cabinet Office - Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21 relates to an initial purchase of semi-automated face covering manufacturing plants acquired at the outset of the pandemic to provide initial domestic resilience while we were facing worldwide shortages. These machines were replaced by fully automated machines. As a result of this investment, more than 13 million masks for public use have already been made and millions more will be produced in the coming months. This programme has helped ensure public demand for face coverings has not affected the supply of higher-grade masks needed by NHS frontline staff.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Steve Reed: [\[35667\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his timescale is for the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper.

Chloe Smith:

We will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper later this year, articulating how bold new policy interventions will improve opportunity and boost livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic.

■ World War II: Channel Islands

Andrew Rosindell: [\[33173\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 2 July 2021 to Question 21838 on World War II: Channel Islands, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of transferring the documents from the Nazi Occupation of the Channel Islands that were subject to legal exemptions to the National Archives.

Julia Lopez:

The Cabinet Office no longer holds files on this subject. Records from this period transferred to The National Archives (TNA) are listed on its online catalogue. Any closures or retentions can be requested via the FOI process and quoting the file reference on TNA's catalogue.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals****John Healey:**[\[35495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many locally employed staff have been processed under the updated Afghan Relocated and Assisted Policy since 1 June 2021.

Leo Docherty:

We have significantly accelerated the pace of relocations under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in line with the military drawdown. Since the 1st June 572 people, former Afghan locally employed staff and their families, have been relocated to the UK. The MOD is working with the Home Office and a range of Government departments to ensure their successful resettlement.

This now takes the total number of people from Afghanistan relocated to the UK under the ARAP and the previous Ex-Gratia Policy to nearly 2,000.

Our commitment to those who are eligible under the ARAP, and the process to deliver it, is not time-limited and will endure beyond the military presence in Afghanistan.

■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[34013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the objectives of the NATO led coalition in Afghanistan were; and which of those objectives have been achieved.

James Heappey:

Our primary objective when we deployed to Afghanistan 20 years ago was to ensure that it was not used as a base for international terrorism. There has not been a successful international terrorist attack on the West mounted from Afghanistan since.

The UK has played a critical role in developing the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. Alongside our NATO Allies we have built and equipped security institutions; trained over 5,000 cadets, including over 300 women; and supported a stable election process. Afghan forces have led security in Afghanistan for the last six years, and are countering security threats across the country. The UK and allies will continue to provide financial assistance to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:[\[34565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK's exit strategy from Afghanistan included an assessment of the risk of the retaking of Afghan territory by the Taliban in the three months after the UK's withdrawal from that country.

James Heappey:

NATO partners were clear that this military withdrawal comes in the context of a renewed regional and domestic push for peace in Afghanistan and that remains the

UK's focus. We will remain fully engaged in this process, holding the Taliban to their commitments on engaging in the peace process and preventing terrorists from using Afghanistan to launch international attacks.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Testing**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[35552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 32308 on Ajax Vehicles: Testing, on which date that initial report was handed over to General Dynamics.

Jeremy Quin:

I will write to the right hon. Member with the requested information shortly.

■ **Armed Forces Covenant**

Stuart Anderson: [\[36769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to encourage more organisations to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

Leo Docherty:

The Armed Forces Covenant applies throughout the UK and is delivered across all sectors of society. Every Local Authority in Great Britain has signed the Covenant and over 7,000 organisations have pledged support. Signing up to the Covenant is encouraged on a national and local level. Defence Relationship Management works closely with businesses and other organisations to encourage them to sign the Covenant and uphold their pledges. The Ministry of Defence works closely with local authorities to support their delivery of the Covenant. We promote the Covenant through regular communications and engagement activities, such as conferences and events. Signing the Covenant also provides the signatory with the opportunity to be recognised by the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) award. To date, 494 organisations hold the ERS Gold Standard for partnering with Defence.

■ **Armed Forces: Deployment**

Lisa Nandy: [\[31387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many full-time UK armed forces personnel are currently deployed overseas, by country of deployment.

James Heappey:

[Holding answer 15 July 2021]: In addition to the 7,025 at sea in Ships and Submarines around the globe, figures for those deployed overseas on 22 Jul 2021, including in Defence Sections of Embassies, International Headquarters, permanent deployments, on UN Duties, on Operations, participating in international exercises, or in support of other Defence activity, are listed in the table below. This represents a snapshot as numbers are continuously changing. Some of these details have been withheld due to operational sensitivity, including our current presence in Afghanistan.

COUNTRY	PERSONNEL
ALBANIA	1
ALGERIA	2
ARGENTINA	2
AUSTRALIA	200
AUSTRIA	2
BAHRAIN	193
BANGLADESH	1
BARBADOS	3
BELGIUM	280
BELIZE	67
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	3
BRAZIL	2
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	734
BULGARIA	1
CAMEROON	17
CANADA	295
CHAD	1
CHILE	2
CHINA	5
COLOMBIA	3
CROATIA	5
CURACAO	2
CYPRUS	3,272
CZECH REPUBLIC	18
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	4
DENMARK	4

COUNTRY	PERSONNEL
DIEGO GARCIA	43
DJIBOUTI	4
EGYPT	4
ESTONIA	716
ETHIOPIA	2
FALKLAND ISLANDS	843
FIJI	1
FINLAND	1
FRANCE	83
GEORGIA	34
GERMANY	585
GHANA	3
GIBRALTAR	516
GREECE	53
INDIA	8
INDONESIA	2
IRAQ	152
IRELAND	1
ISRAEL	4
ITALY	196
JAMAICA	2
JAPAN	5
JORDAN	215
KAZAKHSTAN	2
KENYA	617
KOSOVO	36

COUNTRY	PERSONNEL
KUWAIT	84
LATVIA	19
LEBANON	4
LITHUANIA	2
MALAYSIA	7
MALI	442
MEXICO	2
MOLDOVA	1
MOROCCO	2
NEPAL	69
NETHERLANDS	116
NEW ZEALAND	6
NIGERIA	53
NORTH MACEDONIA	3
NORWAY	49
OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES	6
OMAN	235
PAKISTAN	13
POLAND	164
PORTUGAL	27
QATAR	134
ROMANIA	175
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	1
SAINT HELENA, ASCENSION AND TRISTAN DA CUNHA	23
SAUDI ARABIA	142
SENEGAL	6

COUNTRY	PERSONNEL
SERBIA	1
SEYCHELLES	1
SIERRA LEONE	2
SINGAPORE	9
SLOVAKIA	1
SLOVENIA	11
SOMALIA	63
SOUTH AFRICA	2
SOUTH KOREA	7
SOUTH SUDAN	5
SPAIN	37
SRI LANKA	1
SWEDEN	3
THAILAND	2
TUNISIA	4
TURKEY	46
TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS	15
UGANDA	2
UKRAINE	436
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	141
UNITED STATES	1,053
UZBEKISTAN	1
VIETNAM	2
ZAMBIA	6
ZIMBABWE	1

■ Armed Forces: Housing

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[35548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints from service personnel his Department received on (a) damp, (b) no hot water and (c) heating issues in 2020; and what the average time was to resolve those complaints.

Jeremy Quin:

The number of Stage 1 Complaints raised by Service personnel living in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and Single Living Accommodation (SLA) for issues relating to damp, no hot water and heating during 2020 is set out below, together with the average time to resolve those complaints:

SFA

COMPLAINT TYPE	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	DURATION OF TIME TO RESOLVE COMPLAINT (AVERAGE)
Damp & Mould	460	18.15 days
Hot Water	401	7.39 days
Heating	712	8.04 day

SLA

COMPLAINT TYPE	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	DURATION OF TIME TO RESOLVE COMPLAINT (AVERAGE)
Damp & Mould	0	0
Hot Water	2	19 days
Heating	0	0

A stage 1 complaint is raised when an occupant is dissatisfied with the service in response to a work task.

■ Armed Forces: Long Covid

Layla Moran:

[\[35871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of military personnel referred to date for treatment for long covid at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre have (a) been treated and (b) returned to work.

Leo Docherty:

Between 23 April 2020 and 19 July 2021, the latest period for which figures are available, a total of 462 UK Armed Forces personnel had at least one appointment at one of the COVID clinics at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC). Of

these, 447 personnel attended a COVID outpatient appointment, 260 attended a Defence COVID Recovery Service appointment, 224 a COVID course appointment and 26 a COVID course review appointment.

Information about sickness absence in the Armed Forces is not held centrally. It is therefore not possible to provide with accuracy the number of personnel who have returned to work after attending a DMRC COVID clinic.

■ **Armed Forces: Private Education**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[35549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are under investigation for boarding school allowance fraud as at 19 July 2021.

Leo Docherty:

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

The number of Service personnel currently under investigation, as at 19 July for suspected CEA fraud is 11.

■ **Challenger Tanks**

John Healey: [\[35498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total constructive losses were to his Department for the reduction in the number of Challenger 2 tanks, driver training tanks and Challenger Armoured Repair and Recovery vehicles in 2011-12.

Jeremy Quin:

A constructive loss of £253,810,000 was reported as an advanced notification in the Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts 2014/15, as a result of the reduction in the number of Challenger 2 tanks, driver training tanks and Challenger Armoured Repair and Recovery vehicles. The loss has not yet been closed and is therefore subject to revision depending on the final outcome of the disposal process for the vehicles in question.

The MOD Annual Report and Accounts 2014/15 can be accessed via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482894/19_MOD_ARAc_combined_at_02_Dec_2015_for_web.pdf

■ Harrier Aircraft

John Healey: [\[35496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what was the total constructive loss to his Department of the early withdrawal of the Harrier fleet.

Jeremy Quin:

As reported in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) Annual Report and Accounts 2014/15, the total constructive loss resulting from the withdrawal from service of the Harrier fleet was £1,120,917,000.

The MOD Annual Report and Accounts 2014/15 can be accessed via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482894/19_MOD_ARAc_combined_at_02_Dec_2015_for_web.pdf

■ Military Alliances

John Healey: [\[34432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Chief of Defence Staff Directive on Embedded Personnel 2/16, what definition his Department uses to define significant support in the context of assistance provided during lethal operations by UK personnel embedded in partner forces.

James Heappey:

All UK Armed Forces embedded with our allies on operations remain subject to UK law wherever they are deployed. Embedded personnel receive a comprehensive pre-deployment briefing that covers what they may or may not do during operations and which follows Government intent. Should they be asked to undertake action outwith that set out in their pre-deployment briefing they are able to reach back to UK command for legal and policy advice.

■ Ministry of Defence: Directors

Cat Smith: [\[35725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which of his Department's non-executive directors were appointed through open competition.

Leo Docherty:

Departments follow the principles set out in Cabinet Office/HM Treasury 'Corporate governance in central government departments: code of good practice'. The current Ministry of Defence Non-Executive Directors were recruited through fair and transparent routes, with multiple candidates considered for each appointment. Appointments were made on merit.

■ Ministry of Defence: Ethnic Groups

Ruth Jones:

[\[35886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Black and ethnic minority staff are employed by his Department.

Leo Docherty:

The Armed Forces represent the society they serve and diversity and inclusion is essential to their operational effectiveness. Defence has committed to a Diversity and Inclusion strategy and is working hard to achieve a more diverse workforce. Whilst progress has been made in the representative rates of our people, there is further to go if we are to successfully attract and retain diverse talent, both now and in the future. That is why we have renewed our levels of ambition at the highest levels in Defence as we work to fulfil the key objective in our 2018-2030 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to eliminate discrimination and improve diversity.

As at 1 April 2021, there were 13,690 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Regular Service personnel in the UK Armed Forces. This equates to a representation rate of 9.2 per cent, an increase of 0.4 percentage points compared with 1 April 2020. At the same date, there were 2,030 BAME civilian personnel working in MOD (Main). This equates to a representation rate of **6.3** per cent, a rise of **1.8** percentage points compared with 1 April 2017.

Defence publishes biannual statistics on diversity declarations for Armed Forces personnel and MOD civilian staff. The latest editions can be found at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-biannual-diversity-statistics-index>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-diversity-dashboard-index>

■ Ministry of Defence: Staff

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[35551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many qualified commercial officers his Department employs.

Leo Docherty:

The Department's Commercial Function currently employs 1,328 staff members who are Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) professionally qualified, as appropriate for their role. There are an additional 367 staff members currently studying towards attainment of a CIPS qualification.

■ Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Shipping

John Healey: [\[35497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what was the total constructive loss to his Department for the early withdrawal of five Royal Navy and three Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels in 2011-12.

Jeremy Quin:

Ministry of Defence financial records are only retained for a period of seven years. In line with accounting procedures in force at the time, only Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) LARGS BAY would have been treated as a constructive loss as it was sold. All other vessels withdrawn during this period were decommissioned.

■ RAF Menwith Hill

John Healey: [\[34433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many additional agreements the Government has entered into in respect of the US Military's use of RAF Menwith Hill, aside from the NATO Status of Forces Agreement of 1951; and whether those agreements govern the US's use of the facilities at the base to support military operations overseas.

James Heapey:

The United States (US) military's use of RAF Menwith Hill is enabled through the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (1951), the Visiting Forces Act (1952) and UK/US Cost Sharing Agreement (1973).

Under these arrangements, at the consent of the UK Government, the United States has the use of certain bases in the United Kingdom. The services and facilities at these sites, including RAF Menwith Hill, are predominantly provided by the US Air Force; therefore the US are given the responsibility to operationally run these sites.

■ Veterans: Identity Cards

John Healey: [\[35494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of armed forces service leavers have received their veterans ID card.

Justin Madders: [\[35709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his timetable is for the introduction of the online verification tool for Veterans ID.

Leo Docherty:

A Veterans ID card has been automatically issued as standard to all Service leavers from December 2018. 36,091 such cards have been issued up to July 2021.

The Government remains committed to developing an online digital verification tool that will securely and easily allow veterans to verify their service. A delivery date will be confirmed in due course.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Culture: Self-employed****Seema Malhotra:**[\[35658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support his Department is providing to freelancers in the culture sector who are unable to access the Culture Recovery Fund.

Caroline Dinenge:

The Government recognises the challenge the current pandemic poses to our arts and culture sectors and to the many freelancers working across these industries. As the sector reopens, we continue to keep our cultural recovery policy under constant review.

Freelancers have been supported through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), which has so far helped 2.8m self-employed. Details on future SEISS support were announced by the Chancellor in his Budget Statement in March, with an extension of the scheme to September 2021. Around 500,000 additional people have been brought into scope who filed a tax return in 2019-20, or were previously ineligible, who now may be able to claim the fourth grant.

However, it is also the case that the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) had significant indirect benefits for freelancers. In Round 2, organisations were asked to estimate how many FTEs and freelancers were protected by the fund until the end of June. Collectively, applicants reported that 52,000 full-time staff and almost 100,000 freelancers would be supported until the end of June. And ALBs were able to complement SEISS with their own interventions i.e. over £51m from ACE to individuals.

Additionally, the third round of the Culture Recovery Fund was announced on 25 June. This third and final round of funding will provide further support as the cultural, heritage and creative sectors reopen at full capacity, underlining the government's commitment to help them build back better as life returns to normal.

■ Events Industry: Coronavirus**Seema Malhotra:**[\[35986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the findings of the Events Research Programme.

Caroline Dinenge:

Our Phase I events successfully collected a large amount of data on a combination of testing, and non-pharmaceutical interventions (actions that people can take to mitigate the spread of coronavirus) across the nine pilot events.

Findings from the first phase of the Events Research Programme were published on 25 June, and show that:

- Every event, both indoor and outdoor, carries levels of transmission risk.

- Large unstructured gatherings indoors where there is significant mixing of people in close proximity typically pose a higher risk.
- Mitigation options include: communications, crowd and audience management strategies, face coverings, ventilation, testing, restrictions on food and drink, social distancing and capacity caps.

Findings from ERP pilots continue to be shared with the Government for consideration as part of broader policy making. Key findings from Phases II and III will be published in due course.

■ **Events Industry: Trade Agreements**

Giles Watling:

[\[34585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government's proposed trade deals with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein include permit free touring provisions for UK support staff involved in touring activities in the EEA.

Caroline Dinéage:

The UK's creative industries are the finest in the world and this Government understands that the cultural and creative sectors rely on the ability to move people across borders quickly, simply, and with minimal cost and administration.

On 8 July, the UK - Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein Free Trade Agreement was signed.

The agreement allows UK touring artists, entertainers and support staff to travel to and work in Norway and Liechtenstein for 90 days in any 180 day period, and Iceland for 90 days in one calendar year without the need for a work permit.

The deal was based on the same UK offer that the EU turned down in negotiations. This shows our proposals were workable and our door remains open if the EU is willing to reconsider its position.

To provide further clarity on the arrangements, UK and EEA states plan to issue a non-binding clarification of entry routes for performers, artists and their support staff.

■ **Musicians: Visas and Work Permits**

Giles Watling:

[\[34582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent progress he has made on (a) short term visa and (b) work permit requirements for touring artists and support staff since the publication of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Giles Watling:

[\[34583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer on 25 May to Question 3150 on Theatre: EU Countries, what assessment his Department has made of the varying time limits placed on touring activities without needing visas or work permits offered by the 17 EU Member States.

Giles Watling:[\[34584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to work with his counterparts in the EU member states that have more restrictive visa and work permit requirements than those of the UK, to ensure that artists from the UK can continue touring on a reciprocal basis.

Caroline Dinéage:

We have always acknowledged that the end of freedom of movement would have consequences for touring musicians and performers. That is why, as the Secretary of State has said, we have moved at pace and with urgency to provide greater clarity about the current position, including working with our friends in EU Member States, to support the creative sectors tour in Europe with ease.

Member States are principally responsible for deciding the rules governing what work UK visitors can undertake in the EU, and we have spoken to every Member State. We have established musicians and performers do not need visas or work permits for short-term tours in at least 19 out of 27 Member States. This includes France, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and many more. The length of tour permitted without a visa or permit varies across Member States. For many Member States it is for up to 90 days, which will capture the vast majority of tours.

We are continuing to speak to all Member States to encourage them to ensure their rules and guidance are clear and accessible. And we are now working closely with those Member States that do require visas or work permits for short-term tours to encourage them to adopt a more flexible approach, in line with the UK's own rules which allow creative professionals to tour here easily. Formal approaches have been made to those Member States, and DCMS ministers will play an active role in discussions.

■ Online Harms Reduction Regulator (Report) Bill (HL)**Stephen Timms:**[\[35477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister to the Liaison Committee on 7 July 2021, Q79, that one of the key objectives of the Online Safety Bill is to tackle online fraud, if he will list the key objectives of the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Online Safety Bill will deliver the government's manifesto commitment to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online while defending freedom of expression. The Bill's key objectives are to protect users online and uphold users' rights online.

With regard to protecting users, the Bill will focus on:

- tackling criminal content online, including fraud where this is facilitated through user-generated content;
- protecting children from harmful and inappropriate content; and

- building trust between users and their online platforms.

To uphold users' rights online, the legislation will defend freedom of expression and the invaluable role of a free press.

Stephen Timms:

[\[35478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the statement of the Prime Minister to the Liaison Committee on 7 July 2021, Q79, that one of the key objectives of the Online Safety Bill is to tackle online fraud, what plans he has for the Bill to tackle online fraud other than user-generated content.

Caroline Dinenage:

Online fraud is in scope of the Online Safety Bill. This means that companies in scope of regulation will need to take action to tackle fraud, where it is facilitated through user-generated content or via search results.

Government is currently working with industry to remove the vulnerabilities that fraudsters exploit, with intelligence agencies to shut down known fraudulent infrastructure, and with law enforcement to identify and bring the most harmful offenders to justice. We are also working to ensure that the public have the advice and support they need.

We are continuing to explore additional legislative and non-legislative solutions to tackle fraud in the round. The Home Office is developing an ambitious Fraud Action Plan, which will be published after the 2021 Spending Review. The Online Advertising Programme, led by DCMS, will also consider further regulation of online advertising to reduce online fraud and we will be consulting on it later this year.

■ Press Freedom: EU Action

John Howell:

[\[21180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he plans to make for the implications of his policies of the debate that took place at the Council of Europe on 21 June 2021 on the potential merits of introducing a right to know mechanism for the preservation of media freedom.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government is committed to protecting the freedom of the press and recognises that a vibrant and free press plays an invaluable role in our cultural and democratic life. We want to make sure that this continues, with high journalistic standards working in the public interest. The government set up the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists, and published the National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists. The plan and the Committee's aim is to ensure that journalists operating in the UK are as safe as possible, reducing the number of attacks on and threats issued to journalists. In addition, the government recently published an Online Media Literacy Strategy and Action Plan. Matters involving the Council of Europe are the responsibility of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

■ Social Media: Eating Disorders

Julie Elliott:

[\[35639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with social media companies on content that may encourage the development of eating disorders; and what steps he is taking to remove content of that nature.

Caroline Dinenage:

Ministers and officials have regular meetings with a wide range of stakeholders, including social media platforms, on a variety of issues, including eating disorders content. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](#) website.

Under the draft Online Safety Bill, services in scope will need to minimise and remove illegal content, including illegal online abuse. In addition, services which are “likely to be accessed” by children will be required to provide further protections for children from content and activity which is legal but harmful. Major platforms will also need to address legal but harmful content for adults. The government will set out priority categories of legal but harmful material in secondary legislation, for example content which encourages or promotes eating disorders.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure

Chi Onwurah:

[\[34492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 26 May 2021 to Question 5194 on Telecommunications: Infrastructure, what estimate he has made of the average rental payment to landowners; and what assessment he has made of the the impact of rental payments on digital connectivity.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[34493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 26 May 2021 to Question 5194 on Telecommunications: Infrastructure, what assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed changes to the Electronic Communications Code on average rental income for site owners who lease their land to telecommunications companies for infrastructure; and what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the impact of the changes to rent negotiations on local government finances and the provision of public services.

Matt Warman:

It is not possible to provide estimates of the average rental payments to landowners as these are commercial matters.

The price paid for rights to install digital infrastructure is, in the first instance, a matter for negotiation between operators and site providers. But reforms relating to the legislation underpinning these rights were introduced in 2017. Those changes were intended to strike a balance between ensuring individual landowners do not incur losses and making network deployment and maintenance more cost effective. In our

view, prices being paid for rights to install communications apparatus prior to 2017 were too high and reflected the increase in demand that had taken place for digital services. With digital communications becoming an increasingly critical part of daily life, changes were made to the valuation regime to address this. The pricing regime now in place is more closely aligned to those for utilities like water, electricity and gas. The recent consultation on further changes to the Code made it clear that the government is not revisiting the valuation regime introduced in 2017.

Responses to the recent consultation are currently being considered. We will carefully consider the impact of our proposals on all stakeholders and will carry out a full assessment of the impacts, in line with the usual processes.

Discussions are regularly held between the department and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on a range of issues including telecoms matters. However, I have not had specific conversations regarding the impact of the changes to rental negotiations on local government finances and the provision of public services.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[35524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to increase the effectiveness of the apprenticeship levy.

Gillian Keegan:

The department is responsible for apprenticeships policy in England only.

The apprenticeship levy is collected by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs from all UK employers with a pay bill above £3 million. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland receive a share of levy funding and it is the responsibility of the devolved administrations to determine how they spend this share to fund and operate their apprenticeship programmes.

Apprenticeships are vital in driving economic recovery, and we continue to improve apprenticeships to make it easier for employers in England to make full use of their levy funds. To help businesses of all sizes in England to offer apprenticeships as new employment opportunities, we have increased our cash incentive payments to £3,000 for every apprentice they hire as a new employee from 1 April until 30 September 2021.

We are improving the apprenticeship levy transfer process so that, from August 2021, employers in England who pay the levy will be able to pledge funds for transfer to other employers, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), supported by a new online service to match levy payers with SMEs.

In addition, since 1 April 2021 all SMEs in England arranging new apprenticeship starts have done so through the apprenticeship service. This gives them more control

over their apprenticeship choices and the ability to reserve funds before choosing the provider that best meets their needs.

We are also making apprenticeships in England more flexible so that they better meet the needs of employers from all sectors. We continue to support employers by encouraging greater use of innovative apprenticeship training models, such as the front-loading of off-the-job training. We are also developing accelerated apprenticeships so that apprentices with substantial prior learning (e.g. T Level graduates) can complete an apprenticeship more quickly.

■ Respite Care: Finance

Alex Cunningham: [\[35629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has in the next Comprehensive Spending Review to deliver ring-fenced funding to tackle the disproportionate social isolation affecting families with disabled children.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[35836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the finding of the Disabled Children's Partnerships Left Behind report that six in 10 parents remain socially isolated, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing funding for ring-fenced additional respite care for families with disabled children.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[35896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Disabled Children's Partnerships report, Left Behind, published on 16 July 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional funding to tackle social isolation in disabled children and young people.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[35897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Disabled Children's Partnership's Left Behind report published on 16 July 2021, what steps his Department will take to help ensure every parent carer can access the respite care they need to look after their child safely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

I refer the hon. Members for the City of Durham, Bath, and Stockton North to the answer I gave on 2 June 2021 to Question [7328](#).

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[35829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) in-school mental health counsellors and (b) mental health workers there were in schools in each year from 2010 to 2021.

Vicky Ford:

Information on the number of in-school mental health counsellors and mental health workers is not collected centrally.

The department collects information on staff working in state funded schools via the annual School Workforce Census but does not directly identify in-school mental health counsellors and mental health workers. The results are published in the 'School Workforce in England' statistical publication: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

Our most recent survey of mental health provision in schools and colleges published in 2017 found that 61% of schools and colleges (56% of primary schools, 84% of secondary schools and 93% of colleges) reported offering access to counselling service for their pupils.

School and college-based counselling is valuable provision which can play a particularly effective role as part of a whole-school or college approach, within which support can come from several sources. In that context, it is important that schools and colleges have the freedom to decide what support to offer to students and staff based on their needs, drawing on an evidence base of effective practice. Our 'Counselling in schools' guidance offers support and advice to schools on setting up and improving counselling services and how they can work together to best support pupils: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counselling-in-schools>.

We are also committed to delivering our joint green paper delivery programme with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, which includes introducing new Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) into schools and colleges. These teams are intended to provide early intervention on mild to moderate issues, as well as helping staff within a school or college setting to provide a 'whole school approach' to mental health and wellbeing.

The £79 million boost to children and young people's mental health support that we announced in March will include accelerating the rollout of MHSTs. There are now over 280 MHSTs set up or in training, and this will grow to around 400 by April 2023, supporting nearly 3 million children across the country. This increase means that millions of children and young people will have access to significantly expanded mental health services. High level MHST breakdowns by year, region and area can be found here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/cyp/trailblazers/mh-support-teams/>.

■ Social Services: Disability**Mary Kelly Foy:****[35898]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the sustainable long-term funding of disabled children's social care ahead of the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn.

Vicky Ford:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and his department, discuss a range of issues, including children's social care funding with HM Treasury, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and other government departments on a regular basis.

Students: Finance**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[35944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many applicants for student finance were rejected by Student Finance England in the last twelve months because they did not meet the three year residency eligibility period.

Michelle Donelan:

It is not possible to answer this question in the time available because the Student Loans Company (SLC) classes applicants who do not meet the residency criteria as ineligible and their application does not proceed any further. This activity is not automatically captured within the SLC systems.

