



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 6 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 06 September 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Antisemitism: Prosecutions

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[41129\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the CPS has adequate resources to prosecute hate crime against the Jewish community (a) on social media and (b) in communities across the UK.

Lucy Frazer:

I know the CPS recognises the serious impact hate crimes have on peoples' lives and will always seek to prosecute where there is sufficient evidence to do so, regardless of the offence or how it is committed. Their efforts have led to a continued rise in successful sentence uplifts for recorded hate crime, which this year reached its highest rate yet at 79.1% of cases.

Each CPS Area also has a Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor as a strategic hate crime lead and nationally there is a hate crime lead at Chief Crown Prosecutor level. A network of dedicated Hate Crime Coordinators operate across all 14 CPS Areas, providing experience and expertise on matters relating to hate crime and supporting front line prosecutors to secure sentence uplifts.

The CPS directly engages with communities affected by hate crime to ensure a greater awareness of the law and how it is applied. Within the Jewish community, the CPS sits on the cross-government antisemitism working group with the Community Security Trust, Board of Deputies, and Jewish Leadership Council. The CPS External Consultation Group on hate crime provides a further community perspective on prosecutorial activity.

■ Lancashire County Council and Liverpool County Council: Criminal Investigation

Damien Moore:

[\[36747\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the time taken by the Crown Prosecution Services to make a decision on whether to prosecute in respect of Operation Sheridan.

Lucy Frazer:

The Attorney General and I are responsible for superintending the Crown Prosecution Service but do not have oversight of specific cases.

Operation Sheridan is a live investigation under active review by a team of lawyers from the CPS Specialist Fraud Division. It is a large and complex case with significant sensitivities. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further on individual case details.

The CPS have confirmed that they have substantial legal resource devoted to progressing the case and there is also significant management oversight, at a senior level from both CPS and police.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[\[36610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support is available to businesses forced to close as a result of staff shortages from employees self-isolating following a notification from the NHS Test and Trace app.

Paul Scully:

As of 16 August, fully vaccinated individuals in England are exempt from self-isolation. They are instead advised to take a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test following a notification from the NHS COVID-19 app or a call from NHS Test and Trace. Those who are not yet fully vaccinated and those who test positive for COVID-19 are still required to self-isolate following a notification from the app or a call from NHS Test and Trace.

Daily contact testing (DCT) was also introduced to further support businesses in critical sectors, such as energy and food supply, and help them remain open. DCT enables employees to take a supervised test at their workplace every day instead of self-isolating. This has helped to minimise disruption to critical sectors and ensured staff are not put at risk.

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has provided unprecedented support to businesses and employees, such as through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. In England, the Government has provided £25 billion through cash grants, including through Restart Grants of £18,000 per business premises and over £2 billion in discretionary grant funds made available to local authorities to provide support in their local areas.

Eligible businesses have also not had to pay business rates in the 15 months to 30 June 2021. Most businesses continue to receive 66% relief for the remainder of the year.

■ Climate Change: Malawi

Patrick Grady:

[\[40965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions the Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change and UK International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for the COP26 Presidency had with representatives of the Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience programme in Malawi on the impact of the Government's decision to reduce funding for that programme, during her visit to that programme in August 2021.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As part of my visit to Malawi in August, I visited the Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience programme in Balaka district. I met with programme partners and, in my role as International Champion for Adaptation and Resilience for COP26, we discussed the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation in the district and the importance of locally led adaptation activities such as watershed management, climate smart agriculture, and access to finance.

■ **Concrete****Mr William Wragg:**[\[40958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is considering the use of incentives to encourage the use of concrete with lower carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr William Wragg:[\[40959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is considering the use of incentives to encourage the use of concrete with lower cement content.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to set a net zero target in law, and our Nationally Determined Contribution to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 is the most ambitious in the world. Delivering on this target requires the deep decarbonisation of all sectors. The Government is setting incentives to ensure a smooth transition to net zero across industry, and we are working closely with the construction sector to reduce its emissions contribution.

In June, we published the [National Procurement Policy Statement](#). This sets out the principles that all contracting authorities need to consider when procuring goods and services, and one of these is tackling climate change and reducing waste. The Government has also published [Procurement Policy Note \(PPN\) 06/21](#) which requires suppliers bidding for major government contracts to commit to achieving net zero by 2050, and to provide emissions reporting.

In March, the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) launched *CO₂ nstructZero*, a cross-industry decarbonisation programme. This prioritises development of innovative low-carbon materials including concrete, and it will advance low-carbon solutions for manufacturing production processes and distribution. The CLC will report regularly to Government on its progress against *CO₂ nstructZero* priorities.