Universities: Coronavirus**Bill Wiggin:**[\[35527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to reduce funding for universities that do not return to face-to-face learning after the relaxation of covid-19 restrictions on 19 July 2021.

Bill Wiggin:[\[35528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which universities are offering a fee reduction to students as a result of not offering a full return to face-to-face learning.

Bill Wiggin:[\[35529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which universities are not planning to return to face-to-face learning in the autumn 2021 term.

Bill Wiggin:[\[35530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of universities that are not planning to return to face-to-face learning from the autumn 2021 term, after the relaxation of covid-19 restrictions.

Bill Wiggin:[\[35531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that universities return to face-to-face learning after the 19 July 2021 relaxation of covid-19 restrictions.

Bill Wiggin:[\[35532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the names of those universities that are not planning to return to face-to-face learning in the autumn 2021 term to allow students to make an informed decision on where they wish to attend.

Bill Wiggin:**[35533]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has had discussions with student loan companies on a reduction in university fees for universities that are not planning to resume face-to-face teaching following the relaxation of covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Michelle Donelan:

From July 19, there are no further restrictions on in-person provision in the autumn term. Higher education (HE) providers can shape their courses without restrictions on face-to-face provision. The position will be kept under review considering the latest scientific evidence and public health advice. The latest advice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

HE providers should therefore not be planning to restrict teaching based on COVID-19 restrictions. However, universities are autonomous institutions, and it is for providers to determine their own provision, taking account of government guidance. We understand that several universities have announced plans on teaching in the next academic year and some will retain an element of blended learning. We know that the COVID-19 outbreak has enabled many providers to identify new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, and students will continue to benefit from these alongside in person provision. The department therefore has no plans to publish the names of, or reduce funding for, individual institutions which are not returning to face-to-face provision in the autumn term.

We expect all universities to act in the interest of students and provide them with a full experience, and in accordance with Office for Students guidance, which can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/guidance-for-providers-about-student-and-consumer-protection-during-the-pandemic/>. HE providers should communicate clearly to their students what they can expect from planned teaching and learning so that they are able to make informed choices.

The Office for Students has also made it clear that all HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards. This means ensuring that courses provide a high-quality academic experience, that students are supported and achieve good outcomes, and that standards are protected, regardless of whether a provider is delivering its courses through in-person teaching, remote online learning or a combination of both.

There are no plans to publish names of institutions which are offering fee reductions to their students, as HE providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own fees within maximum fee limits set by the Regulations, where applicable. The government has already announced that maximum fees in the 2021/22 academic year will remain at £9,250 for a standard full-time course. We also intend to freeze the maximum tuition fee caps for the 2022/23 academic year to deliver better value for students and to keep the cost of HE under control. This will be the fifth year in succession that maximum fees have been frozen.

Whether an individual student is entitled to a refund of their tuition fees depends on the specific contractual arrangements between the provider and student. If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

We routinely meet with the Student Loans Company on a range of matters and will continue to do so as we move forward through the COVID-19 outbreak. However, we have not had discussions with the Student Loans Company on a reduction in university fees for universities that are not planning to resume face-to-face teaching for the autumn term.

■ Universities: Ventilation

Kate Green:

[35628]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2021 to Question 30353 on ventilation in universities, what budget has been made available for enforcement activities in respect of ventilation in universities in each of the last 10 years; what enforcement action has been taken in respect of ventilation in universities in each of the last 10 years; and when he last met vice-chancellors to discuss ventilation.

Michelle Donelan:

As employers, higher education (HE) providers have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of COVID-19. They should complete a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and identify control measures, including ensuring adequate ventilation, to manage that risk, based on relevant government guidance and best practice.

As HE providers are autonomous institutions, they should identify and put in place appropriate plans, in line with government guidance, based on their individual circumstances, and for allocating their budgets based on these plans.

HE providers should identify any poorly ventilated spaces as part of their risk assessment and take steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas, giving consideration when holding events where large numbers of visitors are on site. These can be achieved by a variety of measures as set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-covid-19-operational-guidance>.

As set out in the answer of 14 July 2021 to Question 30353 on ventilation in universities, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have published guidance on ventilation during the COVID-19 outbreak which is relevant for HE providers and the HSE may take action if control of workplace risks is needed. This guidance can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/assessment-of-fresh-air.htm>.

I and my officials regularly engage with the HE sector and the importance of ensuring adequate ventilation has been, and continues to be, discussed.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Agriculture: Labour Market**

Stephen Flynn: [\[903154\]](#)

What recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of supply and demand in the UK agricultural sector labour market.

Victoria Prentis:

We make use of all available information to understand labour demand and supply, considering both permanent and seasonal workforce requirements. This includes engaging closely with farmers, growers, and industry bodies to consider the latest data and business intelligence. Defra is also working across Government to ensure there is a long-term evidence-based strategy for the agricultural workforce beyond 2021.

■ **Animal Welfare: Standards**

John Lamont: [\[903144\]](#)

What steps he is taking to increase animal welfare standards.

Victoria Prentis:

This Government has an ambitious programme of legislative and non-legislative measures that go further than ever to ensure the highest level of animal welfare standards. Our Action Plan for Animal Welfare provides an overview. As part of this, we have introduced the Animal Sentience and Kept Animals Bills and intend to legislate further in an Animals Abroad Bill.

■ **Bycatch Mitigation Initiative**

Olivia Blake: [\[35963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative; and whether that policy will (a) include a timeframe to deliver bycatch reductions and (b) aim to eliminate sensitive species bycatch.

Victoria Prentis:

We are aiming to publish the UK Bycatch Mitigation Initiative later this year. This will describe actions to achieve part of the Fisheries Act's ecosystem objective to minimise and, where possible, eliminate incidental catch of sensitive marine species. The actions will include improving our understanding of where and how much bycatch occurs and implementing effective mitigation measures to reduce bycatch.

This initiative will set out a joint vision for bycatch across the UK. Each administration will be responsible for developing solutions that are tailored to local needs.

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Emma Hardy:

[\[35857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has conducted an economic impact assessment on the anticipated costs of UK REACH to (a) UK industry, (b) consumers' access to goods and (c) levels of employment in (i) the UK and (ii) Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle constituency.

Rebecca Pow:

As a result of the transition to UK REACH, businesses will incur costs as a result of obtaining the data needed to support registrations for GB market, along with maintaining access to the EU market. This data submission provides the assurance that those responsible for placing chemicals on the GB market understand – and continue to assess – risk to public health and the environment. Costs will vary depending on the ease and extent to which the company in question can obtain the data, which is a matter of commercial negotiation between business.

Negotiations between businesses are still progressing, and therefore any assessment of these costs would be limited at this time. We acknowledge that there may be impacts on consumer access to goods, and on employment, but both issues are subject to significant uncertainty.

We recognise the importance of our chemicals industry and we will continue to work at pace with the sector to explore what both government and industry can do to help reduce these transitional costs whilst safeguarding public health and the environment.

Emma Hardy:

[\[35858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what (a) meetings and (b) discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of industry and other stakeholders on the future of UK REACH since 1 January 2021; if he will list those meetings; and what steps his Department plans to take in response to the matters raised in those meetings.

Emma Hardy:

[\[35859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward proposals to amend UK REACH to (a) allow chemical substances already in the EU REACH database to be grandfathered in with minimal data sets, such as Safety Data Sheet information added to the new independent UK REACH database, and (b) require only new substances, or substances specifically identified as of concern to the UK regulator, requiring the provision of full data packages.

Rebecca Pow:

Our fundamental priority is to protect the environment and human health. UK REACH places the responsibility on industry to identify and manage the risks posed by chemicals to the environment and human health, including demonstrating how substances can be used safely and communicating this information down the supply

chain. In February, the Government received a letter from several chemical trade associations which raised concerns over the transitional costs associated with UK REACH, particularly the costs associated with accessing the data to support registrations, and made a proposal for how these could be mitigated. A working group of policy officials and industry representatives met regularly, to consider this and other related proposals.

The Secretary of State met with industry representatives on 21 July 2021 to further discuss its proposals and emphasised the need for robust systems that are in line with the fundamental principles of UK REACH. We will formally respond to the proposals shortly.

■ Fishing Catches

Olivia Blake: [\[35964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has developed a timeline for ensuring that there are no population level impacts as a result of bycatch for (a) fulmar, (b) harbour porpoise, (c) bottlenose dolphins and (d) other sensitive species.

Victoria Prentis:

Within the UK Marine Strategy, there are a wide range of targets, including on cetaceans, seals and seabirds, that contribute to our statutory obligation of achieving Good Environmental Status in our seas. These include targets relating to bycatch mortality, specifically on ensuring that the long-term viability of these populations is not threatened by bycatch. These targets remain valid and we remain committed to achieving them.

The UK Marine Strategy is updated on a 6-yearly cycle including assessing and updating targets, our monitoring programmes and a programme of measures to achieve our targets. We will continue to report on and publish public documents showing our progress.

In addition, part of the Fisheries Act's ecosystem objective is to minimise and, where possible, eliminate incidental catches of sensitive marine species. We will set out policies that will help to achieve this objective in the Joint Fisheries Statement which will be published in November 2022. In support of this, we are also developing a UK Bycatch Mitigation Initiative which we are aiming to publish later this year.

Olivia Blake: [\[35965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will commit to annual reporting of bycatch reduction targets for sensitive species.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Government funds a comprehensive and well-respected bycatch monitoring programme which provides essential observer data on incidents of sensitive species bycatch.

This programme reports annually on estimated rates of sensitive species bycatch in fisheries around the UK. The requirement to report annually will continue and will contribute to our assessment of bycatch reduction across a range of species.

■ Food Supply

Caroline Lucas: [\[33886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the report to Parliament in 2021 on food security required under section 19 of the Agriculture Act 2020 will contain an analysis of statistical data by local authority.

Caroline Lucas: [\[33887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the report to Parliament in 2021 on food security required under Section 19 of the Agriculture Act 2020 will include analysis of statistical data relating to the food security of (a) children, (b) disabled people, (c) people with no recourse to public funds and (d) households below the poverty line of 60 per cent of median UK household income.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Food Security Report 2021 will provide a comprehensive analysis into a range of current issues relevant to food security. The key themes set out in the Agriculture Act include Global Food Availability, Supply Sources for Food, the Resilience of the Supply Chain for Food, Household Expenditure on Food, and Food Safety and Consumer Confidence in Food. The section on Household Expenditure on Food will include an assessment of food poverty in terms of economic and physical access to food, along with the ability to afford nutritious food.

The Government agrees that robust official data is required to understand the full scope of the food security picture and to support future policy making. Therefore, this report will bring together regularly reported and publicly available data on the subject of food security, including for the Household Expenditure on Food theme. All relevant data sources are being considered to reflect the full picture of each theme. Analysis is limited by the granularity of available data, which may not be sufficient to report at Local Authority level. The 2021 report will identify gaps and limitations of our data, which will be re-examined in subsequent reports.

■ Food: Standards

Matt Western: [\[903147\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on maintaining British food standards in the trade deal with Australia.

Paul Blomfield: [\[903148\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Trade on maintaining British food standards in the trade deal with Australia.

Victoria Prentis:

I have had regular discussions with the Secretary of State at the Department for International Trade and, indeed, other Cabinet colleagues on the issue of food standards in the context of our negotiations with Australia.

The UK is rightly proud of our world-leading food, environment and animal welfare standards. We have a number of tools available in FTAs to maintain these standards. All imports of agri-food products will still have to comply with the UK's food safety and biosecurity requirements.

The commitment to non-regression means that neither country can lower their animal welfare standards to undercut the other.

■ Gardens: Waste Disposal**Munira Wilson:****[903161]**

What assessment he has had made of the potential effectiveness of providing free garden waste collections as proposed in the consultation on Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England.

Rebecca Pow:

A free minimum garden waste collection service reduces the amount of garden waste that ends up in landfill, minimising the release of harmful greenhouse gases. We will publish a final impact assessment and Government response with further analysis of this proposal and on alternative measures to increase the recycling of garden waste from households.

■ Horses: Slaughterhouses**Rachael Maskell:****[35752]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps owners are required to take to rehome horses before sending them to an abattoir.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 places a legal duty of care on owners and keepers for the animals for which they are responsible on a permanent or temporary basis. It is an offence to cause any animal unnecessary suffering or to fail to provide for its welfare. The 2006 Act is backed up by the statutory Code of Practice (CoP) for the Welfare of Horses, Ponies, Donkeys and Their Hybrids which provides owners with information on how to meet the welfare needs of their animals as required by the 2006 Act: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-horses-ponies-donkeys-and-their-hybrids>

As set out in the CoP, horse owners should proactively develop a plan for a horse's end of life in order to prevent unnecessary pain and distress. Owners are responsible for making any decisions to euthanise a horse or to explore alternative arrangements such as rehoming the animal where it may be appropriate and in the best interests of the horse's welfare to do so. The Blue Cross provides advice on responsible rehoming of a horse: <https://www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-advice/responsible-equine->

[rehoming](#). World Horse Welfare provides advice on end of life decision making: <https://www.worldhorsewelfare.org/advice/management/end-of-life>. The British Horseracing Authority also provides advice on life after racing for racehorses: <https://www.britishhorseracing.com/regulation/life-after-racing/>

Considerations for euthanasia may include when a horse's quality of life has deteriorated significantly, for example due to chronic or age-related conditions. We encourage owners to seek veterinary opinion in such circumstances. If a decision is taken to end a horse's life, it must be humanely destroyed by a vet or a suitably qualified, experienced and equipped person, such as a licensed slaughterman.

■ Land Use

Kirsty Blackman:

[35683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the environmental impact of land use practice in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recognises that the way land is used and managed has a range of environmental impacts, both positive and negative. We regularly review and assess these impacts, working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Increasing the public and private benefits of land-use, and of land management, will be critical to achieving our environmental goals – particularly on climate change and nature recovery.

It is critical that the right environmental actions are delivered in the right places, while maintaining food security and sustainable development. In recognition of this, we have recently published our trees and peat actions plans. In addition we are:

- o developing new schemes that will reward environmental land management;
- o introducing a mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain via the Environment Bill; and
- o introducing Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England that will propose priority locations for nature recovery and the delivery of nature-based solutions.

■ Rivers and Seas and Oceans: Sewage

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[903146]

What steps he is taking to help ensure untreated sewage is not discharged into rivers, inland waterways and the sea.

Rebecca Pow:

We have set up the Storm Overflows Taskforce which has already resulted in increased investment of £144 million and this Government has amended the Environment Bill to introduce measures on storm overflows. Water companies are currently investing £3.1 billion in storm overflow improvements between 2020 and

2025. On 9 July, Southern Water was fined £90 million for pumping raw sewage into protected waters, the largest ever fine imposed on a water company.

■ Rivers: Pollution

Caroline Nokes: [\[903143\]](#)

What steps he is taking to improve cooperation between government agencies tackling pollution of rivers and streams.

Rebecca Pow:

I recently met local hon. Members, Southern Water and the local agencies cooperating on pollution issues in West Sussex and the Solent.

River Basin Management Plans ensure the coordination of action on pollution and the wider management of the water environment, and all relevant Government agencies provide input to their development.

We supplement these with the Catchment Based Approach which brings together, locally, public bodies, business and third sector organisations. We also support initiatives to deliver a coordinated approach to specific issues such as the Storm Overflows Taskforce and the Chalk Rivers Action Group.

■ Seals: Conservation

Dawn Butler: [\[35554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the safety and protection of seal populations along British coastlines.

Rebecca Pow:

Both native grey seal and harbour seal species are protected in the UK under relevant wildlife legislation. Please refer to the following link for details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-marine-species/seals>

In addition, recent Government amendments to the Fisheries Act 2020 offer stronger protection for seals. The amendments prevent the intentional or reckless killing of seals in English, Welsh and Northern Irish waters as a result of commercial fishing.

Together with the Seal Alliance, we launched a new Government-backed campaign ‘[Give Seals Space](#)’ earlier this year to reduce the impact that human disturbance can have on these vulnerable marine mammals.

Defra is also providing funding to understand better the specific threats that seals are facing along the UK coast. This includes additional surveys to strengthen our understanding of fluctuations in harbour seal populations and trialling non-lethal deterrents to reduce interactions between seals and fishing vessels.

■ Waste Disposal: Coronavirus

Steve Reed:

[\[35669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact that increasing levels of isolations as a result of close contact with people testing positive for Covid-19 will have on the ability of local authorities to maintain refuse collections.

Rebecca Pow:

We are actively engaging with companies in the waste sector and local authorities to understand the current level of absences amongst their staff and the potential for this to impact their services.

We circulated a short survey to waste companies and local authorities on 21 July 2021 to gather data on staff absences and heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driver vacancies. We intend to continue gathering this data over the summer to continue our assessment of pressures on waste and recycling services.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Africa: Religious Freedom

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[35689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's factsheet entitled Nonbelievers in Africa published on 11 June 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the scale of challenges faced by non-religious people in Africa.

Nigel Adams:

We have taken note of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's factsheet entitled Nonbelievers in Africa. Protecting freedom of religion or belief for all faiths, and none, remains a priority for the UK Government. Members of non-religious communities continue to be victims of harassment and persecution, despite progress over recent years with the promotion of freedom of religion or belief for all. The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the severity and scale of violations and abuses of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all in many parts of the world, including in Africa. As the Minister of State responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon underlined these points at the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group Annual General Meeting on 24 May.

Lord Ahmad works closely with the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for FoRB, Fiona Bruce MP. In addition to championing FoRB, Mrs Bruce represents the UK at meetings of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance to advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted on the basis of their faith or belief, including members of non-religious communities.

■ Belarus: Government Securities**Catherine West:**[\[35820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 32567 on Belarus: Financial Services, whether further specific plans will relate to the sale of Belarusian state bonds on the London Stock Exchange.

Wendy Morton:

The Government has already made more than 100 designations in response to the fraudulent elections and subsequent human rights violations in Belarus and remains committed to taking action against those responsible for the continued suppression of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Government is considering further measures targeting specific sectors of the Belarusian economy and to prevent Lukashenko's regime from making money in the UK. We keep all evidence and potential designations under close review. We will consider targets, guided by the objectives of the Belarus sanctions regime and the evidence. It would not be appropriate to speculate about future sanctions targets as to do so could reduce their impact.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Torture**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[35808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 32460 on Prisoners: Torture, how many and what proportion of torture cases of UK citizens in overseas detention reported to his Department (a) are closed without ever requesting an investigation from the relevant foreign government on average each year and (b) were closed by his Department without requesting an investigation by the relevant foreign government for alleged torture cases of UK citizens reported in (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO records all information about allegations of torture and mistreatment reported to us by British nationals, and the action taken in response to those allegations, within individual case files. The FCDO collates statistics on the number of cases, but these statistics do not include the proportion of allegations raised with the local authorities, nor whether allegations that were raised by the FCDO resulted in overseas prosecutions of overseas officials. Our statistics do not differentiate whether allegations would constitute torture, or whether they would constitute other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (mistreatment).

■ China: Detainees**Brendan O'Hara:**[\[35688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of claims by UN experts on 14 June 2021 that they had obtained credible information that (a) detainees from minority communities in

China may be being subjected to forced organ harvesting and (b) that specific ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities in detention appear to be targeted.

Nigel Adams:

We have taken note of the statement published by UN experts on 14 June expressing concern about alleged organ harvesting targeting minorities, including Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Muslims and Christians, in detention in China. We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practice, change or share one's faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. We continue to monitor the issue of alleged organ harvesting closely and consider carefully all evidence presented to us. We regularly raise our concerns about human rights with the Chinese authorities, and will continue to do so.

■ **Conflict Resolution: Females**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[35806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of his Department not having a specific budget for the UK Government's support of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda on his Department's ability to (a) track and (b) respond to specific WPS projects to assess whether those projects are advancing the UK Government's commitments and objectives under its National Action Plan on that WPS agenda.

James Cleverly:

Spending on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is mainstreamed across wider government activity rather than funded through one budget, to ensure a broad range of activity and support for the agenda. Progress in meeting commitments and objectives under the 2018-2022 WPS National Action Plan is assessed each year as part of the Annual Report to Parliament. The Government publishes the Annual Report and also presents it to the All Party Parliamentary Group on WPS for scrutiny.

■ **Dalal Mughrabi**

Steve McCabe:

[\[33844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between his Department and the Palestinian Authority, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of the Palestinian Authority on recent reports of official glorification of Dalal Mughrabi, including the naming of a public square in Jenin after her.

Steve McCabe:

[\[33845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between his Department and the Palestinian Authority, what discussions officials in his Department have had with

representatives of the Palestinian Authority on reports of the glorification of Karim and Maher Younes at schools in the Palestinian Authority.

James Cleverly:

Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle any language and actions that could incite violence or hatred. We have a regular dialogue with the Palestinian Authority in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence, including by promoting a more positive portrayal of each other. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to avoid engaging in, or encouraging, any type of action and language that makes it more difficult to achieve a culture of peaceful coexistence and a negotiated solution to the conflict.

■ **Deep Sea Mining**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[35558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the notification of the two year trigger on deep sea mining at the International Seabed Authority.

James Duddridge:

The UK recognises the growing pressure to extract deep sea resources, and is deeply concerned about the potential impacts of mining activities on the fragile marine environment. We therefore continue to press for the very highest environmental standards to be agreed and activated by the International Seabed Authority. Until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impacts on deep sea ecosystems and strong and enforceable environmental regulations in place, the UK has committed not to sponsor or support the issuing of any exploitation licences for deep sea mining projects.

■ **Developing Countries: Food Supply**

Dan Carden:

[\[35861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report published by Oxfam entitled The Hunger Virus Multiplies, published on 9 July 2021, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding in that report that 20 million more people have been pushed to extreme levels of food insecurity in 2021.

Dan Carden:

[\[35863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle (a) conflict, (b) the covid-19 pandemic and (c) the climate crisis as causes of global hunger.

James Duddridge:

COVID-19 is making an already bad food security situation worse and dozens of countries are in or at risk of a generalised food security crisis. As Oxfam's report

states, 2020 saw a sharp increase in severe hunger in countries affected by conflict, and according to latest estimates, the number of people at emergency levels of food insecurity in 2021 has risen further to 41 million.

Humanitarian preparedness and response is one of the seven priority areas for the UK's aid budget this year. FCDO will spend £906 million to maintain the UK's role as a force for good at times of crisis, focusing on those countries most affected by risk of famine. We are combining this funding with our diplomatic and aid expertise: following our 2020 Call to Action to Prevent Famine, our Presidency this year secured the G7's first ever Compact to tackle the drivers of famine. In addition, we have adapted many of our programmes to address impacts of COVID-19 and the longer-term climate crisis. For example, the UK co-chaired multilateral Global Agriculture and Food Security Program has adapted its portfolio to mitigating COVID-19 impacts and to deliver a greener recovery in the poorest countries most affected by the triple threat.

■ **Developing Countries: Sustainable Development**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[35843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Sustainable Development Goals will form a central part of his new International Development Strategy.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary is leading work on the new International Development Strategy, which will ensure close alignment of UK development activity with the objectives of the Integrated Review. The strategy will refer to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

■ **Eritrea: Detainees**

Neil Coyle:

[\[33948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) journalists, (b) political figures, (c) students and (d) other human rights defenders in Eritrea who have been detained since the September 2001 Government crackdown.

James Duddridge:

We remain concerned about the human rights situation in Eritrea. The UK Government takes every opportunity to voice our concern about arbitrary arrests and detentions in Eritrea and has called for the release of those arrested and detained in this way. We have done so directly with the Government of Eritrea and publicly through our annual reporting on human rights and at the UN Human Rights Council, most recently in a statement by the UK's Ambassador for Human Rights on 21 June during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur at the 47th session. Eritrea remains a priority country under our annual human rights reporting, and we will continue to monitor the situation there.

■ Israel: Foreign Relations**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[35584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to the UK of strengthening relations with Israel over the next five years.

James Cleverly:

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

■ Israel: Palestinians**Stephen Timms:** [\[33374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report of the UN Human Rights Office on business activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories published on 28 February 2020, what steps his Department plans to take in response to the identification of three UK firms involved in the demolition of Palestinian structures in breach of international law.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government neither encourages nor offers support to individuals or companies who operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Ultimately, it will be the decision of an individual or a company whether to operate in occupied territories.

Mr David Jones: [\[35562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the displacement of Palestinian families from the community of Ras al Tin by Israeli forces on 14 July 2021.

James Cleverly:

We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation. The UK regularly raises the issue of forced evictions from their homes with the Government of Israel. The Foreign Secretary raised ongoing evictions, demolitions and settlement activity with the Israeli Authorities during his visit to the region on 26 May. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

■ Lebanon: Humanitarian Aid**Wayne David:** [\[35520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the supply of (a) food, (b) fuel and (c) medicine into Lebanon.

James Cleverly:

Since 2011, the UK has allocated over £780 million in humanitarian and development funding to Lebanon. We have provided 1.1 million people with sustainable access to clean water and sanitation, and improved infrastructure and services in over 220 municipalities. In the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion in August 2020, the UK was one of the biggest donors to the response, providing over £27 million of assistance to support the most vulnerable. The UK is at forefront of support to Lebanon's response to coronavirus and has contributed nearly £4.5 million for medical supplies via the World Health Organisation and support through the British Red Cross as well as funding 10 isolation centres.

■ Lebanon: Humanitarian Situation and Politics and Government**Wayne David:**[\[35519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the current (a) political and (b) humanitarian situation in Lebanon.

James Cleverly:

Lebanon is facing a severe economic and political crisis, which the World Bank has warned could rank in the top ten, possibly top three, most severe crises globally since the mid-nineteenth century. Its people are suffering from the failure of Lebanon's political elites to form a government and deliver much-needed and long-promised reforms, exacerbated by the public health crisis caused by COVID-19 and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion in August 2020.

The UK is a long-standing friend of Lebanon. Since 2011, the UK has allocated over £780 million in humanitarian and development funding to Lebanon. The UK and members of the International Support Group for Lebanon stand with the people of Lebanon in their time of need, but we are clear that Lebanon's leaders need to form a capable government and implement a credible reform process as the only sustainable way to address the crisis. I made this clear in my public message following Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Hariri's resignation on 15 July.

■ Lebanon: International Assistance**Wayne David:**[\[35521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether a Minister from his Department plans to attend the aid conference for Lebanon on 4 August 2021.

James Cleverly:

Attendance at the conference will be confirmed shortly.

■ Lebanon: Overseas Aid**Wayne David:** [\[35518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance he has allocated to Lebanon in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

James Cleverly:

FCDO's 21/22 planned country allocations (budgets) will be published in our Annual Report later this year alongside our audited 20/21 accounts. HMG's final 2021 ODA spend, including country data will be published in the 'Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend' in autumn 2022. We will continue to publish our spend information by project on DevTracker.

■ Middle East: Peace Negotiations**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[35582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take to build on the momentum of the Abraham Accords and help further peace in the Middle East.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[35583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the opportunities for the UK through helping to facilitate regional cooperation in the Middle East.

James Cleverly:

The UK warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Sudan. These are historic steps which see the normalisation of relations between friends of the UK. We also welcome the suspension of plans for Israeli annexation of the West Bank - a move the UK has opposed - as it would have been counterproductive to securing peace in the region.

Restoring cooperation is an important and constructive step towards peace, and shows both sides are willing to put the needs and security of both Israelis and Palestinians first. We need to build on this momentum through further dialogue and compromise to move towards a two state solution and a lasting solution to the conflict. The United Kingdom will continue to work towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

■ Nnamdi Kanu**Abena Opong-Asare:** [\[35943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu by the Nigerian authorities.

James Duddridge:

We are seeking clarification from the Nigerian Government about the circumstances of the arrest and detention of Nnamdi Kanu. The UK has requested consular access to Mr Kanu from the Nigerian Government, and we stand ready to provide consular assistance.

Overseas Aid**Sarah Champion:**[\[34503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to a smaller budget for Official Development Assistance, what steps he is taking to promote a locally-led approach to programming in UK aid spending.

Wendy Morton:

The FCDO is already committed to championing locally led development and the upcoming International Development Strategy will be an opportunity to refresh our approach across Government.

Demands to recognise, respect and strengthen, the role of local people and organisations represent a challenge for the whole aid sector that we must face together. Part of our approach is ensuring that we understand when and how our funding reaches local and national actors and promote good practice. For example, our new guidelines for our Rapid Response Facility, improve the tracking of FCDO funds going to local organisations, and ensure that their indirect costs are covered by our funding. In addition, our tender evaluation criteria require lead bidders to demonstrate use of local expertise and to consider the additional Social Value that their teams will deliver, with bids scored accordingly. We are also exploring other models for empowering local people to meet their own priorities. For example, our new 10-year, £60 million co-funded partnership with Comic Relief, will feature local grant making panels and test new ways of building the capacity and sustainability of locally led civil society organisations in Ghana, Zambia and Malawi to help them pursue their own strategic objectives. Another programme is supporting Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in the developing countries to ensure that the priorities of people with disabilities are being addressed.

Palestinians: Foreign Relations**Steve McCabe:**[\[33846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the Palestinian Authority's compliance with the most recent UK-PA Memorandum of Understanding's Partnership Principles; and if he will publish that assessment.

James Cleverly:

We do not publish Partnership Principles Assessments. We have an active dialogue with the PA on the issues identified through these channels and we assess that the

PA continues to demonstrate a credible commitment to our agreements and the 'partnership principles'.

■ **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

Steve McCabe: [\[33847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason his Department has not published any Memorandums of Understanding related to the Service, Stability and Reform Programme in the Palestinian Territories since October 2019.

Steve McCabe: [\[33848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has signed any memoranda of understanding related to the Service, Stability and Reform Programme in the Palestinian Territories since those signed in October 2019.

James Cleverly:

All programming and funding decisions for Financial Year 21/22 are being considered in the context of a temporary overall reduction in Overseas Development Assistance. Allocation decisions have been taken by Ministers in line with the objectives set out in the Integrated Review. We are working with suppliers and partners on what this means for individual programmes. Full budgets and programmes per country will be published in due course, including in our regular Statistics on International Development website and in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Intelligence Services**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[35900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of Saudi Arabian intelligence officers on the UK sanctions list who have received security training from the UK armed forces or police or intelligence services between 2013 and 2017.

James Cleverly:

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

■ **Sierra Leone: Politics and Government**

Neil Coyle: [\[35685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to (a) monitor political unrest and (b) help ensure democracy is upheld in Sierra Leone.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government believes that democracy, human rights and the rule of law contribute to long term security and prosperity, including in Sierra Leone. The UK and

Sierra Leone enjoy an historic partnership, and the UK Government, alongside the international community, is a strong supporter of Sierra Leone's democracy and development.

We enjoy close and enduring relationships with the government, institutions such as parliament and the judiciary, and civil society organisations in Sierra Leone. Through these relationships, the British High Commission in Freetown regularly engages on issues to help promote political stability, and progress democracy and peace for all Sierra Leoneans. For example, the UK urged political leaders in April that parliamentary debates should not result in violence. We will continue to work with international partners to encourage the use of dialogue to resolve tensions.

■ South Africa: Civil Disorder

Sir Robert Neill: [\[35590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment the Government has made of the level of unrest in (a) KwaZulu-Natal and (b) other provinces in South Africa.

Sir Robert Neill: [\[35591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has made any offers of assistance to the South African Government in response to violence and unrest in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK was concerned by the recent outbreak of violence and looting in the South African provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, which sadly resulted in loss of life, injuries, and substantial damage to buildings and businesses. We welcome the South African Government's determination to restore calm and strongly support President Ramaphosa's emphasis on the importance of the rule of law. Our High Commission remains in regular contact with the South African authorities. As a long-standing friend of South Africa, the UK will continue to partner closely with the South African Government, business and civil society on a shared agenda of security, health, economic and social issues.

■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[35842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many and what proportion of the 5 million covid-19 vaccines donated by the UK to other countries by September 2021 will be sent to countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Wendy Morton:

The UK's G7 Presidency has championed equitable access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics. At the G7 Leaders' Summit in June, the Prime Minister confirmed that the UK will share 100 million doses within the next year, of which 30 million will be donated by the end of 2021. 80% of these will go to COVAX. We are on track to

ensure that the first 5 million doses are shared by the end of September. and we will make an announcement shortly with details on which countries will receive them.

■ **Tigray: Food Aid**

Dan Carden: [\[35862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that humanitarian support reaches the 350,000 people experiencing famine-like conditions in Tigray, 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. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report in June reported high levels of food insecurity in Tigray with 353,000 in 'catastrophe' as per the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) levels. 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.

On 14 June I 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, allow unfettered humanitarian access and respect international humanitarian law.

■ **Torture**

Tulip Siddiq: [\[35807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Department's Human Rights and Democracy report published on 8 July 2021, whether his Department conducted a review of 124 open torture cases in December 2020.

Nigel Adams:

I can confirm that, as reported in our Human Rights and Democracy report for 2020, we reviewed a total of 124 open cases of torture and mistreatment in December 2020. This report is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-rights-and-democracy-report-2020>(opens in a new tab).

■ Tunisia: Coronavirus

Wayne David:

[\[35522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the UK's support to Tunisia's covid-19 vaccination programme; and what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the provision of further support from the international community to that programme.

James Cleverly:

I discussed the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic with the Tunisian Foreign Minister, Othman Jerandi, in the margins of the G20 in Italy on 29 June. The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are among the largest donors to the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Advance Market Commitment, committing £548 million. The UK is also donating 80% of its surplus vaccines to COVAX. This support to COVAX has been critical to it supplying COVID-19 vaccines to over 120 countries and economies, including Tunisia. By the end of June, Tunisia received over 760,000 doses from COVAX and will eventually receive 20% of their entire national requirement from COVAX absolutely free.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Accident and Emergency Departments

Rachael Maskell:

[\[33974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number people who have attended an accident and emergency department but who could have been seen by a primary care practitioner in each of the last 18 months.

Edward Argar:

No such estimate has been made as this information is not collected centrally.

■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Misuse

Daisy Cooper:

[\[34596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for drug and alcohol misuse services.

Jo Churchill:

In 2020, Dame Carol Black was commissioned to lead an independent review of drugs, focussing on treatment, recovery and prevention, including an assessment of the adequacy of drug and alcohol misuse service funding. The review was published on 8 July and makes 32 recommendations to Government, including increasing levels of funding to drug and alcohol misuse services. The review is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-two-report>

A Government response to the review will be published shortly.

Daisy Cooper: [\[34598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming the Mental Health Act to include mandatory care for people suffering from addiction.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have not made a formal assessment. For the purposes of the Mental Health Act 1983, drug or alcohol addiction are not considered to be mental disorders. This is stated in section 1(3) of the Act. The reforms to the Act proposed in the Government's White Paper, published in January, respond directly to the recommendations made by Sir Simon Wessely's independent review of the Mental Health Act. The review's terms of reference, as set by the Government, did not extend to a consideration of including addiction within the provisions of the Act.

■ **Cancer: Aspirin**

Jim Shannon: [\[33918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to a review undertaken by academics at Cardiff University, what assessment has he made of the implications for his policies of findings that cancer patients who take aspirin as part of their treatment could reduce their risk of death by 20 per cent.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made.

■ **Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS Trusts: Debts**

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[31406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) clinical commissioning groups and (b) NHS trusts in England are in deficit as at 12 July 2021; and what the figures are for each of those deficits.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 July 2021]: Final data for clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and National Health Service trusts' deficits for the financial year 2020-21 is not yet available but will be published in due course in their local accounts.

However, NHS England and NHS Improvement reported that they expect both CCGs and NHS providers to end 2020-21 with an aggregate surplus position across both sectors.

■ **Coronavirus**

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[33125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who have contracted covid-19 but not been vaccinated will be afforded the same status as those who have been fully vaccinated when restrictions are lifted.

Nadhim Zahawi:

From 19 July, the Government have made the NHS COVID Pass available so that individuals can prove their vaccination status. The NHS COVID Pass is available through the NHS App, NHS.UK, and in letter format. Certification for accessing settings through the NHS COVID Pass can be acquired by completion of a full vaccine course, a recent negative test, or proof of natural immunity. Natural immunity is proof of a positive polymerase chain reaction test, lasting for 180 days from the date of the positive test and following completion of the self-isolation period.

■ Coronavirus: Community Care

Rachael Maskell: [\[33981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people with covid-19 are requiring clinical management in the community as of 15 July 2021.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not held centrally.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Rachael Maskell: [\[34537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of a rise in cases of covid-19 on the ability of ambulance services in (i) North Yorkshire and (ii) England to meet demand.

Edward Argar:

No such assessment has been made. All National Health Service ambulance trusts continue to closely monitor and respond to changes in demand, including the impact of rising cases of COVID-19. Trusts are supported by the National Ambulance Coordination Centre which monitors demand and pressures across the service and oversees pandemic planning and operations.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Chris Green: [\[34511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish (a) a report or (b) the research data that was used to impose the mandatory requirement for people to wear face coverings in June 2020 during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

On 21 April 2020, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) advised that there was enough evidence to recommend that the public wear cloth face masks when in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not possible. In making its recommendations to the Government, SAGE considered the evidence from a number of different studies and their conclusions are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sage-minutes-coronavirus-covid-19-response-21-april-2020>

In June 2020, Public Health England (PHE) used an established methodology to complete a rapid review of the evidence related to face coverings in the community and COVID-19 and concluded that “the beneficial effects of wearing masks may be increased when combined with other non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as hand washing and social distancing.” A second review, published in January 2021, found evidence consistent with the findings of the first review, that the use of face coverings in the community helped reduce the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, PHE continue to advocate the same measures of wearing face coverings in specified community settings, alongside social distancing and good hand hygiene.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Martyn Day: [\[33284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 21 to Question 24270 on Coronavirus: Screening, what percentage of tests in the 2020 Innova lateral flow test evaluation showed accuracy in picking up viral antigens in (a) symptomatic and (b) asymptomatic individuals.

Jo Churchill:

Findings from the evaluation in 2020 showed similar proportions of viral antigen detected by the Innova lateral flow device of 76.7% in asymptomatic and 78.7% in symptomatic individuals.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Caroline Lucas: [\[28141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) monitor covid-19 vaccination rates and (b) increase vaccine uptake among people who are homeless; if he will publish data to support vaccine uptake among homeless people; and if he will make a statement.

Cat Smith: [\[28237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that covid-19 vaccination uptake among people who are homeless is in line with uptake among the general population.

Nadhim Zahawi:

People who are experiencing homelessness were prioritised for vaccination in phase one of the programme alongside those with underlying health conditions, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). To ensure access, we have followed the JCVI recommendation that this group should be offered the vaccine without the need for a National Health Service number or general practitioner registration.

Vaccination rates amongst the homeless population is monitored at a regional level within England and is used to inform deployment decisions so that uptake is maximised where possible. Data on vaccination uptake is not currently available as it has not been centrally validated. This is because data provides a snapshot of

homelessness rates and as such, any vaccine uptake data relating to homeless people and COVID-19 vaccination uptake is also an estimate that cannot currently be validated. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support outreach services and further work is being done to explore the availability of effective on-street models. Local vaccination services also play a vital role in reaching vulnerable groups, including people experiencing homelessness.

Rachael Maskell:

[33270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what expert analysis he has received on the effect of a high viral load of covid-19 circulation on covid-19 transmission among people who have (a) received a covid-19 vaccine and (b) people who have not received a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

There is evidence from a range of studies that COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing infection with the COVID-19 virus. Public Health England (PHE) participated in two studies, which looked at vaccine effectiveness against COVID-19 infection in different populations, including the impact of vaccination on infection, viral load and transmission.

The studies have been published in The Lancet at the following link:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(21\)00354-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(21)00354-6/fulltext)

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)00790-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)00790-X/fulltext)

PHE also studied the effect of vaccination on household transmission of COVID-19 in England. The findings showed that individuals who become infected despite vaccination have lower viral load and are less likely to transmit. This study is available at the following link:

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2107717>

Sir Alan Campbell:

[33852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ask the Chief Medical Officer to update his open letter of 11 June 2021 to all covid-19 vaccine trial participants to clarify the validity of their covid-19 vaccination status.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Deputy's Chief Medical Officer's letter reiterated the importance of the clinical trials and that participants should not be disadvantaged. We are currently working with the National Immunisation Management Service to allow participants to access their NHS COVID Pass for both domestic and international travel purposes. In the interim, participating clinical trial sites have provided a letter to participants which certifies that they are in a clinical trial and should be recognised as vaccinated.

Paul Maynard:

[34479]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people who took part in covid-19 vaccine trials for products not yet approved

are able to (a) certify their vaccine status and (b) access alternative vaccines through the NHS.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is working with clinical research sites to add participant information of COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials into the National Immunisation Management Service, in order to allow participants to access their NHS COVID Pass for both domestic and international travel purposes.

When a former COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial participant becomes eligible for a vaccine currently in deployment, they may ask for the trial to be unblinded. If they have received two placebo doses, they may freely take up the vaccine doses offered to them. If they have received only one dose and a placebo, or are yet to receive a second dose, they may receive an additional dose of the trialled vaccine if agreed by and available from the clinical trial sponsor or receive a single dose of a vaccine approved and currently in deployment, with the acknowledgement that safety data on the combination of the different vaccine is not yet available. If they have received two doses of the vaccine, they will not need additional doses under current guidance.

Dan Jarvis:

[35650]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to support immunocompromised or immunosuppressed people who are not protected by covid-19 vaccines and are clinically extremely vulnerable to protect themselves after 19 July 2021 and until they are able to receive a booster immunisation.

Jo Churchill:

Guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable individuals was published on 12 July and outlines support for all clinically extremely vulnerable people, including those who are immunocompromised or immunosuppressed, and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Those with any concerns should contact their general practitioner practice or specialist who can provide personalised support and advice on any additional precautions. Immunosuppressed individuals are a priority cohort for research into therapeutic and prophylaxis treatments such as monoclonal antibody therapies, novel antivirals and repurposed compounds.

Sarah Olney:

[35835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's guidance is on the number of weeks that should elapse between receipt of the first and second dose of the covid-19 vaccine for pregnant women; and what the evidence is behind that guidance.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends an interval of eight weeks between doses of all the available COVID-19 vaccines, including for pregnant women. On 14 May 2021, in response to the increasing rates

of infection of the Delta variant, the Government amended the interval of second doses for the most vulnerable cohorts who were offered a vaccine in phase one of the programme, from 12 weeks to eight weeks. The eight-week dose interval was applied to all eligible cohorts from 6 July.

The current evidence shows that a longer dose interval produces a better immune response. As such, the JCVI has advised against reducing the dose interval further in order to maximise the effectiveness of the vaccination programme. The JCVI regularly reviews its advice, taking into account new data and evidence on the effectiveness of the programme and epidemiological situation.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[35878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many pregnant women have received (a) one dose (b) two doses of a covid-19 vaccine in the London Borough of Wandsworth as of 19 July 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This information is not held centrally.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Contracts

Fleur Anderson: [\[31557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has created a (a) centralised contract register for the Department and (b) log of declarations of interest in relation to contracts; and how many of his Department's staff have completed data protection training for owners of declaration logs.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 July 2021]: The Department has a central contracts register database. All Senior Civil Servants within the Department log declarations of interests, including those involved in the procurement of contracts and have a contractual delegation authorising them to sign and execute contracts on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whilst abiding by the Department's financial controls framework and procurement policy. All staff within the Department are required to complete a training module on data protection.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Email

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[24198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his departmental IT systems routinely allow officials, advisers and Ministers to access private email accounts from their office desktop computers, department-issue laptop computers and mobile phone devices.

Edward Argar:

Devices issued by the Department, including laptops, mobile phones and tablets, allow users to access online services including web mail, subject to Departmental and cross-Government policies relating to the acceptable use of IT.

Angela Rayner: [\[25832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the statements of 27 June 2021, if he will publish the evidential basis for his Department's assessment that Ministers in his Department only conduct government business through their departmental email addresses.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 6 July 2021]: All Ministers are aware of the guidance around personal email usage and Government business is conducted in line with that guidance. The use of private emails is being investigated by the Information Commissioner's Office and we await the outcome.

Angela Rayner: [\[25836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on how many occasions ministers in his Department referred offers to provide (a) personal protective equipment and (b) test and trace services via private email accounts during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 6 July 2021]: This information is not available. All Ministers are aware of the guidance around personal email usage and Government business is conducted in line with that guidance.

■ **Doctors' List of Patients: Mental Health**

Rachael Maskell: [\[33265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients who have presented to a GP in each of the last 12 months declared mental health as the primary reason for their visit.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: This information is not held centrally.

■ **Eating Disorders: Health Services**

Colleen Fletcher: [\[31427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of children who needed urgent help with an eating disorder were able to access care within one week in each of the last five years in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on access to services for people with an eating disorder in those areas.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 July 2021]: The information for Coventry North East constituency, Coventry and West Midlands is not collected in the format requested. Data for the number of urgent cases of children and young people who started treatment for eating disorders and were treated within one week in England is shown in the following table.

YEAR ¹	URGENT CASES ² SEEN WITHIN ONE WEEK	TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES TREATED	% WITHIN ONE WEEK
2016/17	660	1,016	65.0%
2017/18	855	1,140	75.0%
2018/19	973	1,226	79.4%
2019/20	1,052	1,373	76.6%
2020/21	1,837	2,372	77.4%

Source: Children and young people with an eating disorder waiting times, NHS England and NHS Improvement

Notes:

¹ total of the published quarterly figures for each year.

² number of urgent cases rather than number of people.

NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to support local health systems to develop whole pathways of care which will provide intensive local support, care and treatment closer to home, reduce the reliance on inpatient beds and provide services in line with best practice and the available evidence base. We have announced an additional £79 million to significantly expand children's mental health services in 2021/22, allowing 2,000 more children and young people to access eating disorder services. A further £58 million will also be allocated to accelerate adult community support and bring forward the expansion of integrated primary and secondary care for adults with severe mental illness, including eating disorders.

■ Health Services

Sarah Owen:

[35903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what planning his Department has undertaken to ensure the healthcare system is adequately prepared for covid-19 and influenza in winter 2021.

Edward Argar:

We have provided an extra £6.6 billion to manage COVID-19 pressures in the first half of 2021/22. Efforts are underway to boost the performance of the emergency care system including an extra £55 million investment in ambulance trusts and ongoing work on major emergency department upgrade schemes. Emergency department capacity will be increased through expanding waiting areas and increasing the number of treatment cubicles which will reduce overcrowding and improve infection control measures.

In addition, providers will offer the flu vaccine to over 35 million people this winter season. This includes a continued offer of vaccination for 50 to 64 year olds and the

expansion of the children's programme to secondary school year 11 to protect children and prevent onward transmission to vulnerable members of the community.

■ Health Services: Contracts

Sarah Atherton: [\[35958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to publish details on the awarding of health contracts during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Department publishes information on all the contracts it awards, including those relating to goods and service procured in response to COVID- 19, through Contract Award Notices in the Official Journal of the European Union, Find a Tender awarded opportunity notices for each contract are also published on Contracts Finder.

■ Health Services: Females

Sarah Champion: [\[33935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has in place to improve cross-Government co-operation on matters relating to the commissioning of menstrual health and reproductive health services in the Women's Health Strategy; and what steps he is taking to improve the cohesiveness of decision-making by commissioners.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 20 July 2021]: Issues related to reproductive health will be addressed in the new Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy, which is due to be published later this year. We will be considering ways to improve the cohesiveness of existing commissioning arrangements as part of the Strategy's development process.

Improving menstrual health will be considered as part of the Women's Health Strategy. The 14-week call for evidence included questions on menstrual health and reproductive health. The responses to the call for evidence will inform the priorities in the strategy. We will respond to the call for evidence after summer and aim to publish the Women's Health Strategy by the end of the year. We will work to ensure cohesion between the two strategies.

Sarah Champion: [\[33936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the planned timetable is for publication of the Government's women's health strategy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 20 July 2021]: The 14-week call for evidence closed on the 13 June. We will publish a response to the call for evidence in the autumn and aim to publish the full Women's Health Strategy by the end of the year.

Sarah Champion: [\[35665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Sexual and Reproductive Strategy will help ensure that girls are supported with their menstrual wellbeing from a young age.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Whilst menstrual wellbeing will not be covered in the Sexual and Reproductive Health strategy, it is being considered as part of ongoing work on the Women's Health Strategy. A call for evidence was launched to inform the priorities, content and actions of the Strategy, which included questions on menstrual health. We are analysing the evidence gathered and we aim to publish the Strategy later this year.

Sarah Champion: [\[35666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to engage with a wide range of stakeholders and experts as part of its response to the Women's Health Strategy consultation.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

A call for evidence was launched to inform the priorities, content and actions of the Women's Health Strategy, which closed on 13 June. We engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including researchers, academics, organisations and charities. Analysis of the evidence gathered is currently underway. We will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders as part of ongoing work on the Women's Health Strategy.

■ Health Services: Standards

Philip Davies: [\[33871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve health outcomes for gender-specific health matters for (a) men and (b) women.

Philip Davies: [\[33875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the consultation Women's Health Strategy Call for Evidence, if he will make it his policy to launch a consultation into men's health outcomes.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The women's health strategy for England is in development. The Department does not have a specific men's health strategy. However, relevant issues are identified and policy developed on a condition specific basis, for example in cardiovascular disease and mental health. There are no current plans to launch a consultation on men's health outcomes.

Health: Screening**Paul Bristow:****[R] [33350]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to extend preventative health care testing after the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The UK National Screening Committee advises ministers and the National Health Service on all aspects of population screening. Professor John Deanfield is leading a review of the NHS Health Check programme, which is designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. The review will report later in the year.

Hospitals: Standards**Jonathan Ashworth:****[35653]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will announce his decision on whether to implement the standards proposed by the NHS England consultation on the clinical review of standards for urgent and emergency care.

Edward Argar:

The Government is considering these proposals and will respond in due course.

Hospitals: Waiting Lists**Chi Onwurah:****[34496]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of people that are waiting to start routine hospital treatment.

Edward Argar:

We have committed £9.6 billion to support National Health Service recovery from COVID-19, including £1 billion to increase activity and reduce waiting times. We continue to support partnerships with independent sector providers to bring in additional capacity and we have invested £325 million in diagnostic equipment to improve clinical outcomes.

In addition, we have introduced a programme of 'elective accelerators' in a dozen areas across the country which will receive a share of £160 million to implement and evaluate innovative ways to increase the number of elective procedures they deliver. Lessons learned from this programme will be shared across the country.

Infectious Diseases: Disease Control**Jim Shannon:****[33919]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, whether his Department plans to review the long-term infection prevention and control measures required by intensive care units; and what assessment he has made of the provisions required to minimise the risk of hospital-acquired infections once the covid-19 outbreak has subsided; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are no specific plans to review the long-term infection prevention and control measures in intensive care units (ITU). However, as outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan and in the 'UK 5-year action plan for antimicrobial resistance 2019 to 2024', there is a commitment to publish a National Infection Prevention Manual for England that will contain guidelines for infection prevention and control best practice across healthcare settings. All National Health Service providers will be expected to deliver care to the standards outlined in this guidance.

■ Influenza: Disease Control**Sarah Owen:**[\[35904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of preventative measures other than vaccination that could be taken to mitigate a winter flu outbreak in 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Non-pharmaceutical interventions in place for COVID-19 last winter such as mask-wearing, social-distancing and restricted international travel resulted in extremely low influenza activity globally. As restrictions are lifted, it is expected that winter 2021/2022 will be the first winter in the United Kingdom when seasonal influenza and other respiratory viruses will co-circulate alongside COVID-19. The National Health Service continues to recommend hand washing, using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes and disposing of them as quickly as possible. However, influenza vaccination remains a cost-effective measure to protect those at risk and reduce hospitalisations.

■ Long Covid**Layla Moran:**[\[34030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2021 to Question 4016 on Coronavirus, what progress his Department has made on enabling patients to track long covid symptoms using existing apps.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England offers those patients who have been referred to the 'Your COVID Recovery' online recovery programme a range of validated outcome scales for tracking their symptoms. NHS England is currently adapting these tools for open access and will make them available to anyone who visits the 'Your COVID Recovery' site.

■ Malnutrition**Alex Norris:**[\[35856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of malnutrition in the last five years; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle those costs.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not made a specific estimate.

Maternity Services**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[29065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of midwifery staffing levels in all maternity settings in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 12 July 2021]: We have made no specific assessment.

Matt Hancock**Mr Mark Harper:**[\[R\] \[27052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Rt Hon Member for West Suffolk, declared to his Department a personal interest relating to Gina Coladangelo, a non-executive director on the Departmental Board until 26 June 2021, in the period from 1 January 2019 to 26 June 2021.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 July 2021]: The former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Rt. hon Matt Hancock MP) declared his interests to the Department in line with the Ministerial Code.

Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[33177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Review, published July 2020, what steps he is taking to fulfil recommendation six of that review, and whether he plans to make adverse event logging mandatory.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In response to the Review, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has initiated a substantial programme of work to improve how it listens to patients and the public, to evolve United Kingdom medicines and medical devices regulation, develop a more responsive system for reporting safety incidents and strengthen the evidence to support timely and robust decisions that protect patient safety.

The Agency's Delivery Plan published on 4 July sets out how the MHRA will deliver better patient and public involvement and a more responsive safety surveillance and risk management system. This includes the transformation of the Yellow Card reporting system where work has already begun. The MHRA is reviewing the issue of making reporting of adverse events mandatory for healthcare professionals and will

be discussing this with other partners in the healthcare system with a view to making firm proposals in quarter 4 of 2021/22.

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[33366\]](#)

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 seven of that report on establishing a central patient-identifiable database.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS Digital has put together a programme of work to establish an information system to collect information on surgical implants and devices from healthcare providers in England, currently focussed on pelvic floor, or mesh and related procedures, as a priority.

This will be followed by the development of a United Kingdom-wide Medical Device Information System (MDIS) with regulations being made under section 19 of the Medicines and Medical Devices Act 2021. This system will mean that in future, subject to regulations, we can routinely collect medical device, procedure and outcome data from public and private provider organisations across the UK and data submitted directly from patients. Formal public consultation on the MDIS regulations will begin later this year with the aim of laying the regulations in due course.

Saqib Bhatti:

[\[33368\]](#)

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 the recommendation that a register of the General Medical Council should be expanded to include a list of financial and non-pecuniary interests for all doctors, as well as doctors' clinical interests and specialisms.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government agrees that doctors' financial and non-pecuniary interests should be available publicly. However, we do not think that the General Medical Council's register is the best place to hold this information. We have engaged with healthcare professional regulators, to ensure it is a requirement that all registered healthcare professionals declare their interests and that this information is published locally by healthcare providers.

We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Independent Healthcare Providers Network to ensure this approach is consistently applied across the National Health Service and independent sector. We have worked with the Care Quality Commission to ensure that implementation is monitored. Our response has been informed by participants in a patient reference group and we have worked closely with the devolved administrations to ensure a consistent, United Kingdom-wide approach.

■ Mental Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[33975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the responsiveness of services available to meet people who are experiencing acute mental health challenges or crises.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No specific assessment has been made. Mental health services have remained open during the pandemic and all National Health Service mental health providers have established 24 hours a day, seven days a week all-age urgent mental health helplines.

Karin Smyth: [\[35742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the Health Foundation's estimate that there could be 11 per cent more referrals a year for mental health services in the next three years as a result of the covid-19 outbreak, as set out in Health Foundation's analysis entitled Spending Review 2020: Managing uncertainty, published on 24 November 2020; and if he will take steps to respond to that analysis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no specific plans to do so. However, we continue to work with the National Health Service, Public Health England and others to gather evidence and assess the potential longer-term mental health impacts of COVID-19.

■ Mental Health: Children and Young People

Alex Cunningham: [\[33910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the (a) knowledge and (b) confidence of GPs on responding effectively to the mental health concerns of children and young people.

Alex Cunningham: [\[33911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the quality of mental health support that young people can access through their GP.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 20 July 2021]: Under the Primary Care Network (PCN) Direct Enhanced Services, networks are able to recruit new roles to expand their care team with 100% reimbursement through the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme. From April 2021, PCNs have been able to recruit mental health practitioners through the Scheme.

The Mental Health Recovery Action Plan aims to respond to the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of the public, specifically targeting groups which have been most impacted including those with severe mental illness, including young

people. This is in addition to the £2.3 billion invested in mental health services by 2023-24.

General practitioners are responsible for ensuring their own clinical knowledge remains up-to-date and for identifying learning needs as part of their continuing professional development. This activity should include taking account of new research and developments in guidance, to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality care to all patients.

All United Kingdom registered doctors are expected to meet the professional standards set out in the General Medical Council's (GMC) Good Medical Practice.

■ NHS Trusts: Debts

Rachael Maskell: [\[32434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with local NHS Trusts on (a) the current level of their deficits and (b) taking steps to reduce those deficits.

Rachael Maskell: [\[32435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if, as part of his covid-19 recovery plans, he will make additional resources available to NHS Trusts to prevent them acquiring or increasing their financial deficit.

Rachael Maskell: [\[32436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that the financial deficit held by NHS Trusts is met through additional Government support.

Rachael Maskell: [\[32437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to tackle financial deficits accumulated by CCGs.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: While we have had no specific discussions, local health systems, working with NHS England and NHS Improvement through their operational planning process, discuss the levels of deficits directly with National Health Service providers. We have set out strategic objectives for the NHS in 'The Government's 2021-22 mandate to NHS England and NHS Improvement' which includes clear expectations that financial balance must once again be delivered, with measures including reducing the number of organisations in deficit.

We have provided approximately £18 billion in 2020-21 and £8 billion in 2021-22 to NHS providers and commissioners to fund the cost consequences of the COVID-19 response and an additional £1.5 billion in 2021-22 to tackle the elective backlog and mental health recovery programmes. We have implemented a temporary financial regime to ensure that NHS providers' and commissioners' spending on their individual COVID-19 response is fully reimbursed. We continue to work with NHS

England and NHS Improvement and HM Treasury to secure further approvals and funding support, with announcements expected later in the year.

The NHS is developing their approach to managing deficits in both clinical commissioning groups and NHS providers by moving towards system-based funding allocations and planning. Local leaders will work together to direct use of those system allocations where needed most, with the expectation of financial balance without recourse to additional Government support.

■ **NHS: Contracts**

Jon Trickett: [\[34449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a list of NHS contracts for West Yorkshire tendered in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

This information is not collected centrally.

■ **Oral Tobacco**

Adam Afriyie: [\[33882\]](#)

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 Health and Social Care on 10 June 2021, Official Report, column 465WH, if will he will conduct a review on the regulatory status of snus products in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Oral tobacco products or snus are banned under The Tobacco and Related Product Regulations 2016.

The Department is currently undertaking a post implementation review of the Regulations which will consider if they have met their objectives or if any future regulatory changes should be considered. The report of the review will be published by the end of the year.

■ **Pharmacy: Finance**

Martyn Day: [\[33280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Prime Minister's statement in the coronavirus briefing of 10 February 2021 on reimbursing community pharmacies, when he plans to convert into grants the advanced payments given to community pharmacies to support them with covid-19-related costs.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has no plans to do so. We have recently reached an agreement with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee that pharmacy contractors can now claim for additional costs incurred between 1 March 2020 and 31 March 2021. The increased advance payments of £370 million will be recovered between October 2021 to March 2022 following payment of claims for additional COVID-19 costs.

■ **Pregnancy: Coronavirus**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[34581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the number of pregnant women yet to receive a single dose of the covid-19 vaccine, what steps he is taking to help ensure that pregnant women are kept safe as covid-19 (a) infection rates increase and (b) restrictions lift.

Nadhim Zahawi:

On 19 April the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) updated their advice regarding pregnant women to reflect that they should be offered vaccination at the same time as non-pregnant women, based on their age and clinical risk group.

Our vaccine toolkits for local services, stakeholders, partners and employers cover information around any concerns pregnant women may have in order to reduce hesitancy. We have also sourced and shared case stories of women of childbearing age who have been vaccinated before, during or after pregnancy to reassure women. NHS England and NHS Improvement's Chief Midwifery Officer and 'media medics' have made appearances on consumer and lifestyle media. And at a local level we have supported webinars and engagement sessions specifically focused on women's vaccines concerns.

Women can also discuss any concerns with their general practitioner practice, maternity service or a healthcare professional at their vaccination appointment.

■ **Prostate Cancer: Research**

Anthony Browne:

[\[33358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government announcement in April 2018 of £75 million funding over five years for prostate cancer research, how much of that funding has been disbursed, broken down by project.

Jo Churchill:

The Department funds research into all aspects of human health, including prostate cancer, through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) at the level of £1 billion per year. The following table shows the NIHR's programme expenditure specifically prostate cancer since April 2018:

AWARD TITLE	TOTAL AWARD BUDGET
A randomised controlled trial of Partial prostate Ablation versus Radical Treatment (PART) in intermediate risk, unilateral clinically localised prostate cancer	£ 2,677,446
Enzalutamide for treating non-metastatic	£ 65,625

AWARD TITLE	TOTAL AWARD BUDGET
hormone-relapsed prostate cancer [ID1359]	
A randomised controlled trial of TRANSrectal biopsy versus Local Anaesthetic Transperineal biopsy Evaluation (TRANSLATE) of potential clinically significant prostate cancer	£ 1,072,414
Darolutamide with androgen deprivation therapy for treating non-metastatic hormone-relapsed prostate cancer [ID1443]	£ 65,625
Olaparib for previously treated, hormone-relapsed metastatic prostate cancer (ID1640)	£ 131,250
Perineal biopsy devices for diagnosis of prostate cancer in people with suspected prostate cancer	£ 175,219
A miniature tethered drop-in laparoscopic molecular imaging probe for intraoperative decision support in minimally invasive prostate cancer surgery	£ 869,105
Prostate Liquid Biopsy Test for Risk Stratification of Prostate Cancer, preparation for CE marking.	£ 205,098
Transforming management of advanced prostate cancer: Increasing clinical productivity and capacity and empowering men through digital health	£ 149,168
Further development of and evidence generation for a precision dosing tool for optimising chemotherapy dosing in advanced prostate cancer	£ 150,000
GlycoScore: Superior prostate cancer diagnosis using a simple blood test	£ 150,000
Integrating genetic testing into the prostate cancer pathway to more precisely guide care, treatment and accelerate clinical trials	£ 3,001,779
SUrvivors' Rehabilitation Evaluation after CANcer (SURECAN)	£ 2,447,636

AWARD TITLE	TOTAL AWARD BUDGET
Supported exercise TrAining for Men with prostate caNcer on Androgen deprivation therapy – STAMINA	£ 2,497,723
Endoscopically-delivered Purastat for the treatment of haemorrhagic radiation proctopathy: a randomised feasibility study	£ 225,720
Improving self and clinical management of comorbid diabetes during cancer treatments: a qualitative interview study with patients and clinicians to identify theory-based intervention targets, strategies and implementation options	£ 149,784
A multicentre randomised controlled trial (RCT) of a self-help cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) intervention to reduce the impact of hot flush and night sweat (HFNS) symptoms in men with prostate cancer undergoing androgen deprivation therapy (ADT): MANaging symptoms during prostate CANcer treatment (MANCAN2)	£ 348,659
The Prostate Cancer Androgen Receptor Splice Variant 7 Biomarker Trial (The VARIANT trial) - A multicentre feasibility study of biomarker-guided personalised treatment in advanced prostate cancer.	£276,230
Improving outcomes for men undergoing surgery for prostate cancer. A study to evaluate the feasibility of a multicentre randomised controlled trial of frozen section technology to improve oncological and functional outcomes at robotic radical prostatectomy.	£ 249,302
Multimodal treatment for patients with prostate cancer: a national study using existing electronic data.	£ 257,830
Total	£15,165,614

The NIHR also supports the delivery in the health and care system of prostate cancer research funded by research funding partners in the charity and public sectors. The

NIHR Clinical Research Network has supported over 90 prostate cancer related studies since April 2018, totalling £20.3 million.

■ Public Health: Bexley

Sir David Evennett: [\[33853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the Public Health Grant settlement for the London Borough of Bexley compared with other London boroughs.

Jo Churchill:

As for all local authorities, the London Borough of Bexley's allocation is primarily based on historical National Health Service spend prior to 2013. Since 2019/20, adjustments have been made to the grant to take account of estimated cost pressures arising from an NHS Agenda for Change pay deal and the launch of routine pre-exposure prophylaxis commissioning. Differing levels of need and funding between local authorities has been taken into account when determining allocations. All local authorities received a cash increase in both 2020/21 and 2021/2022.

Sir David Evennett: [\[33855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been allocated to the London Borough of Bexley through the Public Health Grant settlement in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is shown in the following table:

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
£9,951,000	£9,695,000	£9,439,000	£9,861,460	£9,990,146

■ Public Health: Greater London

Sir David Evennett: [\[33854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding has been provided to London boroughs on average through the Public Health Grant settlement in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is shown in the following table.

2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
£20,156,818	£19,638,515	£19,119,939	£19,927,704	£20,408,896

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [\[35651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to require facemasks to be worn on train carriages to help protect those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and need to travel.

Jo Churchill:

The Government recommends people continue to wear face coverings particularly in enclosed and crowded spaces, including on public transport.

People who suffer with long-term conditions or who may be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 should speak to their general practitioner for personalised advice. The standard guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people was updated to reflect the lifting of restrictions on 19 July, including guidance for travel and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

■ Royal Berkshire Hospital: Hydrotherapy

Anneliese Dodds: [\[34574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the correspondence his Department has had with (a) the NHS Berkshire West CCG and (b) Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust on the proposed closure of the hydrotherapy pool at Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Edward Argar:

A search of the Department's Ministerial correspondence database has not identified any such correspondence.

■ School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme

Wera Hobhouse: [\[33296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme will continue beyond September 2021.

Jo Churchill:

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme will continue to be offered from September 2021 to all children in Key Stage 1 at state-funded primary schools.

■ Smoking

Daisy Cooper: [\[34605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reach its smoking cessation targets.

Jo Churchill:

Since the 2017 Tobacco Control Plan was published, overall smoking prevalence has fallen from 15.5% to 13.9%. We have also seen reductions in smoking rates for 15 year olds and amongst pregnant women. This has been achieved through continued investment in stop smoking services, focused local action and support and through the United Kingdom's strong regulatory framework.

However, we know that smoking remains one of the largest causes of preventable mortality and national progress continues to mask significant health inequalities across England. Our new Tobacco Control Plan, to be published later this year, will outline additional measures to reach the ambition of a smoke free England by 2030.

Daisy Cooper:[\[34606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to implement the recommendation from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health to make tobacco manufacturers pay for a Smokefree 2030 Fund to bring an end to smoking.

Jo Churchill:

The Department are currently considering a range of innovative new proposals to be included in the new Tobacco Control Plan, which we will publish later this year. This includes discussions with HM Treasury about the most effective way to raise additional funds to support smoking cessation services.

■ Social Prescribing**Rachael Maskell:**[\[35757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what definition he uses to define social prescribing in the context of his Department's remit and policy.

Jo Churchill:

Social prescribing is a way for local agencies to refer people to a link worker who takes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. They connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support. Link workers also support existing community groups to be accessible and sustainable and help people to start new groups, working collaboratively with all local partners.

The Department leads on developing social prescribing policy and identifying areas for cross-governmental collaboration. It also works with NHSE to ensure the roll-out of social prescribing is carried out across the country.

■ Surgical Mesh Implants**Aaron Bell:**[\[25975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, why rectopexy mesh injured patients are not entitled to access care in the new specialist mesh centres.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 July 2021]: The eight specialist mesh services, currently in operation, have been commissioned to treat women who have experienced

complications due to vaginal or abdominal mesh procedures for urinary incontinence or prolapse, including removal of mesh.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are considering the commissioning of care and support for people with complications in the use of mesh inserted for colorectal indications, known as rectopexy mesh. This work includes exploring whether the remit of the existing specialist mesh services can be expanded. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect to make a decision by the autumn.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[29039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to draw on the experiences of patients adversely affected by pelvic mesh implants to inform medical safety regulations.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department established a patient reference group to provide challenge, advice and scrutiny to the Government's response to the Report of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Review. There were 14 members of the Group, of which two people have been affected by, or hold an interest in, pelvic mesh.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is developing a world-leading regulatory regime for medical devices that prioritises patient safety. This includes an expectation that all devices placed onto the market will hold a UK Conformity Assessed mark by July 2023. A public consultation on the regulation of medical devices, which will provide an opportunity for views to be gained from patients and the wider public, is expected to launch this summer and new regulations are planned to follow the consultation in late spring 2022.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[33999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK citizens who have received the AstraZeneca vaccine produced in India are able to participate in travel to the EU without having to quarantine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

All University of Oxford/AstraZeneca doses manufactured by the Serum Institute of India and administered in the United Kingdom have been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, and are known commercially as 'Vaxzevria'. The European Medicines Agency has authorised the Vaxzevria vaccine and as a result is recognised by the European Union.

The EU recently set out their Green Pass initiative for double vaccinated EU citizens and the minimum criteria for the vaccines Member States should accept. This includes the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and all our other currently deployed vaccines. However, it is for individual Member States to determine the vaccine criteria accepted at their borders.

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[35655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who cannot be fully vaccinated against covid-19 due to a medical contraindication will be subject to quarantine requirements on return from an amber- or green-listed country when covid-19 quarantine restrictions are lifted for fully vaccinated people.

Jo Churchill:

Currently unvaccinated individuals arriving from 'amber list' countries must continue to follow quarantine requirements. We will set out our approach for those with medical exemptions shortly. Arrivals from 'green list' countries, regardless of vaccination status, are not required to quarantine.

■ **Travel: Malta****Mary Glendon:**[\[33225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department is having with its counterpart in Malta in respect of British tourists' entry to Malta whose covid-19 vaccine was manufactured at Serum Institute in India.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 19 July 2021]: Following discussions with the Government of Malta, they are now accepting all travellers vaccinated with vaccine batch releases approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. This includes accepting all those who have received the AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured in the Serum Institute of India under the United Kingdom's vaccination programme.

HOME OFFICE■ **Afghanistan: Immigration****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[35475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the wives of some Afghan former (a) interpreters and (b) other locally employed civilians who assisted British armed forces and have been granted permission to settle in the UK, are not being allowed to accompany their husbands; and if she will urgently make representations to resolve this issue.

Kevin Foster:

The UK owes a huge debt of gratitude to all locally employed staff (LES) who have supported our troops and embassy in Afghanistan, and we are significantly accelerating the pace of their relocation, with their family members, to the UK ahead of our military withdrawal.

There is a small number of family members who applied to relocate under the ex gratia scheme, but who do not meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules because they were not married or living together in a relationship akin to a marriage

or civil partnership for at least two years prior to the date on which the LES relocated to the UK.

We have recently published updated guidance to enable us to consider such cases outside the Rules and will review these cases in line with this guidance.

■ **Animal Experiments**

Alex Sobel: [\[35873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the publication of the annual statistics of scientific procedures on living animals in Great Britain for 2020, what factors have contributed to the increase in procedures using dogs, cats, horses and rats.

Victoria Atkins:

The numbers of animals used each year depends on a number of factors, including the scientific requirement for the programmes of work.

The Home Office assures that, in every research proposal: animals are replaced with non-animal alternatives wherever possible; the number of animals are reduced to the minimum necessary to achieve the result sought; and that, for those animals which must be used, procedures are refined as much as possible to minimise their suffering. The Home Office has made no assessment of why there was an increase in procedures using dogs, cats, horses and rats

■ **Animal Experiments: Dogs**

Alex Sobel: [\[35874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the publication of the annual statistics of scientific procedures on living animals in Great Britain for 2020, what harms were experienced by the 10 dogs who were genetically altered with a harmful phenotype.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office assigns severity classification to protocols in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (as amended) which is published at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/14/contents>. The classification takes account of the highest severity likely to be experienced by any animal used in the protocol and takes account of the pain, suffering, distress and lasting harm that an animal is likely to experience, after applying all the appropriate refinement techniques. The severity classification for the 10 dogs with a harmful genetically altered phenotype was 'Moderate'.

The Home Office assures that, in every research proposal animals are replaced with non-animal alternatives wherever possible, the number of animals are reduced to the minimum necessary to achieve the result sought, and that, for those animals which must be used, procedures are refined as much as possible to minimise their suffering.

■ Asylum: Deportation

Claire Hanna:

[\[35953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the (a) accuracy and (b) implications for her policy of reports of potentially unlawful and inhumane treatment of asylum seekers on the Esparto 11 flight in August 2020.

Chris Philp:

We take the health and wellbeing of those in our care extremely seriously and proper safety procedures were followed throughout the Esparto 11 charter flight on 12 August 2020.

Published guidance, and the training received by detainee custody officers makes it clear that physical force, and the use of waist restraint belts or handcuffs, should only be used after a thorough assessment of risk, and in consideration of each individual's personal circumstances. These risk factors may justify the application of restraints to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both the returnee and escorting staff. The Home Office reviews all reports resulting from a use of force to ensure that techniques are used proportionately, that they are justified, and are used for the minimum period required.

On occasion, people with no right to be in the UK go to extreme lengths to prevent their removal by attempting to cause physical harm to officers or themselves. In these instances, force will be used sparingly as a last resort for their own and others protection.

On 2 October 2020, HM Inspectorate of Prisons published a report of their inspection of the flight, which found that much of operation ran smoothly and they saw returnees generally treated with courtesy. The inspectorate raised no overall safety concerns with these procedures, but did make some recommendations for improvements, which are already being implemented.

■ Asylum: EU Nationals

Patrick Grady:

[\[35719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims in the UK were (a) made by and (b) granted to EU nationals in each year since 2015.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum applications lodged in the UK and the initial decisions on asylum applications are published in tables Asy_D01 and Asy_D02 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#), breakdowns by year and nationality are available. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to Q1 (Jan-Mar) 2021

Additionally, the Home Office publishes further data on asylum and resettlement in the [asylum and resettlement summary tables](#). The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

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

■ Asylum: Housing

Catherine West:

[35819]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of accommodation for asylum seekers and refugees; and whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of an independent review of conditions in that accommodation.

Kevin Foster:

To monitor compliance with the standards we expect from our providers, the Home Office access providers' systems and apply a robust performance management system to the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC). This is supplemented by a formal governance process which includes quarterly Strategic Review Management Boards and monthly Contract Management Groups. Service credits and subsequent improvement plans are discussed and monitored as part of this process.

Service Delivery Managers speak daily with providers about performance. In response to the global pandemic, officials also have formal meetings on a weekly basis to ensure individuals are housed safely, services are delivered in line with their contractual obligations and guidance from Public Health England (PHE) is followed.

Asylum seekers can raise specific issues or concerns about their accommodation through the 24/7 Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service operated by Migrant Help. The Home Office and our providers receive feedback on complaints raised through our regular dialogue with Migrant Help.

The Home Office contracted an independent organisation, Human Applications, to conduct a rapid review of initial accommodation for single adult asylum seekers, including hotels and the former military barracks. The purpose was to check compliance with public health guidelines to prevent the transmission of Covid 19. We have shared a report summary of findings and recommendations with our partners, including non-Government Organisations and Strategic Migration Partnerships. We also held workshops with our accommodation providers to empower them to action findings.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention

Neil Coyle:

[35687]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of delays to post-Grenfell fire safety works on the level of costs incurred by (a) the London Fire Brigade and (b) other local fire authorities.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is clear that building safety is the responsibility of building owners. To help increase the pace of remediation, the Government has made £5 billion of

taxpayer funding available for the remediation of unsafe cladding on high rise residential buildings.

Across 2020/21 and 2021/22, the Government has also allocated around £50m in additional taxpayer funding to address the fire safety issues that arose from the Grenfell Tower fire. The majority of this funding has been allocated to FRAs and the NFCC to:

- strengthen protection capacity and capability;
- deliver the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 operational recommendations;
- deliver the Building Risk Review programme; and establish a central strategic leadership hub

Decisions on how to allocate their resources to deliver their statutory duties most effectively is a matter for individual Fire and Rescue Authorities, based on their assessment of local risk.

Overall fire and rescue authorities will receive around £2.3 billion in 2021/22. Standalone Fire and Rescue Authorities will see an increase in core spending power of 2.6 per cent in cash terms in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21.

The London Fire Brigade is part of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and it is a matter for the Mayor to set the budget for the GLA's functional bodies, including the London Fire Commissioner.

The total resource reserves held by standalone fire and rescue authorities at March 2019 was £538m. This is an increase of £4.7m or 1% compared with March 2015 and is equivalent to 39% of their core spending power.

■ Immigration: Hong Kong

Sarah Olney:

[\[35831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what arrangements her Department has put in place for Hong Kongers who are waiting for the processing of their British National Overseas applications to be completed when the Leave outside the Immigration Rules come to an end at the end of July 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Leave Outside the Rules (LOTR) at the border was a temporary concession introduced to enable those eligible for the new Hong Kong BN(O) route who wished to travel to the UK before the route was launched to do so. This provision was in place until 23:59 on 19 July.

The BN(O) route is now open for applications. Those who are eligible for it should apply and await a decision on their application before travelling to the UK. The Home Office aims to make a decision on applications to the BN(O) route within 12 weeks.

■ Members: Correspondence

Michael Fabricant: [\[35492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 33109, when her Department plans to respond to the email from Mr Peter Jones of January 2021, sent to his Department by the hon. Member for Lichfield's office; for what reason a reply has not been forthcoming from her Department for in excess of six months since the receipt of that email; and what her Department's policy is on timely responses to constituency enquiries from hon. Members.

Kevin Foster:

I have responded to the email from the hon. member for Lichfield most recently on 22 July.

Discussions remain ongoing regarding Educational Oversight for Private further education colleges and I will provide a further response as soon as possible.

We aim to respond to all correspondence from MPs in a timely manner. The Department works to a target of responding to 95% of MPs written correspondence within 20 working days.

■ Migrants

Stephen Timms: [\[35479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her officials have to meet representatives of the Unity Project to discuss improving the Change of Conditions application process in response to their letters of 11 April and 11 June 2021; and if she will make a statement.

Stephen Timms: [\[35480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to simplify and shorten the Change of Condition application process; and if she will make a statement.

Stephen Timms: [\[35481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the form to apply for change of conditions of leave to allow access to public funds requires applicants to provide a five year address history.

Chris Philp:

A reply to the Unity Project's letter of 11 April was sent on 14 May and Home Office officials met with the Unity Project on 17 June as part of the No Recourse to Public Funds forum. My officials remain happy to meet with them again to discuss any outstanding concerns about the Change of Conditions application process.

We are currently reviewing that process to see how it can be improved. We will update the Unity Project and other stakeholders once this review is complete.

We do require core details of an applicant's background information to ensure an accurate assessment of their application can be made, including recent previous addresses. In most cases this information reduces the need to request further documentary evidence and therefore speeds up the consideration process.

■ Passports: EU Nationals

Hilary Benn: [\[35982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the requirement that EU visitors must have a passport rather than an ID card on the number of (a) EU tourists and (b) EU school parties coming to the UK.

Kevin Foster:

EEA identity cards are among the least secure documents seen at the UK border and are, as a rule, not as secure as corresponding national passports. They continue to dominate detection figures for document abuse at the border.

The Government is committed to strengthening the security of our border, so will phase out the use of EU, other EEA and Swiss national identity cards as a valid travel document for entry to the UK from 1 October 2021.

We do not accept identity cards as a travel document from any other nationalities. We expect people who visit the UK from outside the EU (including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) to hold a passport and we will now expect those visiting from EU countries to do the same. Using a passport also means EU nationals making a short visit can also use e-gates where available for a quicker and easier arrival experience.

We have provided almost a year's notice for this change to allow people to plan ahead and obtain a passport, if they need to, before they travel.

■ Refugees: Resettlement

Catherine West: [\[35809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how number of refugees her Department commits to resettling as part of the Government's refugee resettlement programme each year.

Chris Philp:

Through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) we continue to welcome vulnerable refugees in need of protection to the UK. The number of refugees we resettle every year depends on a variety of factors including local authorities' capacity for supporting refugees and the extent to which Community Sponsorship continues to thrive. This year, the recovery from the pandemic will clearly be a significant factor affecting capacity. We are working closely with our partners to assess the capacity for resettlement in the months ahead and will continue to welcome those in need in the years to come.

Statistics under the scheme are published through official statistics at quarterly intervals. The next set of statistics will be published in August and will include the number of people resettled in the year to June 2021. These are available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

■ Slavery: Victims

Gill Furniss: [\[35823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of the waiting time for conclusive grounds to be established for victims of human trafficking and modern day slavery.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics regarding the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). These include the average time taken to make a Country Guidance Decision. The latest published NRM statistics can be found here: Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, Quarter 1 2021 – January to March - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

■ Visas: Fees and Charges

Bambos Charalambous: [\[35845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the prevalence of VFS Global, the operator of her Department's online visa application system, charging for emails received from service users.

Kevin Foster:

VFS Global (VFS) and TLS contact run the network of overseas Visa Application Centres (VACs) on behalf of UKVI.

VFS provide services at the VACs to enable individuals to upload supporting evidence and biometric information, such as a photo, for visa applications and also coordinate the return of travel documents to customers.

VFS do not charge for emails received from customers.

■ Visas: Research

Hilary Benn: [\[35507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visas have been granted to overseas researchers under the Global Talent Visa in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021 to date, broken down by nationality.

Kevin Foster:

Information on visas granted under the Global Talent scheme is routinely published as part of the quarterly Immigration statistics.

The current data is available and can be found via the link below on tab Vis_D02.

[entry-clearance-visa-outcomes-datasets-mar-2021.xlsx](#)

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Building Safety Fund: Leeds****Hilary Benn:****[35504]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will list the properties in the (a) LS1, (b) LS2, (c) LS10, (d) LS6, (e) LS7 and (f) LS9 postcodes that have (i) applied to the building safety fund and (ii) been approved for funding.

Christopher Pincher:

We are unable to publish a list naming individual buildings that have applied to the Building Safety Fund. This reflects the position of the Government not to reveal the identity of high-rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding systems on public safety grounds.

The Department is continuing to work with building owners to progress applications for the Building Safety Fund. Application progress is communicated to registrants who we expect will ensure that their residents are kept fully informed. The latest Building Safety Fund statistics are available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics.

■ Buildings: Fire Prevention**Stephen Hammond:****[35589]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of how funding for remediation of building safety works will be sourced if it cannot be recovered from (a) the original developer of a building or (b) any existing warranties or insurances.

Christopher Pincher:

Our £5.1 billion investment in grant funding for cladding remediation on residential buildings of 18 metres and taller in England will protect hundreds of thousands of leaseholders from the cost of remediating unsafe cladding on their homes.

We are also stepping in to provide a generous finance scheme for the remediation of combustible cladding on medium-rise residential buildings, where the risk is lower. Under this scheme leaseholders in residential buildings between 11-18 metres will pay no more than £50 per month towards the cost of combustible cladding remediation.

Government funding does not absolve building owners of their responsibility to ensure that their buildings are safe. They should consider all routes to meet costs, protecting leaseholders where they can - for example through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work.

Under the Defective Premises Act, compensation can be claimed from anyone responsible for the defective work, such as developers, builders and other contractors, architects and designers.

We have seen many responsible developers and building owners stepping up to take responsibility for correcting these defects - for example, in more than half of the high-rise private sector buildings with ACM.

■ Changing Futures Programme: South Tyneside

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[35672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding from the £64 million Changing Futures programme will be allocated to South Tyneside.

Eddie Hughes:

Changing Futures will work in 15 local areas to test new approaches to improve outcomes for adults experiencing multiple disadvantage, with almost £64 million in total programme funding from the Government's Shared Outcomes Fund (£46 million) and aligned funding from The National Lottery Community Fund (£17.9 million)

Northumbria is one of these local partnerships, covering South Tyneside and five other local authority areas (Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, Sunderland). The Northumbria partnership will receive £5.089 million in grant between 2021/22-2023/24 to support their delivery plan for the Changing Futures programme

■ Community Ownership Fund

Ben Lake: [\[33306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Community Ownership Fund will be opened to applications.

Eddie Hughes:

The bidding prospectus, guidance notes and application form for the community ownership fund were published on 15 July and the first bidding round is now open. Applicants will be able to complete the online application form from 30 July and the first bidding round will close on 13 August. There will be future bidding rounds in December 2021 and May 2022.

Anthony Browne: [\[33359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 2.124 of the Budget 2021 Red Book, if he will provide an update on when the (a) bidding prospectus for the Community Ownership Fund will be published and (b) first bidding round is due to open.

Eddie Hughes:

The bidding prospectus for the Community Ownership Fund was published on 15 July and the first bidding round is now open. Applicants will be able to complete the online application form from 30 July and the first bidding round will close on 13 August. There will be future bidding rounds in December 2021 and May 2022.

■ Council Tax and Property Valuations

Daisy Cooper: [\[33338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to (a) review the council tax banding system and (b) update the associated property valuations of that system.

Luke Hall:

The Government has no plans to review the council tax banding of properties in England or carry out a council tax revaluation. A revaluation would be expensive to undertake and could result in increases in bills for many households. This happened following the council tax revaluation in Wales when 33% of all homes there were placed in a higher band compared to 8% of homes that were placed in a lower band.

■ Culture: Planning

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[35673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Agent of Change principle in protecting pre-existing cultural venues since its inclusion in the National Planning Policy Framework; and what plans the Government has to put that principle on a statutory footing.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[35674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what protections for pre-existing cultural venues and businesses will be included in the Government's proposed changes to the planning system.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[35675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what role the Agent of Change principle will have in the Government's proposed changes to the planning system.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[35676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the Agent of Change principle and the protection of pre-existing cultural venues and businesses within the planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is supportive of ensuring that existing facilities, including cultural venues and businesses, do not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in their area due to new developments. That is why the National Planning Policy Framework includes the 'agent of change' principle. This sets out that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing business and community facilities. It also makes clear that the person or business responsible for the change of use of land is responsible for managing the implications of the change.

Planning practice guidance on Noise provides further detail on how the risk of conflict between new development and existing businesses, or facilities can be addressed. Whilst we have not undertaken further assessment of the principle, local authorities will consider the effects on a case by case basis.

We were clear in Planning for the Future that the reformed planning system will continue to protect the places of environmental and cultural value which matter to us. We received 44,000 responses to the Planning for the Future White Paper consultation. We announced in the Queen's Speech that we will be bringing forward a Planning Bill in the current session of Parliament, and we will publish a response to the White Paper consultation. This will set out our decisions on the proposed way forward.

■ Flats: Permitted Development Rights

Dr Rupa Huq:

[35805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial impact on leaseholders attempting to purchase the freehold of their building, of development potential costs incurred as a result of an existing freeholder intending to exercise permitted development rights of upward extension for the construction of additional flats; and if he will make a statement.

Eddie Hughes:

The Impact Assessments published alongside changes to permitted development rights (available at https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2020/79/pdfs/ukia_20200079_en.pdf and https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2020/43/pdfs/ukia_20200043_en.pdf), set out an assessment of their impacts, including on leaseholders.

We announced in January changes to enfranchisement valuation to make it easier, cheaper and simpler for leaseholders to extend their lease or buy their freehold. This includes allowing leaseholders to voluntarily agree to a restriction on future development of their property to avoid paying 'development value'.

■ Housing: Green Belt

Joy Morrissey:

[34064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the preservation of the Green Belt of increased housing targets in the Government's proposed changes to planning.

Joy Morrissey:

[34065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what impact assessments his Department has undertaken on the effect of the Government's proposed changes to planning on the preservation of Green Belt.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government will continue to protect the Green Belt in line with our manifesto commitment. The new method for calculating local housing need introduced last year and reforms to the planning system through the Planning Bill will not change national planning policy on the protection of Green Belt. Local communities will still use local plan policies to establish and protect their Green Belts, and the National Planning Policy Framework will remain a material consideration. The Government has also made clear that local authorities should consider local constraints, such as Green Belt, in the process of planning for new homes.

Local Government Services: Coronavirus**Steve Reed:**[\[35670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the impact that increasing levels of isolations as a result of close contact with people testing positive for covid-19 will have on the ability of local authorities to deliver services.

Luke Hall:

It is essential that everyone continues to follow national guidance on self isolation, it remains a legal requirement for people to self-isolate if they test positive and are told to do so, or are told to isolate as a close contact of a positive case by NHS Test and Trace. The public should continue to download and use the latest version of the NHS Covid-19 app to help reduce the spread of the virus

Local authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide a range of services to their communities. Local authorities have business continuity plans in place in order to continue to deliver these services and mitigate against any disruptions. Ministers and officials from my Department continue to have regular discussions with local partners to ensure appropriate plans are in place.

Local Government: Greenhouse Gas Emissions**Steve Reed:**[\[35668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department plans to take in response to the National Audit Office report entitled Local government and net zero in England, published 16 July 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government welcomes the NAO report and is carefully considering each recommendation

Further details of how we intend to work with local government to reach net zero will be set out in the Net Zero Strategy, to be published prior to COP26.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Avanton**Sarah Olney:** [\[35834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether officials of his Department have communicated via (a) email, (b) written letter, (c) text message, (d) video call and (e) in person with Sir Michael Fallon or any other representative of Avanton from 1 December 2019 to the 19 July 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

Sir Michael Fallon has not contacted the Department. Any representations on planning matters are handled in accordance with published propriety guidance.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Directors**Cat Smith:** [\[35726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which of his Department's non-executive directors were appointed through open competition.

Eddie Hughes:

I can confirm that all six of the current Non-Executive Directors within the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government were appointed through fair and open competition. Recruitment campaigns were run in line with standard practice for public appointments as set out in the Cabinet Office guidance.

■ Parking: Fees and Charges**Ben Lake:** [\[33307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress his Department has made on developing (a) a single independent appeals service for motorists in receipt of a private parking charge and (b) an Appeals Charter to protect motorists from charges that are unfair or issued in error.

Luke Hall:

In its response to the parking Code Enforcement Framework consultation in March 2021, the Government announced its intention to implement a series of fairer parking measures which will benefit motorists. These include the creation of a single independent appeals service for motorists to turn to if they receive a private parking charge and an Appeals Charter which will protect motorists from charges that are unfair or issued in error.

On 26 May, the Government announced that it will conduct a further technical consultation on its proposed changes to parking charges, seeking views from motorists, parking operators and landowners on the level of private parking charges, including the Appeals Charter. This will help deliver a fair, proportionate and consistent system across the country. Further details of the consultation, including delivery timescales for the single appeals service, will be announced shortly.

■ Pensions: Free Zones

Matt Rodda: [\[35865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what due diligence assessment was carried out on the pension liabilities of applicant firms as part of the Freeports bidding process.

Matt Rodda: [\[35866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes he has put in place in respect of the (a) financial sustainability and (b) pensions obligations of firms selected to operate freeports.

Matt Rodda: [\[35867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will carry out a review of the pension liabilities of firms selected to operate freeports; and if he will make a statement.

Matt Rodda: [\[35868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions his officials have had with successful applicants to run freeports on their ongoing pension liabilities.

Luke Hall:

The Freeport model will comprise a broad coalition of local partners, including businesses, local authorities and ports. Trustees and employers have a wide range of legal duties in respect of workplace schemes, including and are responsible for compliance with legislative funding requirements. The Pension Regulator is the regulator of work based pension schemes, and has a range of powers that it may use to intervene, and to take action, primarily against trustees and employers, where they do not comply with their duties.

As set out in the Bidding Prospectus, each Freeport was asked in their bid proposals to summarise their preferred governance structure. The Freeport Governance Body will need to meet core standards and criteria on governance, including compliance with MHCLG requirements on monitoring and evaluation. The Government is assessing the proposals and will work with the Freeports to ensure that governance is robust. The relevant public body (Local Authority or Authorities or Mayoral Combined Authority) of the Freeport Governance Body will be accountable to MHCLG for the expenditure and management of public money.

The Freeport Governance Body will be responsible for the effective delivery of the Freeport according to the economic strategy determined through the bidding process and the Freeport Governance Body will work with Government to ensure the Freeport stays aligned with national policy and delivers on its monitoring and evaluation commitments.

The Government recognises rigorous monitoring and evaluation will be key to the success of the Freeports. The Government fully intends to evaluate the impact of Freeports and will be publishing its monitoring and evaluation strategy in due course.

■ Permitted Development Rights

Ruth Cadbury: [\[35695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 1 July 2021, HCWS145 on Revitalising high streets and town centres, what his timetable is for bringing forward the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to article 4 directions.

Christopher Pincher:

The new policy in relation to Article 4 directions came into immediate effect on 1 July 2021. The National Planning Policy Framework was updated with the new wording on 20 July 2021.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[35696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) local authorities in England have used Article 4 directions and (b) times each local authority has used an article 4 direction in each of the last five years.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[35697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities in England have used Article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights for the conversion of commercial space to residential properties.

Christopher Pincher:

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

■ Planning Permission: Richmond upon Thames

Sarah Olney: [\[35832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the (a) potential merits of calling in the planning Homebase, Manor Road (GLA ref: 4795) planning application and (b) extent to which that planning application is consistent with the (i) Government's policy on local authority decision-making on where tall buildings should be sited in their local authority areas and (ii) principle's set out in paragraph 12 of his Department's National Planning Policy Framework, published in February 2019.

Christopher Pincher:

There is nothing I can add to the decision letter of 14 January 2021 and the application therefore remains for determination by the Mayor of London.

Sarah Olney: [\[35833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will meet with the hon. Member for Richmond Park to discuss the Homebase, Manor Road (GLA ref: 4795) planning application.

Christopher Pincher:

Due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in the planning system, it would not be appropriate to meet to discuss an individual planning application.

■ **Property Development: Buckinghamshire**

Joy Morrissey: [\[34062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of construction developments in the Ivers on (a) biodiversity and (b) local wildlife welfare.

Christopher Pincher:

We do not centrally hold information on the potential effect of individual developments. The potential effects of developments are to be considered by local planning authorities as part of the plan-making and decision-taking process. Our partners in local government have the requisite local knowledge that allows them to make the best decisions for their own areas when it comes to development.

The Government has pledged that this generation will leave the natural environment in a better state than when we inherited it. To contribute towards this goal, the Environment Bill will legislate for mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain as a condition of most new development. Ensuring new development leads to more nature, not less, the Government will additionally legislate to introduce biodiversity net gain for new Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in England through an amendment to the Environment Bill.

The reformed planning system will continue to protect the places of environmental and cultural value which matter to us. In line with the ambitions in our 25 Year Environment Plan, we want the reformed system to play a proactive role in promoting environmental recovery and long-term sustainability.

■ **Rents: Government Assistance**

Stephen Morgan: [\[33320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that early intervention support is available for tenants experiencing difficulties in meeting the cost of their rent.

Eddie Hughes:

The UK Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support during the pandemic, which is available to tenants. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit are in place until the end of September helping renters to continue paying their rent. Local housing allowance

rates have been maintained at their increased level in cash terms in 2021/22, meaning claimants renting in the private rented sector continue to benefit from the significant increase in the local housing allowance rates applied in April 2020.

For those who require additional support, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available. For 2021-22 the Government has made £140 million available in DHP funding, building on the £180m provided last year.

To help those at risk of homelessness we are providing local authorities with £310 million through the Homelessness Prevention Grant. This funding represents a £47 million increase on the previous year's funding and can be used to offer financial support for people to find a new home, to work with landlords to prevent evictions, and to ensure families have a roof over their head. Tenants in need of additional support should speak to their local council for more information.

Renters also continue to benefit from longer notice periods, giving them more time to make alternative arrangements. As of 1 June, until at least 30 September, notice periods must be at least 4 months except in the most egregious cases. Bailiffs have been asked not to carry out an eviction if anyone living in the property has Covid-19 symptoms or is self-isolating.

■ **Travellers: Caravan Sites**

Sir Charles Walker: [\[35561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has any grant funding schemes in place to help local authorities meet the cost of providing more authorised sites for travellers; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government encourages local planning authorities to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations and are supporting efforts through the new Affordable Homes Programme. Local authorities, and social housing providers can bid for funding through the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26 which will leverage up to £38 billion of private and public investment, and includes funding for permanent traveller sites and transit sites.

■ **UK Community Renewal Fund: Fakenham**

Jerome Mayhew: [\[35893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when Fakenham, Norfolk is planned to receive funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund.

Luke Hall:

The UK Community Renewal Fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

The deadline for bid submission has now passed. Officials are currently assessing the bids received and funding decisions will be announced in due course. Successful project applicants will have until 31st March 2022 to deliver their projects.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Research

Ian Murray:

[\[35601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to replicate the specific functions performed by the Interreg scheme in supporting cross-border research and development.

Luke Hall:

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

This Government will ensure that the UK Government and its institutions are working effectively to realise the benefits of four nations working together as one United Kingdom.

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

Ian Murray:

[\[35983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will ensure that there is an element within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund reserved for research organisations which have had particular dependency on Interreg cross-border funding in order to maintain continuity of research and UK participation in these fields.

Luke Hall:

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

This Government will ensure that the UK Government and its institutions are working effectively to realise the benefits of four nations working together as one United Kingdom.

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

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Water Power

Ian Murray: [\[35984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will take steps to ensure that the research and development of marine energy technologies, which has been dependent on funding under the Interreg scheme, is not disadvantaged under the transition to a UK Shared Prosperity Fund; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

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

This Government will ensure that the UK Government and its institutions are working effectively to realise the benefits of four nations working together as one United Kingdom.

Spending Review 2020 set out the main strategic elements of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in the Heads of Terms. This stated that UK Shared Prosperity investment should be aligned with the government's clean growth and net zero objectives. The Government will publish a UK-wide investment framework later this year and confirm its funding profile at the next Spending Review.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Agricultural Products: Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[35526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what further overseas markets have been effectively opened up for Northern Ireland producers in the 12 months since the announcement of the Bounce Back Plan for the food, drink and agriculture industries.

Graham Stuart:

The Department of International Trade's (DIT) Bounce Back package and the more recently launched Open Doors campaign have supported UK businesses in accessing international opportunities, through initiatives such as our export masterclasses and virtual trade promotion events. Last year, DIT secured market access to the USA for UK beef exports for the first time in 20 years, worth an estimated £66m over five years. Northern Irish beef producers are already taking advantage of this lucrative market.

■ Arms Trade: Israel

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[35671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department made of the potential merits of varying the terms of licences issued for the export of arms to Israel in response to the violence in that country and the neighbouring Palestinian Territory in May 2021.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the Hon. Lady to the answer I gave on 21st July 2021 (UIN: 34507).

China: Import Controls**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:**[\[35476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to (a) the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 16 June 2021, Official Report, column 287, (b) the oral contribution of the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of 12 January 2021, Official Report, column 162, (c) the Answer of 25 June 2021 to Question 16783 on Import Controls: China, (d) the Answers of 5 July 2021 to Questions 24880 and 24881, (e) the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28048 and (f) in accordance with the Prime Minister's oral contribution of 7 July 2021, Official Report, column 901, if she will clarify whether the UK (i) has or (ii) plans to implement import controls on goods made in China believed to be the product of forced labour.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government is committed to tackling the issue of forced labour in global supply chains, including through strengthening the Modern Slavery Act, and the introduction of financial penalties for businesses that fail to meet their statutory obligations.

Whilst we do not have plans to place import controls on goods from China, we have announced a range of other measures, including a comprehensive review of export controls. We are working closely with international partners too. Last month, under our G7 Presidency, G7 leaders committed to work together to make sure that global supply chains are free from the use of forced labour.

Department for International Trade: Re-employment**Andy McDonald:**[\[33238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, 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 her 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.

Greg Hands:

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

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has only one non-departmental public body, the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA), which was established on 1 June 2021. The TRA, like all non-departmental public bodies does not employ civil servants and is responsible for the management of its staff.

DIT works constructively with the TRA when it comes to workforce management matters, however the TRA is ultimately responsible for the management of its staff. There is a Human Resources Memorandum of Understanding between DIT and the TRA, which sits alongside the Framework Agreement that is required for all Public Bodies. These documents outline how DIT will work with the TRA to support staff retention and redeployment policy.

■ EU External Trade: Carbon Emissions

Rachael Maskell: [\[33968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions he has had on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism in the run up to COP26.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) recognises the importance of addressing the risk of carbon leakage to ensure our ambitious policy of decarbonisation is not undermined. We are working closely across government to develop our evidence base and explore policy options, of which a carbon border adjustment mechanism is one.

Our priority is to work together with our international partners, including developed and developing countries, on how we tackle climate change together. We are continuing to assess a range of potential options on this issue.

■ Export Academy

Hilary Benn: [\[35509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many businesses by region have been supported through the Export Academy; and what the cost to the public purse has been of the Export Academy since it was launched in 2020.

Graham Stuart:

The Department is not able to provide, reliably, the management information data requested. 2018/19 is the last published data from the Export Client Quality Survey which reported that over 19,000 unique businesses were supported by the Department for International Trade.

■ Exports: EU Countries

Chi Onwurah: [\[35637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to increase the proportion of exports to the EU to levels prior the UK leaving the EU.

Graham Stuart:

The proportion of goods exported from the UK to the EU (as a proportion of total UK goods exports) was 50.1% in May 2021. This has increased since the decline in January to 36.9%, and is slightly above the annual proportions for 2018 (49.5%), 2019 (47.4%) and 2020 (48.5%).

The proportion of services exported from the UK to the EU (as a proportion of total UK service exports) was 37.6% in Q1 2021, slightly above the annual proportion for 2020 (36.9%), and below 2019 (38.1%) and 2018 (40.4%).

The Department for International Trade provides a range of services to support businesses to export to the EU, including through the overseas Europe Network, International Trade Advisors and the Transition Period Enquiry Unit.

■ Liquefied Natural Gas: Mozambique

Kate Osamor: [\[33994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to UK Export Finance's support for the Mozambique LNG project, how many contracts have been issued for UK goods and services as a result of that support, on what date each of those contracts was signed; and what the total value was of each of those contracts.

Kate Osamor: [\[33995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate he has made of the number of contracts supported by UK Export Finance with (a) UK and (b) non-UK companies for the Mozambique LNG project.

Kate Osamor: [\[33996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to UK Export Finance's support for the Mozambique LNG project, what the names of the companies are with which contracts for that project have been issued for UK goods and services; and on what date those contracts were issued.

Graham Stuart:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) is aware of contracts with estimated supported eligible contracting of over US \$750 million having been awarded from the Mozambique LNG project. Those contracts include the manufacture of equipment, subsea installation vessels, and provision of legal and financial advice.

Specific details of individual contracts that are eligible for UKEF support are not published due to commercial confidentiality.

■ Trade Agreements

Alex Norris: [\[32489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with stakeholders on her obligations under the Trade Act 2021 to undertake health assessments of trade deals; who will carry out those assessments; and when the health assessment for the UK-Australia free trade deal will be carried out.

Greg Hands:

There are no obligations under the Trade Act 2021 to carry out health assessments of our trade agreements. However, under section 42 of the Agriculture Act 2020, my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade must prepare a report

explaining whether, or to what extent, measures in a free trade agreement (FTA) applicable to trade in agricultural products are consistent with the maintenance of UK levels of statutory protection in relation to:

- (a) human, animal or plant life or health,
- (b) animal welfare, and
- (c) the environment.

This report must be laid before Part 2 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 - which must precede ratification of the FTA - can commence.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Emily Thornberry: [\[35569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, for what reason a declaration of her discussions on 28 August 2019 with Tony Abbott at Stoke Lodge on issues relating to the UK/Australia relationship was not included in her register of external meetings for the period July-September 2019, published on 23 January 2020.

Greg Hands:

The Department does not release details of meetings hosted by foreign Governments as part of the Ministerial Transparency data.

■ Trade Agreements: India

Mr Jonathan Lord: [\[35618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent progress her Department has made on negotiating a free trade agreement with India.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

British trade with India has averaged around £20 billion over recent years. The Indian market is huge, and the scope for growth is great. My Rt hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced an Enhanced Trade Partnership with India in May, which addresses some immediate market access barriers and sets out our intent to negotiate a free trade agreement. My Department has since launched a public consultation, which closes on 31st August, to give businesses the opportunity to share their experiences of trading with India. A deal would make it easier for British businesses to succeed in India's dynamic market, driving growth and supporting jobs across the United Kingdom.

■ Trade Agreements: Sri Lanka

Sam Tarry: [\[36807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has undertaken of Sri Lanka's compliance with human rights criteria as outlined in section 21 of Trade Preference Scheme (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1438).

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Department has not undertaken such an assessment.

Trade Agreements: Ukraine**Emily Thornberry:**[\[35570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to agree a revised Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement with Ukraine, to replace the current agreement signed on 8 October 2020; and for what reason a revised agreement is necessary.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom-Ukraine Political Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement, entered into force on 1st January 2021. Neither the United Kingdom nor Ukraine are seeking to replace it. It is standard practice for agreements to be amended and updated over time to align with the developing interests of those involved, or to add greater clarity where this is helpful to businesses.

Trade Promotion**Hilary Benn:**[\[35506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many businesses have received support from his Department's network of international trade advisors since its launch in 2020, broken down by region of the UK.

Graham Stuart:

The Department is not able to provide, reliably, the management information data requested. Published research from the Export Client Quality Survey reported 7,896 unique businesses supported by International Trade Advisors between April 2018 and March 2019.

Hilary Benn:[\[35510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many meetings (a) he has and (b) other Ministers of his Department have attended with international trade advisers in the (i) Northern Powerhouse, (ii) Midlands Engine, (iii) South and (iv) London regions; and which Ministers were in attendance at each of those meetings.

Graham Stuart:

According to Department for International Trade records, the Secretary of State did not attend any meetings with international trade advisers since February 2020.

Other ministers have attended twenty-seven meetings with international trade advisers since February 2020. Ten meetings took place in the Northern Powerhouse region, one in the Midlands Engine, fifteen in the South, and one in London.

Minister Stuart attended six meetings in the Northern Powerhouse, eleven in the South, one in the Midlands Engine, and one in London.

Minister Jayawardena attended four meetings in the Northern Powerhouse, and four meetings in the South.

■ Trade: Developing Countries

Emily Thornberry: [\[35571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what proposed simplifications she is considering making to the conditions that could lead to variation or suspension of preferences for beneficiary countries under the (a) Least Developed Countries Framework and (b) General and Enhanced Frameworks as per the consultation launched by her Department on 19 July 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[35573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her Department's 19 July document, Statement of direction: designing a new UK trade preferences scheme to take effect in 2022, what assessment she has made of the (a) impact of her proposed tariff reductions in the General and Enhanced Frameworks and (b) effect of that matter on the value of preferences on (i) exports to the UK, (ii) wages, and (iii) GDP of the 47 countries under the Least Developed Countries Framework.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

HM Government wants to take a more ambitious, generous, and pro-growth approach to trading with developing nations. Our proposed new scheme will mean more opportunity and less bureaucracy for our friends around the world.

There is an ongoing public consultation on the content of the scheme, which HM Government will take account of. We will consider where existing tariff rates may be particularly important for least developed countries also.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Hearing Impaired

Maria Eagle: [\[35512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what information or evidence of impairment has to be provided by a court user to HM Courts and Tribunals Service before reasonable adjustments will be considered.

Maria Eagle: [\[35515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance his Department (a) has given and (b) plans to give to (i) HM Courts and Tribunals Service personnel and (ii) the Judiciary on enabling hearing impaired users to use specialist equipment assessed as suitable for them at attended Court hearings; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Eagle:

[\[35516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the needs of a hearing impaired court user for reasonable adjustment to enable them to access hearings in person are met in all cases; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS will provide reasonable adjustments for court and tribunal users with disabilities and takes steps to avoid treating people less favourably because of their disability. Court and tribunal users are encouraged to get in touch with HMCTS to discuss any particular adjustments they may need. HMCTS staff will sensitively ask those needing reasonable adjustments what support they require in order to be able to provide reasonable adjustments. We are committed to providing reasonable adjustments for all of those people with hearing loss to be able to access hearings in person.

Reasonable adjustment guidance and broader disability guidance is provided to all HMCTS staff for in person hearings and remote hearings. All guidance raises awareness of the issues people with hearing loss may face, and the reasonable adjustments which may help them to fully participate in hearings. Guidance also provides practical help for staff to ensure they know what hearing enhancement equipment is available in their buildings for users and how to use it. It includes a checklist for making sure that staff have time to test hearing enhancement equipment and are comfortable with how it's used.

The Judiciary of England and Wales is constitutionally independent of Government, so the MoJ does not issue guidance to the judiciary. Judicial guidance on equal treatment is provided through access to the Equal Treatment Bench Book (ETBB), published by the Judicial College, and learning materials which provide explicit guidance on working with diverse individuals such as those who have hearing loss.

■ **Legal Aid Scheme: Special Guardianship Orders**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[35563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending the eligibility criteria for legal aid for (a) special guardians and (b) prospective special guardians, including the removal of means testing; and if he will publish any economic modelling undertaken in relation to that assessment.

Alex Chalk:

In February 2019 as part of the Legal Support Action Plan, we committed to bringing special guardianship orders into scope of legal aid.

Although work was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic response, we are intending to look into the role of special guardians and at the scope for extending legal aid to special guardians in private law proceedings as part of wider consideration of the civil legal aid scheme more generally.

We are currently conducting a review of the means test for legal aid. We plan to conclude the review in later 2021, at which point we will publish a full consultation paper setting out our future policy proposals in this area which will include a full impact assessment. We will take these proposals into consideration for the approach to means testing when looking into special guardianship orders.

■ Prisons: Ventilation

Bridget Phillipson: [\[35608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2021 to Question 30344 on Prisons: Ventilation, what budget has been made available for enforcement activities in respect of ventilation in prisons in each of the last ten years; what enforcement action has been taken in respect of ventilation in prisons in each of the last ten years; and when he last met (a) prison governors and (b) representatives of the Prison Officers' Association to discuss ventilation in prisons.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice is not an enforcing authority and does not engage in enforcement activity. We are not aware of any enforcement action against HMPPS in relation to ventilation.

While there is regular engagement with prison governors and representatives of the Prison Officers' Association on issues relating to health and safety in prisons, there have been no meetings to discuss ventilation specifically.

■ Sexual Offences: Prosecutions

Mr David Lammy: [\[35487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were prosecuted for committing an offence under section 5 of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 in each of the last 10 years.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 in England and Wales, up to December 2020, available in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, which can be found here:

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

Data showing the number of defendants prosecuted under section 5 of this Act, in England and Wales from 2010 to 2020 (latest available) can be found in the attached table.

The data supplied is a subset of published information from the Courts Proceedings database.

Attachments:

1. Table [PQ 35487 table.xlsx]

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Harassment and Incitement: Social Media**

Ruth Jones: [\[34043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues and social media platforms on tackling sectarian abuse and incitement online.

Mr Robin Walker:

Online abuse is an issue that affects all parts of the United Kingdom and it is important that we work together to keep people safe from such abuse.

In May, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport published its draft Online Safety Bill. The Northern Ireland Office, as well as the Northern Ireland Department of Justice, who have lead responsibility in Northern Ireland for tackling sectarian abuse and incitement online, have been engaged in this work.

■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh: [\[35768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which victims of terror in Great Britain he consulted prior to his Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past proposals, announced on 14 July 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

Following the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 24 June, the UK and Irish Governments initiated an ongoing process of intensive engagement with the Northern Ireland parties and other stakeholders, with a view to finding a way forward on legacy issues.

It was agreed that engagement with victims and survivors - including those in Great Britain - would be central to these discussions, and their views and perspectives will continue to be sought.

Louise Haigh: [\[35771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which victims groups within Great Britain he plans to engage with as part of the policy on addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland's past.

Mr Robin Walker:

Following the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 24 June, the UK and Irish Governments initiated an ongoing process of intensive engagement with the Northern Ireland parties and other stakeholders, with a view to finding a way forward on legacy issues.

It was agreed that engagement with victims and survivors - including those in Great Britain - would be central to these discussions, and their views and perspectives will continue to be sought as part of this ongoing process of engagement.

The Government is committed to publishing details of ministers' meetings with external organisations on a quarterly basis. Publications for the Northern Ireland Office can be found on gov.uk.

Louise Haigh: [\[35772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether the information sharing procedures and protocols available to Operation Kenova will be made available to the information recovery body outlined in the Command Paper on Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's past published on 14 July 2021.

Louise Haigh: [\[35774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Command Paper, Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past, published 14 July 2021, whether a new information recovery body will have access to full police and disclosure powers including access to intelligence, powers of arrest, search, the right to seize documents and information sharing procedures in line with operation Kenova with MI5, PSNI and the Ministry of Defence.

Louise Haigh: [\[35775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Command Paper on Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past published on 14 July 2021, what training staff at an information recovery body will be given to enable them to take responsibility for determining the relevancy of material help by a state organisation irrespective of how sensitive that information may be.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government's proposals outlined in the command paper published on 14 July, including those regarding a new independent information recovery body, are intended to inform ongoing intensive engagement with the Irish Government, Northern Ireland parties and other stakeholders with an interest in this issue.

All elements of these proposals - including their practical operation - are subject to ongoing consideration and discussion.

Louise Haigh: [\[35773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Command Paper, Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's past, published 14 July 2021, whether the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals to prevent inquests relating to the legacy of the past from continuing.

Mr Robin Walker:

As outlined in the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's oral statement of 14 July, and in the command paper published afterwards, the Government wants to move away from a focus on criminal justice outcomes - which is delivering for nobody - and instead focus on effective information recovery and reconciliation measures.

The Government's proposals are intended to inform ongoing intensive engagement with the Irish Government, Northern Ireland parties and other stakeholders with an

interest in this issue. All elements of these proposals - and any alternative proposals - are subject to ongoing consideration and discussion.

Louise Haigh: [\[35776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Command Paper on Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past published on 14 July 2021, whether he plans to release the full human rights impact assessment for those proposals.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Government is fully committed to fulfilling its human rights obligations.

On 19 July, the Government published on gov.uk a Section 75 Equality Screening Form for its proposals to address the legacy of the Troubles, as set out by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 14 July. Appropriate impact assessments will be provided in due course.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports: Non-domestic Rates

Seema Malhotra: [\[35985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to support airports with annual business rates higher than £8 million.

Robert Courts:

The Airport and Ground Operations Scheme provides eligible commercial airports and ground operators support towards permitted fixed costs subject to certain conditions. These eligible businesses can claim based on the equivalent of their business rates liabilities, or COVID losses, whichever is lower, up to the scheme cap.

The cap strikes an appropriate balance between supporting airports in financial distress while protecting the interests of the taxpayer.

In total, we estimate that by the end of September 2021 the air transport sector (airlines, airports and related services) will have benefited from around £7bn of Government support since the start of the pandemic. This includes support through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

■ Aviation: Carbon Emissions

Kerry McCarthy: [\[35557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the consultation Jet zero: our strategy for net zero aviation on published on 14 July 2021, what proportion of the aviation sector's carbon dioxide removal from the atmosphere is expected to come from (a) engineered carbon dioxide removal technologies and (b) natural systems, in (i) 2040 and (ii) 2050.

Robert Courts:

The Jet Zero Strategy will prioritise in-sector reductions through operational improvements and technological advancements, then seek to address residual carbon emissions through greenhouse gas removals.

At this stage, deployment trajectories for different greenhouse gas removal technologies are uncertain. We do not have a breakdown of how much carbon dioxide we expect to be removed through engineered technologies versus natural systems.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is developing policy for the demonstration and deployment of greenhouse gas removals which will help inform our trajectory to net zero aviation by 2050.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination****Drew Hendry:**[\[35749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions officials in his Department have had with their European counterparts on (a) mutual acceptance of vaccine status certificates and (b) how to evidence someone who cannot receive the vaccine.

Robert Courts:

We are engaging with international partners, including the EU, and will provide an update in due course on how we will approach vaccinated individuals from other countries. We recognise that there are those who cannot have a vaccine for medical reasons, and we will work to ensure they are not disadvantaged. We have already set out our approach for those on clinical trials, and similarly will set out our approach for those with medical exemptions soon.

■ **Department for Transport: Ethnic Groups****Ruth Jones:**[\[35884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many Black and ethnic minority staff are employed by his Department.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The number of staff employed by the department who have declared themselves to be Black and ethnic minority is 1125 as of the 30th June 2021.

The breakdown between the central Department and the Executive Agencies is as follows:

DFTc	665
DVLA	106
DVSA	234
MCA	102

DFTc	665
VCA	18
Total	1125

Note that the figures for black and ethnic minority staff do not include members of staff who have chosen either not to interact with the voluntary declaration system, or those who have chosen to interact but have declared that they prefer not to say.

The current declaration rate for ethnicity for the department is currently 86.61%.

■ Driving Licences

Nick Fletcher: [\[34082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to revert to the system for renewing driving licences that was in use prior to the covid-19 outbreak, including the process used for (a) renewing and (b) reapplying for a short-term medical licence.

Rachel Maclean:

The process for renewing driving licences, including for those with medical conditions, has not changed.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) online services have been available throughout the pandemic and are the quickest and easiest way to renew a driving licence.

Paper renewal applications will take longer. Ongoing industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union, fewer operational staff on site at the DVLA to allow for social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements and an increased demand for services has led to delays in dealing with paper applications.

The DVLA has recently trialed a simplified renewal process for some medical conditions. This has significantly reduced turnaround times for some drivers.

However, there will be further delays if the DVLA requires further medical information from NHS health care staff before it can make a licensing decision.

■ Driving Tests: Lanarkshire

Marion Fellows: [\[35736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the extent of the backlog in practical driving test availability in Lanarkshire; and what steps he is taking to tackle that backlog.

Rachel Maclean:

The average waiting time for practical car driving tests in Lanarkshire is 19.75 weeks (East Kilbride 19 weeks, Airdrie 23 weeks, Hamilton 24 weeks, Lanark 13 weeks).

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has put in place a number of measures to increase practical driving tests. These include offering overtime and annual leave buy back to examiners, asking all those qualified to conduct tests, but who do not do so as part of their current day job, to return to conducting tests, and conducting out of hours testing (such as on public holidays). The DVSA has also started a recruitment campaign to increase the number of examiners.

The aim is to increase testing capacity and reduce the backlog as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining a COVID-secure service for customers and examiners.

■ **Electric Scooters: Pilot Schemes**

Ruth Edwards: [\[34624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the illegal use of electric scooters hired under the Government's e-scooter rental trials.

Rachel Maclean:

Operators are only permitted to run trials if they have engaged with local authorities and the local police force to ensure that any issues regarding enforcement of e-scooter rules are dealt with swiftly. Additionally, all operators must have a plan in place to prevent riders using trial e-scooters on the pavement. Operators in trial areas utilise 'geofencing' technology to reduce speeds in busy, contested areas and creating 'no-go zones'. They also provide a range of training options for users, both in-person and via online modules. They are able to suspend and also delete accounts where riders have failed to follow the rules of the trial.

The police will take action against rider behaviour, whether private or rental, for offences including drink driving; riding on the footway; contravening red traffic lights and using a mobile phone. Private e-scooters, being ridden illegally will be issued with fixed penalty notices for contravening cycle lanes, riding without insurance and/or riding without a driving licence.

Operators are required to cooperate with the police on these and other matters and provide information necessary to investigate any criminal offences raised by the local police force.

■ **Great British Railways**

Rachael Maskell: [\[33983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what locations are under consideration to headquarter Great British Railways.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are still in the early stages of the Rail Transformation Programme and will consider options for the location of Great British Railways' headquarters in due course.

■ Heathrow Airport

Fleur Anderson: [\[35916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Prime Minister on the construction of a third runway at Heathrow airport.

Robert Courts:

The Government has always been clear that Heathrow expansion remains a private sector project which must meet strict criteria on climate change, air quality, and noise, as well as being privately financed, affordable, and delivered in the best interest of consumers.

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with Prime Minister on a wide range of transport matters.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

Kerry McCarthy: [\[35560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many (a) Driver Certificate of Professional Competence and (b) large goods vehicle driving tests were taken in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021 to date; and how many of those tests taken were successfully passed.

Rachel Maclean:

CPC TESTS

	Conducted	Passed	% Pass rate
01/01/2019 - 31/12/2019	7,130	6,656	93.4
01/01/2020 - 31/12/2020	4,403	4,152	94.3
01/01/2021 - 31/03/2021	47	42	89.4

LGV tests

	Conducted	Passed	
01/01/2019 - 31/12/2019	73,554	43,282	58.8
01/01/2020 - 31/12/2020	42,200	24,626	58.4
01/01/2021 -	624	475	76.1

CPC TESTS

31/03/2021

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: EU Countries**Giles Watling:** [\[34586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the new cabotage rules set out in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, what recent assessment he has made of ways to ease new restrictions on cabotage and road haulage for tours operating from the UK.

Giles Watling: [\[34587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress he has made on the publication of guidance for (a) splitter vans and (b) all other vehicles used by artists touring in the EU.

Giles Watling: [\[34588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made with the EU on negotiating a cultural exemption on cabotage limits for UK hauliers involved in touring activities in the EU.

Giles Watling: [\[34589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of new cabotage rules set out by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement on UK hauliers involved in touring activities in the EU.

Rachel Maclean:

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) allows EU hauliers to continue to operate to, from, through and within the UK without the need for permits. The TCA ensures that the vast majority of journeys will continue as they did before the end of the transition period.

The Department for Transport continues to have regular discussions with colleagues across Whitehall on this issue, and is working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport through their Touring Working Group. The Department also continues engage directly with the road haulage sector to help them adapt to the new rules under the TCA.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[33174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of reforming driving licences for (a) Heavy Goods Vehicles and (b)

Passenger Carrying Vehicles to be weight-based for tackling the driver shortages in the HGV industry.

Rachel Maclean:

We have held initial discussions with some elements of the vocational training sector, and with organisations with delegated examiners, about delegating to them the authority to sign-off the manoeuvres element of the practical test needed to acquire a HGV driving licence. This potential reform in the process would allow DVSA examiners to focus on the on-road element of and increase the number of tests conducted, though this would need a regulatory amendment.

When considering whether drivers in the coach and bus industry would provide a suitable pool of qualified drivers to relieve the HGV driver shortage, we must take into account labour pressures in the bus sector. We continue to keep all options under review.

■ **London North Eastern Railway: Recruitment**

Ian Mearns:

[\[35604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many additional station staff London North Eastern Railway has hired during the covid-19 outbreak; at what (a) locations, (b) job grades and (c) salaries; and whether those staff have been employed (i) on a temporary or permanent basis and (ii) directly or via a recruitment agency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

London Northern Eastern Railway (LNER) have not hired additional station staff as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, at the start of pandemic, LNER redeployed staff from other frontline roles to provide additional support at stations. These staff helped to manage queuing and helped to ensure social distancing was maintained at stations. Additionally, LNER's cleaning contractor redeployed some of their furloughed cleaning staff to provide enhanced cleaning at LNER stations.

■ **London Underground: Trains**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[33170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether officials of his Department have had discussions with representatives of Transport for London on whether steps are being taken to prepare the London Underground system for driverless trains.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[33171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether officials of his Department have had discussions with the Mayor for London on whether he is taking steps to prepare the London Underground system for driverless trains.

Rachel Maclean:

The Extraordinary Funding and Financing Agreement of 1 June 2021, between the Government and the Mayor of London, sets out that the Department for Transport (DfT) will lead a joint programme with Transport for London (TfL) on the

implementation of Driverless Trains on the London Underground. That agreement was the subject of discussions between the Secretary of State for Transport and the Mayor of London, and DfT and TfL have since held a number of discussions on this issue.

■ Network Rail: Recruitment

Ian Mearns: [\[35603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many additional station staff Network Rail has hired during the covid-19 outbreak; at what (a) locations, (b) job grades and (c) salaries; and whether those staff have been employed (i) on a temporary or permanent basis and (ii) directly or via a recruitment agency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There are currently 1011 Network Rail staff working at the 20 stations it is responsible for managing. This is an increase of 45 from 23 March 2020, at the start of the pandemic. Of these 1011 staff, 982 are employed on permanent contracts and 29 have been employed on fixed term or contingent contracts.

The number of contingent staff deployed at Network Rail's stations has fluctuated throughout the course of the pandemic. The number of contingent agency staff deployed at Network Rail's stations peaked in May / June 2020 at approximately 500, when additional customer assurance was provided following the relaxation of Covid restrictions and timetable changes at that time. The salaries of agency staff is held by the agencies.

The table in the attached document sets out a comparison of staff numbers at Network Rail managed stations between March 2020 and July 2021. This is broken down by location.

Attachments:

1. Staff numbers at Network Rail [Table - Staff numbers at Network Rail.docx]

■ Northern Trains: Recruitment

Ian Mearns: [\[35605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many additional station staff Northern Trains has hired during the covid-19 outbreak; at what (a) locations, (b) job grades and (c) salaries; and whether those staff have been employed (i) on a temporary or permanent basis and (ii) directly or via a recruitment agency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Northern Trains Limited has worked with its services contractor to recruit and train additional staff, across its network, to facilitate a heightened cleaning regime.

■ Oxford-Hereford Railway Line

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[32381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to progress plans to re-double the North Cotswold Line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is currently considering the Strategic Outline Business Case resubmitted by the North Cotswold Line Task Force in February 2021, which sets out their proposals for transforming services on the route. A decision on whether the scheme can enter the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline will be made shortly.

■ Public Transport: Ventilation

Jim McMahon:

[\[35822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 July 2021 to Question 29872 on Public Transport: Ventilation, what the budget is for enforcement activities for ventilation in each of the last ten years for (a) buses, (b) trains and (c) other forms of public transport; what enforcement action has been taken in respect of ventilation on (i) buses, (ii) trains and (iii) other forms of public transport in each of the last ten years; and when he last met with industry bodies representing operators of (A) buses, (B) trains and (C) other forms of public transport to discuss ventilation.

Rachel Maclean:

Transport companies must make sure that there is an adequate supply of fresh air in enclosed areas and this has not changed during the pandemic.

The type of ventilation in use across vehicles on the UK public transport network, varies according to vehicle age and vehicle type. Some older rail rolling stock and almost all UK buses are reliant on opening windows and doors for passenger ventilation.

The Office of Rail and Road carries out health and safety enforcement of railway operators, but there is not a specific budget covering ventilation matters and the regulator does not hold records for specific ventilation enforcement activities. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the ORR has encouraged all train and station operators to review their risk assessments and is continuing to monitor duty holders' safety management systems and risk assessment arrangements.

For vehicles with Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems, the exact standard which the ventilation meets will be dependent on the standard in place when the vehicle was designed. Measuring ventilation rates is extremely difficult, with the need to consider stopping patterns, occupation rates and weather conditions in addition to the capability of any HVAC systems in place.

We are working with transport operators to identify areas of poor ventilation for improvement following SAGE and HSE guidance to further ensure that ventilation on public transport is adequate. Our recent safer transport guidance for operators includes measures to assess and address the risk of Covid-19.

■ Reading Buses

Grahame Morris: [\[35602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2021 to Question 30342 on Buses: Ventilation, if the Department will seek information on the air filtration system used by Reading Buses.

Rachel Maclean:

The national bus strategy for England is one of the Government's key strategies and encouraging people to return to using buses will play a vital role in helping with the recovery of the sector. The Government is eager to learn of any technological developments that operators are putting in place to assist with the safety, wellbeing and reassurance of the travelling public. We will continue to engage with operators to understand their ventilation systems and other interventions and will ensure this includes Reading Buses.

■ Transport: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [\[35652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to issue guidance to transport providers on the protection of workers who are vulnerable to infection from covid-19 because they (a) have an underlying health condition, are (b) immunocompromised or (c) immunosuppressed.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department will continue to provide clear guidance to transport operators on how to provide safer workplaces, based on The Health and Safety Executive guidance on protecting vulnerable workers. This includes measures that can be taken to assess and address the risks of COVID-19. This also includes guidance to operators that they should continue to support workers in high risk groups and discuss any concerns individuals may have around their particular circumstance.

The Department will also encourage transport operators to consider the reasonable adjustments needed for staff with underlying health conditions and how these fit with other obligations to workers arising from employment rights and equality legislation.

The Government has published [guidance](#) for those people who have been identified by the NHS as being clinically extremely vulnerable. There is different guidance for people living in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe: [\[35493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what advice his Department is providing to recipients of the Indian-manufactured AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine who plan to travel to Italy over concerns that that vaccine has not been authorised by the EU Digital Covid Certificate.

Robert Courts:

Travel advice is a matter for the FCDO. The government is clear that all AstraZeneca vaccines given in the UK are the same product and appear on the NHS COVID Pass as Vaxzevria. The European Medicines Agency has authorised Vaxzevria and we are confident that travel will not be affected. The government recommend that all passengers check FCDO travel advice before travelling overseas.

Gill Furniss:[\[35824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress his Department has made on bi-lateral agreements for covid-19 vaccination certification for international travel; and when he plans for those agreements to be operational.

Robert Courts:

We are working closely with international partners on reopening travel and will provide an update in due course on how to safely reopen travel for fully vaccinated people from overseas.

TREASURY**■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme****Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[\[34066\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will delay bounce back loan repayments by 12 months to help support businesses while they are in the initial phases of reopening.

John Glen:

The Government has already taken action to give businesses the flexibility and space they need to repay their loans. Under the Bounce Back loan scheme no repayments are due from the borrower for the first 12 months of the loan, and the Government covers the first 12 months of interest payments charged to the business by the lender.

In order to give businesses further support in making their repayments, the Government announced "Pay as You Grow" (PAYG) options. PAYG will give businesses the option to repay their Bounce Back loan over ten years. This will reduce their average monthly repayments on the loan by almost half. Businesses will also have the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months (an option which they can use up to three times). They can also pause their repayments entirely for up to six months – and given the continued challenges businesses are facing, the Government opted to enable borrowers to make use of this option from the first repayment, which means that businesses can choose to make no payments on their loans until 18 months after they originally took them out. If borrowers want to take advantage of this option, they should notify their lender when they are contacted about their repayments.

■ Carbon Emissions: Finance

Charlotte Nichols: [\[34619\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the advice he received on the exclusion of nuclear energy from the Green Financing Framework.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[34620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications of the Barclays report, Nuclear for a decarbonized future, published on 2 June 2021 for the Green Financing Framework.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[34621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Green Financing Framework, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the conclusion in the report by Barclays, entitled Nuclear for a decarbonized future, that nuclear is net zero.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[34622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with respect to the Green Financing Framework, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policy of the Climate Bonds Initiative's inclusion of nuclear energy in its Climate Bonds Taxonomy.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[34623\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to reconsider the exclusion of nuclear energy from the Green Financing Framework in respect of the International Capital Markets Association Green Bonds Principles which include nuclear energy.

John Glen:

The government recognises that reaching net zero emissions by 2050 will require power to be generated from low carbon sources. The UK Government Green Financing Framework explicitly states that nuclear power is, and will continue to be, a key part of the UK's low-carbon energy mix.

Nuclear energy is excluded from the UK Government Green Financing Framework, which is in line with current international market standards for sovereign green bonds. The Green Bond Principles published by the International Capital Market Association do not address the question of nuclear energy. All other major sovereigns have explicitly excluded nuclear energy in their green bond frameworks.

Only two sovereigns (The Netherlands and Nigeria) have so far certified their green bonds with the Climate Bonds Initiative Taxonomy – neither of whom included nuclear energy in their frameworks.

The Barclays report on nuclear energy aligns with what is stated in the UK Government Green Financing Framework: that nuclear power will play an important role in achieving net zero. The framework however does not stipulate what the Government considers to be green and what is not – this will be the role of the UK Taxonomy. Recognising however that many sustainable investors currently have

exclusionary criteria in place around nuclear energy, the UK Government will not finance any nuclear energy-related expenditures under the Green Financing framework.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Alison McGovern:

[\[35612\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 29788 on Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and with reference to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) statistics: 1 July 2021, Table 12 - CJRS extension: employments on furlough by country, region, local authority and gender and Table 14 - CJRS extension: employments on furlough by age and gender, whether his Department plans to publish that data by country, region, local authority, gender and age as one dataset; and for what reason that cumulated data is not currently available.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs will publish additional information on the number of employments on furlough in due course in a future release of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) statistics.

Previously published statistics on the CJRS include the cumulative number of employments put on furlough at any time since the start of the scheme. Figures by local authority are in table 1a of the 1 July release.

HMRC keeps the contents of the statistics under review and have developed them informed by user feedback.

■ **Electronic Funds Transfer: Fraud**

Ruth Edwards:

[\[34628\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what engagement he has had with the Payment Systems Regulator on the powers they require to introduce mandatory protections for victims of authorised push payment scams.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to tackling fraud and ensuring that victims of Authorised Push Payment (APP) scams are protected.

The Government welcomed the publication of the Payment Systems Regulator's (PSR) call for views on APP scams in February 2021, which set out various potential measures for reducing APP scams and improving customer outcomes, including new requirements on payment service providers to reimburse APP scam victims. The Government is of the view that the introduction of Faster Payments Service rules setting reimbursement requirements on all scheme participants is the best possible solution to the issue of APP scams.

The PSR's call for views has now closed and the Government is engaging with the PSR and industry on next steps, including considering what further actions may be necessary to make progress on this issue.

■ Environmental Impact Assessment

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[35534\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Annual Report on Major Projects 2020-21, published on 15 July 2021, what assessment he has made of the capability of his Department to manage the (a) scope, (b) time, (c) quality and (d) cost of its 36 category A projects.

Jesse Norman:

The IPA has released a Deliverability Confidence Assessment (DCA) of GMPP projects in the Transparency document which accompanies the Annual Report. [1] (see deliverability assessment on column F). These represent the IPA's evaluation of a project's likelihood of achieving its aims and objectives, and doing so on time and on budget. Each DCA is followed by a departmental commentary that provides further explanation behind the GMPP projects' rating.

[1]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002103/GMPP_Government_Major_Projects_Portfolio_AR_Data_March_2021.xls

■ Klarna: Regulation

Chi Onwurah: [\[34501\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what regulations Klarna is subject to.

John Glen:

Buy-Now-Pay-Later firms which offer regulated consumer credit agreements must be authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and comply with FCA rules and the relevant parts of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 for any regulated lending they undertake.

Interest-free Buy-Now-Pay-Later agreements repayable in under twelve months and in twelve or fewer instalments are currently unregulated. Firms offering these agreements do not currently need to comply with the Consumer Credit Act 1974. Firms which solely offer these agreements do not need to be authorised by the FCA.

However, firms offering these products must comply with the rules set out in the UK Advertising Codes, and are also subject to the Consumer Rights Act 2015, concerning the fairness of their contract terms, and the Consumer Protections from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 in relation to unfair commercial practices. Offending firms can be referred to Trading Standards and OFCOM for further action where necessary. The Advertising Standards Authority also published formal guidance about Buy-Now-Pay-Later on 1 December 2020 setting out its expectations on both providers and retailers when offering these services. It banned harmful Buy-Now-Pay-Later adverts in December 2020 stating that future advertising must not irresponsibly encourage the use of the product, particularly by linking its use with lifting or boosting mood.

On 2 February 2021, the Government announced its intention to bring currently unregulated Buy-Now-Pay-Later agreements into the scope of FCA regulation. The Government intends to publish a consultation on its proposed approach to regulation soon.

■ National Savings Bonds: Environment Protection

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[35960\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason nuclear energy projects are excluded from the new green savings bonds; and how his Department plans to attract private investment to support point 3 of the 10 point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

John Glen:

The government recognises that reaching net zero emissions by 2050 will require power to be generated from low carbon sources. As set out in the Government's Energy White Paper last autumn, nuclear power will play an important role in achieving net zero.

Some energy sources have been excluded from the UK Government Green Financing Framework, including nuclear energy. This is in line with current international market standards for sovereign green bonds, it does not represent an assessment of what the Government considers 'green' or affect an expenditure's eligibility for traditional financing instruments. We will review the framework on a regular basis with the aim of adhering to best practices in the market.

In December, the Government published responses to the consultation on the proposed regulated asset base (RAB) funding model for nuclear projects, which involves an economic regulator granting a licence to a company to charge a regulated price to users of the infrastructure. The funding model could help secure private investment and cost consumers less in the long run. The Government is continuing to explore a range of financing options, including the RAB model and the potential role of government finance during construction, provided there is clear value for money for consumers and taxpayers.

■ PAYE

Alison McGovern:

[\[35613\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the ONS release entitled Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK: June 2021, tables 11 and 12, if he will publish (a) regional and (b) NUTS1 and NUTS2 breakdowns of payrolled employees from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information; and if he will provide further breakdowns of those data by age.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC and the ONS jointly publish statistics on earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information. The next release will be on Thursday 17th August and will be available on the ONS website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkhours/bulletins/earningsandemploymentfrompayasyouearnrealtimeinformationuk/previousReleases>

Breakdowns by NUTS1, NUTS2, and age are already available individually in the statistics, along with a breakdown by industry. The range of these statistics have been expanded since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and NUTS3 was published additionally for the first time in July. Further additional breakdowns will be released over the next few months and will be announced through the ONS release calendar.

■ Public Expenditure: Environment Protection

Alison Thewliss: **[35714]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish further detail on the UK sustainable fund disclosure framework, announced in his Mansion House Speech on 1 July 2021.

Alison Thewliss: **[35715]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of cross-jurisdictional consistency when the Government implements the UK's sustainability disclosure requirements.

John Glen:

The Chancellor used his 2021 Mansion House speech to announce economy-wide Sustainability Disclosure Requirements for businesses and investment products to report on their impact on climate and the environment – and the risks and opportunities these pose to their business.

Cross-jurisdictional consistency and adopting international standards will form a key component of these requirements, which will streamline and build on existing sustainability reporting requirements such as our commitment to mandatory economy-wide disclosures aligned with the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, where the UK is already a world-leader. The regime will also incorporate considerations around adopting the global corporate reporting standard for sustainability being developed by the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation.

The Government intends to legislate to deliver this and will publish a Roadmap setting out its approach to green finance regulation ahead of COP26.

■ SME Brexit Support Fund

Hilary Benn: **[35505]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the (a) total number of applications made by businesses to the SME Brexit Support Fund, (b) number of grants that have been approved, and (c) total amount of funding in grants provided to date for each region of the UK.

Jesse Norman:

As of 19 July 2021, 5,414 businesses completed applications for grants of up to £2,000. Of this number, 4,736 have been offered a grant.

A regional breakdown of the figures shows that businesses in England have been offered £5,862,213, in Scotland £387,387, in Wales £196,546 and in Northern Ireland £360,174.

Treasury: Directors**Cat Smith:**[\[35723\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which of his Department's non-executive directors were appointed through open competition.

Kemi Badenoch:

All HM Treasury Non-Executive Directors were recruited according to the guidance set out in the Corporate governance code for central government departments.

HM Treasury announces the appointments (including reappointment dates) of Non-Executive Directors, as well as their experience, in the Annual Report and Accounts. Our current Non-Executives are covered in the following Annual Report and Accounts.

[Annual Report and Accounts 2014-15](#) (Page 24, 41)

[Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16](#) (Page 41)

[Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19](#) (Page 45)

WORK AND PENSIONS**Attendance Allowance****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[35523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the change has been in attendance allowance award success rates from 2012 to 2020.

Guy Opperman:

The Attendance Allowance Award Success Rate for the 2012/13 (full financial year) was 75.2% and the rate for 2020/21 (full financial year) was 88.9%.

Source: Output from Attendance Allowance Computer System (AACS)

Business Premises: Ventilation**Edward Miliband:**[\[35564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2021 to Question 30321 on Business Premises: Coronavirus, what budget has been made available for enforcement activities in respect of business premises ventilation in each of the last 10 years; what enforcement action has been taken in respect of

ventilation of business premises in each of the last 10 years; and when she most recently discussed ventilation of business premises with national bodies representing businesses.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) allocates resources based on planned levels of activity to deliver its published strategy and plans. It does not allocate budgets by specific risk areas such as business premises ventilation, but inspectors will take action to respond to poor ventilation if identified during regulatory activity.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the risks associated with poor general ventilation in a workplace increased due to the risk of transmitting coronavirus. HSE has carried out more than 300,000 interventions since the start of the pandemic, to check how businesses are implementing measures to reduce transmission of coronavirus at their sites, including whether employees are working in poorly ventilated spaces. Where contraventions are identified, HSE inspectors will take action to secure compliance by providing verbal advice, written correspondence or serving enforcement notices.

HSE has also updated their website guidance to support businesses in addressing the issue of ventilation in businesses www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm.

HSE does not collate all enforcement action taken specifically in respect of ventilation. However, HSE's operational database shows that in the last ten years, there have been 7 enforcement notices specifically citing Regulation 6 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (as amended), which imposes general requirements for ensuring workplaces are adequately ventilated. Please see table below for figures:

YEAR	NUMBER OF ENFORCEMENT NOTICES CITING CONTRAVENTIONS OF REGULATION 6 OF THE WORKPLACE (HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE) REGULATIONS 1992 (AS AMENDED)
2011	2
2012	1
2013	0
2014	1
2015	0
2016	0
2017	0
2018	0
2019	3

YEAR	NUMBER OF ENFORCEMENT NOTICES CITING CONTRAVENTIONS OF REGULATION 6 OF THE WORKPLACE (HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE) REGULATIONS 1992 (AS AMENDED)
2020	0
Total	7

This table does not, however, provide a full picture of HSE enforcement in respect of ventilation, for example because enforcement action on coronavirus-related ventilation deficiencies may be taken under the general provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, without reference to the above-mentioned regulation (and in such cases cannot readily be identified on HSE systems). Further, HSE does not collate information to identify how often verbal advice or written correspondence has been provided by inspectors to deal specifically with ventilation deficiencies.

HSE has had numerous recent meetings with national representative groups in which the issue of workplace ventilation was discussed and is involved in scientific activities researching ventilation issues. The Secretary of State has not been involved in these discussions personally.

■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[35844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support the Government is providing to clinically extremely vulnerable people who have (a) been unable to work from home and consequently have been unable to work as a result of the nature of their employment and (b) amassed debts in covering basic living costs.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government has put in place an unprecedented package of support to help people during the COVID-19 pandemic, protecting livelihoods with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, and a range of temporary welfare measures. The Government has also worked with mortgage lenders, credit providers and the Financial Conduct Authority to help people manage their finances with payment holidays, and has taken unprecedented action to support renters, ensuring that no-one has been forced from their home during lockdown.

Although Shielding advice was paused on 1 April 2021, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is still available until 30 September, and clinically extremely vulnerable people may be eligible throughout this period, providing their employer agrees. Clinically extremely vulnerable people may also be eligible for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if they are sick or incapable of work due to coronavirus or other health reasons, subject to meeting the eligibility conditions. Those who are not receiving any support through the furlough scheme or Employment and Support

Allowance may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) where they meet the qualifying conditions.

The Government recognises that the full impact of COVID-19 on people's personal finances is still unfolding, and that some are struggling at this challenging time. To help people in problem debt get their finances back on track, the Government has agreed to maintain record levels of funding for free-to-consumer debt advice in England for the Money and Pension Service in 2021/22.

In addition to this, the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) has now been launched in England and Wales. A standard breathing space offers people in problem debt a pause of up to 60 days on most enforcement action, interest, fees and charges, and will encourage them to seek professional debt advice. A mental health crisis breathing space, with some stronger protections, is available to people receiving mental health crisis treatment. It lasts as long as the person's mental health crisis treatment, plus a further 30 days.

■ Health: Disability

Jim Shannon:

[\[35643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government has made of effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the health and wellbeing of disabled people.

Justin Tomlinson:

The impact of COVID-19 on disabled people, and those with health conditions, continues to be monitored across Government using a range of sources including regular engagement with disabled people and disability stakeholders to ensure the needs of disabled people are considered in the Government's response to COVID-19. The Disability Unit is working with the Office for National Statistics to improve our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people.

We are learning as much as we can, as quickly as we can about this virus, who it affects and how best to keep everyone safe from it and protect those who may be more vulnerable than others.

We are committed to ensuring all disabled people can play a full role in society. That is why we will publish a National Disability Strategy in the coming weeks which will take into account the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on disabled people and will focus on the issues that disabled people say affect them the most in all aspects of life.

■ Immigration: EEA Nationals

Neil Coyle:

[\[35686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many EEA nationals in receipt of in work, out of work, or health and impairment-related benefit have yet to apply for Settled Status.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the honourable member of Bermondsey and Old Southwark to my previous response on this subject : [UIN 31481](#).

■ Personal Independence Payment

Drew Hendry: [\[35747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Order by Consent issued by the High court on 13 July 2021 (CO/4263/2020), what assessment she has made of the potential merits of conducting an inquiry into her Department's handling of Personal Independence Payment benefit calls.

Drew Hendry: [\[35748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Order by Consent issued by the High court on 13 July 2021 (CO/4263/2020), whether her Department carried out an equalities impact assessment of its policy to make on-the-spot personal independence payment benefit calls to recipients of that benefit.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department's aim is that claimants are paid the correct amount of benefit at the earliest opportunity. Where new evidence or information becomes available after an appeal has been lodged, but before it is heard at a tribunal, DWP is able to revise a decision and increase the award where appropriate. In circumstances where the decision can be revised but not to the level the claimant is seeking on appeal, we contact claimants to give them the option to continue with their appeal or to have the decision revised, in which case they can still appeal the new decision. The right of appeal was always set out in the decision letter claimants receive notifying them of the new decision. Accordingly, we have no plans to further review the Department's handling of past calls.

We began contacting claimants in this way in 1998 consequent on the change in the law introduced by the Social Security Act 1998, whereby the Secretary of State may revise a decision in the claimant's favour even if they would not get everything they were seeking on appeal. An equality impact assessment was not conducted at that time and has not been conducted pursuant to the Equality Act 2010.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Older People

Munira Wilson: [\[35902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason people of retirement age are ineligible for the mobility component of personal independence payment.

Justin Tomlinson:

Government mobility support is focused on people who are disabled earlier in life; developing mobility needs in older life is a normal consequence of ageing.

You can claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) until you reach State pension age. Thereafter if you are receiving PIP you will continue to do so including the mobility component. If you have a change in circumstances where a health condition worsens after state pension age, you cannot claim the mobility component if you did not receive this previously.

A mobility component is also not provided to those who claim Attendance Allowance.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Jessica Morden:

[\[35574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to support an urgent independent inquiry into (a) the impact of the benefits assessment process on claimants' mental health and (b) preventing future deaths of those wrongly declared fit for work.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department's key obligation is to ensure that claimants receive the benefits that they are entitled to, in a timely manner. We continually review our processes to ensure that benefits assessment processes are accessible and supportive to all customers, including those with mental health conditions. We recently put in place a number of improvements to disability benefits assessments, to ensure that vulnerable customers are identified and all evidence relevant to the claim is taken into account. These include enhancing Additional Support Markers on digital case files to indicate vulnerable claimants.

The Department is committed to learning from cases where there is suggestion or allegation that the Department's actions or omissions may have negatively contributed to the customer's circumstances. We conduct internal retrospective investigations (known as Internal Process Reviews) to capture these lessons, and take them forward to inform future policy and service.

■ Social Security Benefits: Mental Health

Stuart Anderson:

[\[35895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that mental health is included in the decision-making processes on provision of social security.

Justin Tomlinson:

The impact of a claimant's mental health is taken fully into consideration when deciding on their entitlement to health and disability benefits. Decision makers receive mental health awareness training, have access to guidance and to the support of healthcare professionals when considering entitlement to benefit. The Green Paper on health and disability benefits, which was published on 20 July, explores how the welfare system can better meet the needs of disabled people, including those with mental health conditions, now and in the future, to build a system

that enables people not only to receive the benefits to which they are entitled but to live independently, and move into work where possible.

■ **Universal Credit: Coronavirus**

Claire Hanna: [\[35954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her Department's impact assessments for the removal of the uplift to universal credit.

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: Maladministration**

Douglas Chapman: [\[35698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2021 to Question 15239, whether her Department is on schedule to automate the process of proactively correcting universal credit payments at risk of being reduced when coinciding with the claimant receiving multiple wages during one assessment period by mid-summer 2021.

Will Quince:

We are currently on schedule to deliver the automation which will allow us to identify and take action when claimants are impacted by two earnings in the one assessment period by Summer 2021.

■ **Universal Credit: Private Rented Housing**

Paula Barker: [\[35955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the Landlord Portal will be made available to private landlords.

Will Quince:

There has never been a plan to expand the landlord portal for social sector landlords to the 2 million private sector landlords.

We provide clear pathways for private landlords to raise general queries or concerns about individual cases, for example, through our Partnership Manager network.

In May 2020 we also introduced a new online system for private landlords to enable better interaction with Universal Credit. Private landlords are now able to request a Universal Credit tenant's rent is paid directly to them online, which helps claimants who struggle with managing their money to pay their rent. This system replaces the arrangement of completing a form and submitting it via email or post.

■ Working Conditions: Temperature

Rachael Maskell:

[36680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of guidance on high workplace temperatures.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regularly reviews and, where necessary, refreshes guidance published on its website. HSE is satisfied that guidance on high workplace temperatures remains current and relevant.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, places a legal obligation on employers to provide a 'reasonable' temperature in the workplace. Employers should consult with employees or their representatives to establish sensible means to cope with high temperatures.

These regulations do not specify a maximum working temperature. No meaningful upper limit can be imposed because in many workplaces extreme temperature is not seasonal, rather it is created by the work, for example, in a glass works or foundry. Factors other than air temperature, i.e. radiant temperature, humidity and air velocity, become more significant and the interaction between them become more complex with rising temperatures. In such environments it is still possible to work safely provided appropriate controls are present.

Detailed guidance on workplace temperature and thermal comfort is available on the HSE [website](#). This includes how to undertake a thermal comfort assessment and measures that can be taken to improve thermal comfort.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):

[\[HCWS246\]](#)

UK Innovation Strategy

Today the Government is publishing both the UK Innovation Strategy, ‘Leading the future by creating it.’

Innovation is central to tackling the largest challenges the world faces, from climate change to global pandemics. The UK must be in the vanguard of the response to these challenges. That is why the Government has placed innovation at the heart of our Plan for Growth and so much else we want to achieve, from fighting coronavirus to achieving net zero and building Global Britain.

The UK has a long and illustrious history of world-leading innovation, from the industrial revolution to the vaccine development of the past year. Now we have left the EU, we can move even more quickly to respond to emerging challenges and global opportunities, and cement the UK’s position as a world-leader in science, research and innovation.

To this end, the UK Innovation Strategy sets out the Government’s vision **to make the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035**, placing innovation at the centre of everything this nation does. Through this we seek to generate disruptive inventions, the most tech-centric industry and government in the world, more tech “unicorns”, and a nation of firms and people that all aspire to innovate.

To achieve these objectives, we want to unlock business investment in innovation. This is a core objective of the Innovation Strategy, and my officials have consulted with over 400 businesses and organisations to determine the factors that could lead to an increase in business innovation.

In the Innovation Strategy we set out our plans against four key pillars, which will support the achievement of our vision:

- Pillar 1: Unleashing Business – We will fuel businesses who want to innovate.
- Pillar 2: People - We will make the UK the most exciting place for innovation talent.
- Pillar 3: Institutions & Places - We will ensure our research, development and innovation institutions serve the needs of businesses and places across the UK.
- Pillar 4: Missions & Technologies – We will stimulate innovation to tackle major challenges faced by the UK and the world and drive capability in key technologies.

Through these pillars, the Innovation Strategy aims to both establish the right underlying policy environment and clearly signal those areas where the Government will take the lead.

This Innovation Strategy is only the first step. In the coming months and years, we will maintain a laser-like focus on realising our ambitions for innovation. We will track a range of quantitative metrics to measure our progress in delivering our commitments, alongside in-depth intelligence from businesses and other innovation stakeholders. Innovation will also be a crucial element of our efforts to level up the UK economy. A detailed strategy for levelling up through research and innovation will be set out as a part of the Government's forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper.

I will place a copy of the Innovation Strategy in the Libraries of both Houses.

R&D People and Culture Strategy

I am also delighted to announce that the government has today published its R&D People and Culture Strategy, delivering on the commitment we made in the R&D Roadmap last summer. The Roadmap recognised that people are at the heart of R&D, and that we need talented, diverse people, with the right skills, working in an environment that allows them to do their best work and deliver positive outcomes for our society and the economy.

The R&D People and Culture Strategy sets out, for the first time, a whole sector vision that is backed by clear government commitments. It is a call to action to create a more inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable UK R&D sector, in which a diversity of people and ideas can thrive.

Through this strategy, we will set out actions that will bring the best out of people and enable talent and ideas to flow freely between academia, business, and other sectors. We will ensure that everyone's contribution is valued, and the UK has an outstanding research culture that truly supports discovery, diversity, and innovation, and offers varied and diverse careers that bring excitement and recognition.

The Strategy identifies three priority areas across which action is needed :

- **People:** *redefining what it means to work in R&D in the 21st Century – valuing all the roles that make it a success and ensuring the UK has the capability and capacity it needs.*
- **Culture:** *co-creating a vision of the culture we want to see within the sector - working together to make lasting change happen so that researchers and innovators with diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking can thrive and do their best work here.*
- **Talent:** *renewing the UK's position as a global leader in R&D in attracting, retaining and developing talented people, making sure careers in UK R&D are attractive to talented individuals and teams both domestically and internationally.*

A talented and thriving R&D workforce will be key for realising our science superpower ambitions, and the R&D People and Culture Strategy will play an important role in supporting the vision I am setting out in the Innovation Strategy to make the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035.

We have engaged widely with the sector to date on the issues identified in this strategy, and my Hon. Friend the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation and I are very

grateful to the hundreds of individuals and organisations who have contributed to their respective development. The Government will continue working closely with the sector to ensure the successful implementation of .

I will place a copy of the R&D People and Culture Strategy in the Libraries of both Houses.

Post Office Horizon Update

This House is aware of the distressing impact that problems with the Post Office's Horizon IT system have had on the lives and livelihoods of many postmasters.

Over the years, the Horizon accounting system recorded shortfalls in cash in branches. These shortfalls were treated by the Post Office as caused by postmasters, and this led to dismissals, recovery of losses by Post Office Ltd and, in some cases, criminal prosecutions. We now know this data was unreliable.

The Court of Appeal handed down a landmark judgment on 23 April 2021, which quashed the convictions of 39 postmasters. A further 12 were quashed in the Court of Appeal earlier this week. Further convictions have been quashed in the Crown Court. The Government has been clear that we want to see compensation delivered fairly and as quickly as possible. We have also been clear that it is for the Post Office to engage with the individuals in the first instance regarding how compensation can be paid. I am pleased to provide an update on the steps to begin providing compensation to postmasters whose criminal convictions were based on Horizon data and have been quashed.

We have listened to affected postmasters and want to see them receive compensation quickly. The Government has therefore decided to support the Post Office so that it can make interim payments of up to £100,000 promptly to individual postmasters whose criminal convictions relied on Horizon data and have been quashed, ahead of final compensation settlements being agreed with them. I am providing this support in my capacity as sole shareholder in the Post Office.

While we recognise that these interim payments may not represent the full compensation that postmasters may ultimately receive, and which will need to be determined between the Post Office and the individuals concerned, it is a means of providing monies to individuals at an early stage in the claims process. The process for finally determining the compensation to be paid will take time and will involve POL obtaining a full quantification of all claims. These claims need to be carefully examined so that postmasters ultimately receive fair compensation and the payments that they deserve.

In the meantime, the Government thanks the postmasters for their patience, recognising the impact that being wrongfully prosecuted has had on individuals and believes that an interim payment is a way to begin to address the hardships they have faced ahead of when the final sum can be determined and paid.

Post Office is contacting the legal representatives of postmasters whose convictions have been quashed with further information about interim payments. We expect Post Office to

issue offer letters for interim payments within 28 days of receiving a claim from eligible postmasters.

Government is committed to supporting and maintaining the Post Office network, which, along with the postmasters, provide essential services to our urban and rural communities. This decision supports the Government's priorities to support postmasters and to see the longstanding Horizon issues resolved. This support is in addition to the financial support BEIS has provided for the Historical Shortfall Scheme to proceed, which was opened to recompense postmasters who repaid shortfalls and did not have a criminal conviction. In addition, BEIS launched the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, which recently converted to a statutory footing, following the Court of Appeal judgment.

We understand that Post Office has already begun work to deliver the full compensation sum to postmasters and we will work with them towards this. With my status as sole shareholder in the Post Office, my Department continues to engage actively with Post Office Limited on this and will maintain strong oversight of this process.

Reforming the framework for better regulation

Our exit from the EU provides us with the opportunity to think boldly about how we regulate and for the first time in a generation, we have the freedom to conceive and implement rules that put the UK first. The UK will use its newfound freedoms as an independent trading nation to boost growth, increase competition and create jobs by revamping the way rules and regulations for businesses are set. We will use this freedom to unlock cutting-edge technologies, unleash innovation, and propel start-up growth, levelling up every corner of the UK. This will be a crucial part of boosting our productivity and helping us bring the benefits of growth to the whole of our country.

In seizing this opportunity, we are launching a consultation to seek feedback from interested parties on how we can reform the UK framework for better regulation.

The consultation sets out five principles that will underpin the Government's approach to regulation to ensure it benefits the British people:

- A sovereign approach : the UK will use its freedoms to take a tailored approach to setting rules in a way that boosts growth and benefits the British people.
- Leading from the front : we will act nimbly to support the development of new technologies.
- Proportionality : We will use non-regulatory options where we can, while acting decisively to put in place strong rules where they are needed.
- Recognising what works : Regulations will be thoroughly analysed to ensure they work in the real world.
- Setting high standards at home and globally : we will set high standards at home and engage in robust regulatory diplomacy across the world, leading in multilateral settings, influencing the decisions of others and helping to solve problems that require a global approach.

Proposals explored in the consultation

The consultation follows a report from the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform, which the Prime Minister convened earlier this year, and examines a number of the Taskforce's proposals for reforming regulation, including the adoption of a less-codified, common law approach to regulation. There is also a focus on the process for measuring and reporting impacts under the Better Regulation Framework. Areas examined in the consultation include:

- the adoption of a less-codified, common law approach to regulation;
- a review of the role of regulators, especially around competition and innovation;
- delegation of more discretion to regulators to achieve regulatory objectives in a more agile and flexible way counterbalanced by increased accountability and scrutiny;
- streamlining the process of assessment of impacts;
- moving to earlier scrutiny of impact assessments and evaluation of existing regulation;
- consideration of options on measuring the impact of regulation;
- re-introduction of regulatory offsetting; and
- baselining the UK's regulatory burden.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office Update

Minister for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):

[\[HCWS237\]](#)

On 12 April, the Government announced that the Prime Minister had asked Nigel Boardman to investigate the development and use of supply chain finance in Government, especially the role of Lex Greensill and Greensill Capital (including associated companies or companies in its group) and any related issues that Mr Boardman considered were in scope.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, Mr Boardman has provided the Prime Minister with a report which sets out Mr Boardman's findings of fact. This was provided to the Prime Minister yesterday and is being made available to the House today.

In producing this report, Mr Boardman interviewed 45 individuals, for a total of over 100 hours. Mr Boardman had access to all the papers he requested, totalling several thousand pages of written evidence. This is a non-statutory review, but in line with long-standing convention, the Prime Minister made clear at the outset his expectation that all Ministers, special advisers and civil servants, whether current or former, should cooperate fully. Those individuals who participated, or their personal representative where applicable, were provided with relevant documents to assist their evidence. They were then offered the opportunity to discuss the relevant documents and provide any comment during an interview with Mr Boardman. These comments were considered, in good faith, as part of the Review.

The purpose of the Review was to establish the facts and any lessons to be learnt. As set out in the Terms of Reference, the Review does not form part of a disciplinary process, nor is it intended to apportion blame or criticism to individuals. In establishing and setting out the facts, however, Mr Boardman attributes actions to named individuals, some of which could be read as critical of individuals. Where this is the case, the individuals concerned, or their personal representative where applicable, were given the opportunity ahead of the report being finalised to make representations on those sections of the report that could be perceived as criticisms to correct factual inaccuracies.

The Government thanks Mr Boardman for all of his work in examining the evidence and setting out his judgement on the facts of what occurred. Mr Boardman will be providing the second part of his report, including any specific recommendations, shortly. The Government will respond to Mr Boardman's findings, and any recommendations, in due course.

I am depositing a copy of the report in the Libraries of both Houses, and publishing it on GOV.UK.

■ Improving Cross-Government Functions and Digital Delivery

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove):

[\[HCWS247\]](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has strained our country's resilience like nothing we have seen out of wartime, and the public has endured huge sacrifices. Our mission now is to respond by transforming the country for the better, levelling up, and making opportunity more equal. To achieve these changes, government must be reformed.

The recently published [Declaration on Government Reform](#), set out a plan for the renewal and rewiring of government, as a means to deliver the better Britain that the public demands and deserves. As part of its focus on improving performance, the Declaration committed to improving the cross-government functions and strengthening standards and spending controls, to ensure the Government is delivering both excellence and value for money.

The Government is today publishing two independent and separate reports which each contain recommendations on how to improve the cross-government functions and digital delivery. These two reports are:

1. A Review of the cross-cutting functions and the operation of spend controls, by the Rt. Hon. Lord Maude of Horsham; and
2. Organising for Digital Delivery report presented to the Digital Economy Council.

Lord Maude's advice and the Organising for Digital Delivery report presented to the Digital Economy Council are critical to driving reform activity within the cross-government functions, and the reports were invaluable input in finalising the commitments and actions in the Declaration.

Lord Maude's recommendations are centred around a strong functional model with three essential elements of Leadership, Capability and Mandate. Strong progress is being made on the functional reform activity, overseen by myself and Lord Agnew, and a Board

chaired by Alex Chisholm, the Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service. Some examples of progress so far include:

- New leadership put in place for the Digital Data and Technology function, as announced in January this year. This included the establishment of the Central Digital and Data Office to work with the Government Digital Service and lead the Digital, Data and Technology function for government, also taking on responsibility for the Government Automation Taskforce.
- The Infrastructure and Projects Authority's publication of its mandate in January, which sets out clearly its own responsibilities and those of departmental Accounting Officers for major government projects and programmes. This is critical to making sure they are set up for success from the outset, supporting the Government to meet its ambitions.
- Steps have been taken to strengthen spending controls, and increase their reach and effectiveness. More organisations are now in scope and the controls are being applied more consistently within departments.
- Lord Maude's report advises on the need to set in train (or complete, where already underway) assessment and accreditation programmes; multiple functions are actively exploring how this should be achieved. Investment in professional expertise, recognising its importance, will be an integral part of Government functions. For example, the training and accreditation of Contract Managers across Government is being led by the Government Commercial Function, which is critical to driving excellent value for money for taxpayers.
- We are implementing a programme of modernisation to strengthen and unify the communications profession across Government, to provide more efficient, responsive and effective communication which delivers Government priorities with one voice. This will build fulfilling careers for people and allow us to attract and develop the best talent.
- The Shared Services Strategy for Government was published in March 2021. Following Lord Maude's advice, and working across Government, a core element of the strategy is the plan to consolidate all back office services into a maximum of five centres. This will achieve better quality services for staff, better people data and reduced cost, encouraging greater collaboration and improving interoperability across Government.

Copies of both reports have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

DEFENCE**■ Defence's Strategy for Dealing with Rape and Serious Sexual Offences**

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty): [\[HCWS241\]](#)

Today I am pleased to announce the Ministry of Defence's intent to publish a Defence wide strategy for dealing with rape and serious sexual offences in the Service Justice System (SJS).

As set out in the cross-Government Violence Against Women and Girls strategy published yesterday (21 July), crimes against women and girls is an unacceptable, preventable issue. To echo the Lord Chancellor in his statement on the End-to-End Rape Review on 21 June, rape and serious sexual offences are some of the most horrific crimes dealt with in both the civilian criminal justice system, and the Service Justice System. They have devastating and lasting effects on victims, and it is only right that action is taken to improve public confidence, make the system fairer and more effective and encourage victims to come forward.

The SJS deals with significantly fewer cases of rape and serious sexual offending compared to the civilian criminal justice system, however Service personnel must have confidence that they will receive the same high-quality care, support and justice in either system. Viewed as a proportion of allegations reported rather than just the cases which reach court, in 2020 the conviction rate in the Service Justice System was around 8%^[1] compared to around 2% in the civilian criminal justice system^[2]. Whilst we are confident the SJS is capable of dealing with the most serious offences it is still not good enough, both systems must do better. Which is why we will be producing a strategy that will pull together ongoing work across the whole of the SJS.

The Ministry of Defence has already been working with the agencies and bodies within the SJS to introduce improvements by implementing the majority of recommendations made in the Service Justice System Review (2019) by HH Shaun Lyons. This includes measures such as the creation of a Defence Serious Crime Unit; changes to how the Court Martial operates; and better support for victims and witnesses.

In addition, the Defence Secretary has asked Sir Richard Henriques to conduct an independent review into policing, prosecutorial and other processes for addressing allegations emanating from overseas operations. The review, which is due to report shortly, will set out recommendations on improving the investigative processes within the SJS.

Furthermore, the Defence Select Committee inquiry into Women in the Armed Forces, is due to publish its report shortly. The Committee has been looking at the experience of our female Service personnel from recruitment to transition and considering whether there are unique challenges that are not adequately addressed by the current policies and services. The Committee received evidence from current and former female Service personnel in their thousands, for which serving personnel were given special permission to contribute. We expect this report to make a number of recommendations in relation to

the handling of rape and serious sexual offence cases and we will review its evidence and recommendations with the full seriousness and sensitivity they deserve.

To build on these developments, and the recent publication of the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the Defence Secretary and I have commissioned a Defence wide strategy for how rape and serious sexual offences are dealt with in the SJS. The strategy will aim to reduce the prevalence and impact of rape and other serious sexual offending in the Armed Forces and improve the handling of those cases in the SJS. It will learn from the Government's recent response to the review of the end-to-end handling of rape cases in the civilian criminal justice system and provide reassurance that the SJS is also determined to do better and hold component parts of the system to account for delivering improvements.

The strategy will recognise the importance to our people and to the wider service community of the damage caused by sexual offending. With that in mind, we will ensure that support is provided to those who want it, and reassurance that it will remain in place for as long as it is needed. In addition, we will be open and transparent about what victims can expect from the SJS at all stages of their case.

The strategy will bring together in one place all the provisions which the Service Justice System already has for dealing with cases of rape and serious sexual assault and ensure they are coherent across the whole system and that the interests of the victim are prioritised.

[1] www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sexual-offences-in-the-service-justice-system-2020

[2] www.gov.uk/government/publications/end-to-end-rape-review-report-on-findings-and-actions

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Contingencies Fund Advance – Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Domestic Environment)

(Rebecca Pow):

[[HCWS236](#)]

Defra has sought a repayable cash advance from the Contingencies Fund of £275,000.

The requirement has arisen because there is an urgent requirement to proceed with the procurement of scheme administrators for the packaging Extended Producer Responsibility scheme and the Deposit Return Scheme in advance of Royal Assent of the Environment Bill.

Under Managing Public Money rules, expenditure to make preparation for the delivery of a new service prior to Royal Assent requires an advance from the Contingencies Fund. The cash advance will pay for essential expenditure related to procurement activities. The need to spend now in advance of Royal Assent is driven by the necessary timelines associated with procurement.

Parliamentary approval for expenditure of £275,000 for this new service will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for Defra. Pending that approval, urgent resourcing estimated at £275,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Anti-Corruption Update

Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Dominic Raab): [\[HCWS244\]](#)

Today, the UK has imposed asset freezes and travel bans on five individuals under the Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions Regulations 2021.

This is the second set of designations under this regime since the Regulations were laid in April 2021. The regime can be used to impose sanctions for serious corruption around the world. As set out in the Regulations, the activities covered are bribery and misappropriation, plus a range of different kinds of involvement in such bribery or misappropriation.

These designations address cases of serious corruption which have deprived citizens of vital resources in Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

In Equatorial Guinea, the sanctions target the Vice President, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, for his involvement in the misappropriation of state funds, corrupt contracting arrangements and soliciting bribes to fund a lavish lifestyle in various countries abroad. We have designated Nawfal Hammadi Al-Sultan, a former Iraqi Governor, who misappropriated public funds intended for reconstruction efforts and to provide support for civilians, and improperly awarded contracts and other state property. We have designated Alex Nain Saab Morán and Alvaro Enrique Pulido Vargas, businessmen with links to the Maduro regime, for exploiting two of Venezuela's public programmes which were set up to supply poor Venezuelans with affordable foodstuffs and housing. They benefitted from improperly awarded contracts, where promised goods were delivered at highly inflated prices. Finally, we have designated Kudakwashe Regimond Tagwirei, a Zimbabwean businessperson whose involvement in misappropriation was at the expense of the country's macroeconomic stability.

These latest designations show the UK's ongoing commitment to the fight against corruption. They send a powerful message to deter those involved in serious corruption around the world: you and your dirty money are not welcome in our country. We will continue to keep future designations under close review, guided by the purposes of the sanctions regime and the evidence.

■ British Council

Minister for Asia (Nigel Adams): [\[HCWS240\]](#)

1. I can today inform Parliament that the British Council, a non-departmental public body of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, will sell its IELTS

English language test business in India to IDP Education, for £130 million. The business will be sold on debt free, cash free basis.

Rationale

1. Like many organisations, Covid-19 has had a significant financial impact on the British Council's operations. The proceeds from the sale will strengthen the British Council's financial position and support its modernisation process.

Format and timing

1. Due to the nature of the agreement between the British Council and its IELTS partners, there is only one possible buyer of the British Council's India IELTS business. Ernst & Young provided an independent valuation, which concluded that the offer for the business was fair and reasonable.
2. UKGI has worked closely with the FCDO providing valuable advice on commercial aspects of the British Council's outline and full business cases for the transaction.

Fiscal impacts

1. I can confirm that the net sale proceeds of £120 million were above the government's retention value range.

METRIC	IMPACT (OVER A 5YR HORIZON)
Net sale proceeds	£120 million
Retention value range	Above
Public Sector Net Borrowing	No immediate impact
Public Sector Net Debt	Improved by a total of £120m
Public Sector Net Financial Liabilities	Improved by a total of £120m
Public Sector Net Liabilities	Improved by a total of £118m

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Integrated Care Systems

Minister of State for Health (Edward Argar):

[\[HCWS248\]](#)

Earlier this year, Ministers asked NHS England to set out options for boundary alignment in integrated care systems in specific geographies where upper-tier local authorities currently have to work across more than one ICS footprint and to assess the impact of changes to deliver alignment in each case. Over the last six months NHS England has worked with stakeholders to develop advice and analysis for each of the affected areas to inform the final decision.

This work has now concluded, with advice provided to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This statement sets out the final decision that has been taken for the areas in scope of the review:

- East of England
- Frimley
- Bassetlaw
- Glossop
- West Birmingham
- North Northamptonshire

This work has been underpinned by the principle that coterminous boundaries deliver clear benefits in integration between local authorities and NHS organisations. As approaches to integrated care develop it is crucial that we have a system that helps support closer working both across NHS organisations and between the NHS and local government.

On the ground, coterminous boundaries can also improve joined up decision making on delivery of services for patients. Improved alignment can allow areas to build joint care models around a wide variety of services including children's and adult social care services, public health, as well as community and mental health services which are often also aligned along local authority footprints.

There has therefore been a strong presumption of moving towards coterminosity, save for in exceptional circumstances where there were strong reasons for not doing so.

NHS England regional teams have conducted robust engagement activity with local stakeholder organisations to develop analysis of the risks, mitigations and benefits for any options for coterminous boundaries in the affected areas. This engagement has included roundtables with local NHS organisations, including the ICS's themselves as well as providers, commissioners and local authorities.

The Department of Health and Social Care has engaged at ministerial level with parliamentarians as well as national organisations such as NHS Providers and the LGA to ensure their views were reflected in the final advice to the Secretary of State and they had an opportunity to feed into the development of this work.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's decision process has involved careful consideration of a wide range of issues, perspectives and interests and a careful weighing up of risks and benefits, outlined in the analysis provided by NHS England for each area as well as having regard to his legal duties.

These have been considered on a case-by-case basis for each area and where NHS England has made a recommendation based on broad (not universal) local consensus, including a recommendation to retain the status quo, the Secretary of State has listened and has accepted these recommendations. There was not a broad local consensus for three of the areas within this review and as such no recommendations were made by NHS England. In these areas a balanced judgement was taken, weighing up the risks

and benefits of a change in boundaries and having regard to his legal duties by the Secretary of State.

Following this review, the Secretary of State has concluded the NHS should:

- East of England – this area is considered an appropriate exemption to the principle of coterminosity. No changes will be made to the existing boundaries.
- Frimley – this area is considered an appropriate exemption from the principle of coterminosity. No changes will be made to existing boundaries.
- Glossop – The decision has been taken to move the area of Glossop from Greater Manchester ICS into Derbyshire ICS.
- Bassetlaw – The decision has been taken to move the area of Bassetlaw from South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw ICS into Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICS thus delivering coterminous boundaries for the area.
- West Birmingham – The decision has been taken to move West Birmingham from the Black Country and West Birmingham ICS into Birmingham and Solihull ICS thus delivering coterminous boundaries for the area.
- North Northamptonshire – The decision has been taken to move the Lakeside Healthcare GP practice into Northamptonshire ICS and retain the Wansford and Kings Cliffe GP practice in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICS. This moves the region much closer to coterminous boundaries and reflects specific local considerations.

Local areas may still wish to keep under review how their boundaries are working in the light of any new legislative framework. Therefore, this decision does not preclude the important work many systems undertake naturally to ensure they have a system and boundaries that best suit local needs. We have already heard such requests from local stakeholders around Cheshire and Merseyside ICS, as such the Secretary of State has also announced his intention to review this system. The Secretary of State also intends to review the areas of Cumbria and North Yorkshire, as we are now aware, they will remain non-coterminous following the conclusion of MHCLG's unitarization process. These reviews will take place in two years, following the implementation, subject to parliamentary passage, of the Health and Care Bill.

Full details of these decisions and the decision process will be published on the Department of Health and Social Care section on the GOV.UK website shortly.

HOME OFFICE

■ New Plan for Immigration

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[\[HCWS245\]](#)

On 6 July, the Government introduced the Nationality and Borders Bill in Parliament. This is part of the Government's New Plan for Immigration, delivering the most comprehensive reform in decades to deliver a fair but firm immigration system.

The Bill – and the wider plan – has three key objectives:

- To make the system fairer and more effective so that we can better protect and support those in genuine need of asylum
- To deter illegal entry into the UK breaking the business model of criminal trafficking networks and saving lives
- To remove from the UK those with no right to be here

The introduction of the Bill was preceded by a consultation that was launched in March. The Government has carefully considered that consultation and I am today laying before the House a Command Paper (CP 493) setting out its response.

This has also been published on gov.uk.

■ **Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 – Appointed Person Reports**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): [\[HCWS249\]](#)

The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) Appointed Person reports covering England and Wales for the period 2017/18 to 2020/21, are today being laid before Parliament.

The Appointed Person is independent of Government and scrutinises the circumstances and manner in which search and seizure powers conferred by the Act are exercised in instances where prior approval is not gained from a justice of the peace and either no seizures are made or any cash or property seized is not detained for more than 48 hours.

I am pleased that we are now able to publish Mr McCourt's reports covering the period from 2017/18 to 2020/21.

The House will note that there has been a delay in publishing the Appointed Person reports since the 2016/17 report, when the previous office holder's tenure ended. Greg McCourt was subsequently appointed to the role for each of the three jurisdictions (England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) with effect from 1 August 2019. Despite the pressures and challenges of COVID, since his appointment he has been working across the jurisdictions and with POCA stakeholders to receive and assess reports on the use of the relevant powers of search and seizure.

Importantly, Mr McCourt, is satisfied with the operation of the powers in the period. There is nothing to suggest that the procedures are not being followed in accordance with the Act. While the figures for 2019/20 and 2020/21 show a small increase in the number of reported cases, it reflects more regular use of the powers in a broader range of live police operations, supporting the recovery of the proceeds of crime whenever they are encountered.

Mr McCourt has made two recommendations. Firstly, that a template should be developed to standardise the information that law enforcement officers provide and, secondly, that law enforcement agencies be regularly reminded of their reporting requirements under the Act. I support Mr McCourt's recommendations and my officials will work with him and our stakeholders to implement them both.

These powers are a valuable tool in the fight against crime. As the reports show, these powers have been used appropriately to combat crime. We will continue to monitor the way that the powers have been used closely.

Copies of the reports will be available in the Vote Office.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ LOCAL GOVERNMENT UPDATE

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): [\[HCWS234\]](#)

On 12 October 2020 [HCWS502] I told the House that I had issued invitations under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) to principal councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Somerset, including associated existing unitary councils, to submit proposals for moving to unitary local government in those areas. Councils in these areas had requested such invitations and had been developing ideas about restructuring local government in their areas for some time.

The consultation

On 22 February 2021 I told the House [HCWS785] that I was launching a statutory consultation on all of the eight locally-led proposals for reorganising local government that I had received on 9 December in response to the invitation. These proposals were - four from councils in Cumbria, two from councils in North Yorkshire and two from councils in Somerset. In the case of each area there is a proposal made by the county council for a unitary authority covering the whole area. In the case of North Yorkshire and Somerset there is a proposal from district councils for two unitary authorities in each area. In Cumbria district councils have made three proposals, each of which involve establishing two unitary authorities.

When launching the consultation I made it clear that I welcomed views from any interested persons, including residents, in addition to the named consultees. The named consultees were the councils which made the proposals, other councils affected by the proposals, councils in neighbouring areas, public service providers, including health providers and the police, Local Enterprise Partnerships, and certain other business, voluntary sector and educational bodies. The consultation closed on 19 April and I have received a total of 13,020 responses. I will be depositing a summary of the consultation responses in the libraries of Parliament.

The decisions on unitary proposals

I am now able to inform the House of my decisions as to which of the eight proposals, subject to Parliamentary approval, are to be implemented. The 2007 Act provides that I may implement a proposal with or without modifications. I have decided that in each of the areas to make no such modifications.

In reaching my decision, I carefully considered each of the proposals. I assessed each proposal against the three criteria set out in the invitation sent to all the principal councils

on 9 October. These criteria provide that for a proposal to be implemented, that proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery across its area; commands a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal; and any unitary councils to be established have a credible geography.

I have also had regard to all the representations I received, including those received through the consultation, and to all the relevant information available to me, including the results of the local poll that the Somerset district councils held during the period from 18 May to 4 June and the representations received about the poll and its conduct.

For Cumbria I have decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for two unitary councils - an East unitary council covering the existing areas of Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland and a West unitary council covering the existing areas of Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland. I considered that this proposal met all three of the criteria.

I also considered that the proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of Cumbria also met all three of the criteria. However, having regard to the size and geography of Cumbria, including the geographic barriers of lakes and mountains, and the rurality of its population, I have decided that it would be more appropriate to implement the East West unitary proposal, allowing for more localised decision making, which could be important given the geography of Cumbria.

I have decided not to implement the proposal for two unitary councils – one council comprising the existing areas of Barrow, South Lakeland and Lancaster City and the other council comprising the existing areas of Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden. I considered that this proposal did not meet the improving local government and service delivery and credible geography criteria. I have also decided not to implement the proposal for two unitary councils – one council comprising the existing areas of Allerdale, Carlisle and Eden and the other council comprising the existing areas of Barrow, Copeland and South Lakeland. I considered that this proposal did not meet the credible geography criterion.

For North Yorkshire I have decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the existing administrative county of North Yorkshire. I considered that this proposal strongly met all three of the criteria. I have also decided not to implement the proposal for two unitary councils - one council comprising the existing areas of Ryedale, Scarborough, Selby and the current unitary of York, and the other council comprising the existing areas of Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate and Richmondshire. I considered that this proposal did not meet the improving local government and service delivery and credible geography criteria.

For Somerset I have decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the existing administrative county of Somerset. I considered that this proposal met all three of the criteria, strongly meeting the improving local government and service delivery criterion. I have also decided not to implement the proposal for two unitary councils - one council comprising the existing areas of Mendip District and South Somerset and the other council comprising the

existing areas of Sedgemoor and Somerset West & Taunton. I considered that this proposal did not meet the improving local government and service delivery and credible geography criteria.

Future steps

I now intend to seek Parliamentary approval for the necessary secondary legislation to implement my decisions. I intend to lay the draft structural changes Order before Parliament around the turn of the year and they will include provisions for appropriate transitional arrangements, including for elections in May 2022 for the future unitary councils; for cancelling elections currently scheduled for May 2022 for existing councils, including those rescheduled from May 2021 as a result of the orders made earlier this year; and for the unitary councils to assume the full range of local authority responsibilities on 1 April 2023, when predecessor councils would be abolished.

Establishing these new unitary councils will be a significant step towards ensuring the people and businesses across Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset can in future have the sustainable high-quality local services they deserve. I expect all the existing councils and their partners to work collaboratively and constructively together to drive forward the process of establishing unitary councils and transforming local service delivery for the residents, businesses and local communities of these three areas.

I would like to reiterate that Government will not impose top-down government solutions. We will continue, as I am now currently doing, to follow a locally-led approach where councils can develop proposals which have strong local support. However, restructuring is only one of the different ways that councils can streamline and make savings, and deliver strong leadership. This has been the Government's consistent approach since 2010, when top-down restructuring was stopped through the Local Government Act 2010.

When considering reform, those in an area will know what is best, and as my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister set out in his speech on 15 July we remain committed to devolving power to people and places across the UK. We are open to devolution where there is strong local leadership, whether supported by two tier local government, unitary structures or various joint arrangements. Our plans for doing this and strengthening local accountable leadership will be set out in the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ The Abortion Services Directions 2021

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):

[\[HCWS238\]](#)

Today I am issuing a direction to the Department of Health, the Minister of Health, the Health and Social Care Board, and to the First and deputy First Minister, to commission and make abortion services available in Northern Ireland as soon as possible, and no later than 31 March 2022. I am also directing that there should be immediate support for interim services of early medical abortion, which are at risk of collapse.

I have a statutory duty to protect the rights of women and girls in Northern Ireland, imposed by section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019. This duty requires me to ensure that the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the 2018 Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Report are implemented in full. I therefore have a duty to “provide women with access to high-quality abortion and post-abortion care in all public health facilities”. I acknowledge and respect the deeply held views that individuals hold on this issue. However, it is the clear will of Parliament that the rights of women and girls in Northern Ireland are properly upheld.

The Government laid the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 and they came into force on 31 March 2020. Those Regulations delivered a framework for abortion services which struck the appropriate balance between delivering a CEDAW compliant legal framework that ensures the health and safety of women and girls, and gives clarity and certainty to the healthcare profession, but is also sensitive to the circumstances in Northern Ireland.

In March 2021, we took a further step and made the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021. We took this important step because a year after the 2020 Regulations were made, women and girls in Northern Ireland are still unable to access high-quality abortion and post-abortion care in Northern Ireland in all the circumstances allowed by the Regulations we made on 31 March 2020. This remains the case today.

The Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021 gave me a power to direct a Northern Ireland Minister, a Northern Ireland department and the Health and Social Care Board of the Public Health Agency to take action necessary to implement all the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the CEDAW report. The Regulations were debated on the 26 and 28 of April 2021 in the House of Commons and House of Lords respectively and both houses supported the regulations overwhelmingly, with a majority of 431 to 89 on a free vote in the Commons.

For over a year, the Northern Ireland Office has continued to work closely with the Department of Health, and other relevant Northern Ireland departments, trying to progress this work. Some service provision commenced on the ground from last April and I put on record my thanks to the medical professionals and Informing Choices Northern Ireland who have ensured that women and girls have had some local access to abortion services in Northern Ireland, and the organisations that have supported this work

Though I recognise the huge strain that Covid-19 has placed on healthcare in Northern Ireland, I remain extremely disappointed that full commissioning proposals have not yet been brought forward by the Department of Health and that the Executive has not an opportunity to discuss them. This ongoing stalemate leaves me no choice but to issue a direction. I have a legal and moral obligation to ensure the women and girls in Northern Ireland are afforded their rights and can access the healthcare as set out in the 2020 Regulations.

I am now directing the Department of Health to secure the commissioning and availability of the relevant healthcare services. The direction also includes an

immediate requirement for the Department of Health to continue to support the Central Access Point provided by Informing Choices NI (ICNI) who are key to providing Early Medical Abortion services. I have chosen to impose a deadline for the availability of commissioned services of 31 March 2022 to account for the Department of Health's estimate that it would take 8-12 months to make fully commissioned CEDAW compliant services available.

I am also directing the Department of Health and the Regional Health and Social Care Board. The direction includes a requirement to commission, provide and fund abortion services so that they are available in all of the circumstances in which abortions are lawful. This includes access to services in cases of Fatal Fetal Abnormality and Severe Fetal Impairment in line with the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No 2) Regulations 2020 in any service commissioned. It is for the Northern Ireland Executive to allocate all necessary funding for abortion services from its Barnett-based Block Grant or its own resources.

I am also directing the First Minister and deputy First Minister that once proposals are brought forward by the Department of Health, they must be included on the agenda at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

At the heart of this matter are the women and girls in Northern Ireland, who have been, and continue to be, denied the same reproductive rights as women in the rest of the UK. Parliament determined that this should be corrected and by exercising the power to direct, we will ensure that it is.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Machinery of Government

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): [\[HCWS242\]](#)

I am making this statement to bring to the House's attention the following Machinery of Government change.

With effect from 1 August 2021, the Vaccine Taskforce will become a joint-unit of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department of Health and Social Care.

To support this, responsibility for the Taskforce's work on vaccine and antibody procurement and supply and clinical development will transfer, on the same date, from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to the Department of Health and Social Care. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will remain responsible for vaccine and antibody manufacturing.

■ Response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's GCHQ Procurement Report

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): [\[HCWS243\]](#)

On 19 November 2020, the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) published their report entitled 'GCHQ Accommodation Procurement: A Case Study'.

The procurement of Nova South as the headquarters of the NCSC was a unique challenge, undertaken within a demanding timeframe and as a result, the Government acknowledge there are lessons that can be learned from the procurement process.

Today, the Government is publishing its response to this report.

I remain grateful to the Intelligence and Security Committee for its continued independent oversight and scrutiny. I would like to thank the former Committee for their work in the last Parliament, and I look forward to working with the appointed Committee in the future.

Copies of the Government response have been laid before both Houses.

TRANSPORT

■ Review of National Policy Statement for National Networks

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS235\]](#)

In 2019, our roads handled 88 per cent of all passenger travel by distance, the vast majority of it by car or van. Even doubling rail use across the country would only reduce this proportion to 75 per cent, assuming that overall demand did not rise. The roads also carry more than three-quarters of freight traffic, and of course nearly all pedestrian, cycling, bus and coach journeys.

Continued high investment in our roads is therefore, and will remain, as necessary as ever to ensure the functioning of the nation and to reduce the congestion which is a major source of carbon. Almost half of our £27 billion programme for England's strategic roads, though often described as for roadbuilding or capacity expansion, is in fact for renewing, maintaining and operating the existing network, or for funds to improve safety and biodiversity, deliver active travel schemes and tackle noise or pollution.

In the coming years, our ambitious and accelerating plans to decarbonise all road traffic, will transform roads' impact on greenhouse gas emissions. We have always said, however, that we must ensure the road network meets today's demands, not those of the past. In the last eighteen months, fundamental changes have occurred in commuting, shopping, and business travel, which before the pandemic made up 30 per cent of all road journeys by distance, and a much higher proportion at the times and places of greatest pressure.

Trends already underway in homeworking, online shopping, and videoconferencing, all of which had reduced trip rates even before the pandemic, have dramatically increased, and seem unlikely to be fully reversed. Against that, though, must be set the effects on road demand of the hopefully temporary move away from public transport during the crisis; of increases in delivery traffic; and potentially of increases in driving when electric and autonomous vehicles become common.

The current National Policy Statement (NPS) on National Networks, the Government's statement of strategic planning policy for major road and rail schemes, was written in 2014 – before the Government's legal commitment to net zero, the 10 Point Plan for a

Green Industrial Revolution, the new Sixth Carbon Budget and most directly the new, more ambitious policies outlined in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

While the NPS continues to remain in force, it is right that we review it in the light of these developments, and update forecasts on which it is based to reflect more recent, post-pandemic conditions, once they are known.

The aim is to begin the review later this year, and for it to be completed no later than Spring 2023. This review will include a thorough examination of the modelling and forecasts that support the statement of need for development, and the environmental, safety, resilience, and local community considerations that planning decisions must take into account. Reviewing the NPS will ensure that it remains fit for purpose in supporting the government's commitments for appropriate development of infrastructure for road, rail, and strategic rail freight interchanges.

While the review is undertaken, the NPS remains relevant government policy and has effect for the purposes of the Planning Act 2008. The NPS will, therefore, continue to provide a proper basis on which the Planning Inspectorate can examine, and the Secretary of State can make decisions on, applications for development consent.

TREASURY

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):

[\[HCWS239\]](#)

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will incur new expenditure in connection with the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021-22.

Parliamentary approval for resources of £4,206,110,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £4,206,110,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Further requests to the Contingencies Fund may be made as necessary to fund Covid-19 activity delivered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.