In addition, BEIS funded the Industrial Fuel Switching Competition. The concrete and cement sectors are carrying out demonstrations of a 'zero carbon fuel mix' for cement kilns in 2021, funded by this programme. Further research funded by the BEIS Industrial Energy Efficiency Accelerator programme is enabling the sector to formulate and demonstrate new low carbon multi-component cements for the UK market. Through utilisation of new technologies and improved efficiency of

infrastructure, the industry is set to deliver net zero concrete and cement products across all supply chains by 2050.

■ **Construction: Materials**

Drew Hendry:

[\[40975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Construction Leadership Council's statement on Construction Product Availability on 22 June 2021, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support allocation transparency within the building materials supply chain and (b) protect smaller building firms from unfair practices in materials supply.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

At present, demand for building materials is outstripping supply due to high levels of global construction activity. Manufacturers are working hard to maximise production, but they are struggling to keep pace with demand due to lack of stock and Coronavirus-related disruption to production facilities, shipping and logistics.

The Government recognises the impact that this situation is having on many smaller building firms and we are working closely with the Construction Leadership Council's (CLC) Product Availability Group to monitor and manage it.

■ **Energy Charter: Biofuels**

Barry Gardiner:

[\[37348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the inclusion of biomass in the Energy Charter Treaty on transition to cleaner renewable energy sources including wind and solar.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK supports the process to modernise the Energy Charter Treaty in a way that helps the global energy transition, such as the right for States to regulate to reach emissions reduction targets and a stronger focus on climate security issues.

■ **Energy: Meters**

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[40565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 5 July 2021 to Question 24871 on Energy: Meters, and with reference to paragraph 17 of Annex B of the Government's response to the consultation on the smart meter policy framework post 2020: minimum annual targets and reporting thresholds for energy suppliers, dated June 2021, what policy measures the Government is planning to assess, develop and research to reach the very highest levels of coverage by the end of the Framework; and what estimate his Department had made of when that coverage will be reached.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

A number of policy measures have been considered and are already being implemented. These include publishing guidance to construction companies and other parties to support installation of smart meters in domestic new builds; confirmation that recipients of future Warm Home Discount Industry Initiatives will be provided with smart meters advice; and targeted funds to decarbonise the public sector and promote smart metering.

The Government will continue analysis of potential policy measures. We will seek input and ideas from stakeholders as the rollout progresses for possible future introduction later in the rollout where appropriate, and dependent on wider industry progress towards reaching high levels of operational fulfilment and delivery of consistently good customer service.

The Government's new four-year smart metering policy Framework, which commences on 1 January 2022 introduces annual, minimum individual installation requirements for energy suppliers, on a trajectory towards 100% subject to annual tolerance levels which were confirmed for Years 1 and 2 of the Framework in June 2021. The Government will consult on the minimum installation requirements for Years 3 and 4 of the new Framework during 2023.

Dr Alan Whitehead:[\[40566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 5 July 2021 to Question 24871 on Energy: Meters, and with reference to paragraph 17 of Annex B of the Government's response to the consultation on the smart meter policy framework post 2020: minimum annual targets and reporting thresholds for energy suppliers, dated June 2021, when the Government plans to define high levels of operational fulfilment and consistently good customer service.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government has worked with industry to identify, define and share good practice to help improve operational capabilities. We will continue to support energy suppliers to further improve operational fulfilment and customer experience.

The Government will engage with energy suppliers and other stakeholders in due course to help define more precisely the pre-conditions for the effective deployment of potential additional policy measures.

Dr Alan Whitehead:[\[40567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 5 July 2021 to Question 24872 on Energy: Meters, which consumer orientated policy measures the Government is considering to ensure households can realise the benefits of smart meters and drive completion of the rollout.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government is committed to ensuring that households can benefit from smart meters as soon as possible. The rollout is already making good progress, with 25.2 million smart and advanced meters across Great Britain, as of the end of June 2021.

A number of measures have been considered and are already being implemented. These include publishing guidance to construction companies and other parties to support installation of smart meters in domestic new builds; confirmation that recipients of future Warm Home Discount Industry Initiatives will be provided with smart meters advice; and targeted funds to decarbonise the public sector and promote smart metering.

The Government will continue analysis of potential further policy measures. We will seek input and ideas from stakeholders as the rollout progresses for possible introduction later in the rollout where appropriate, and dependent on wider industry progress towards reaching high levels of operational fulfilment and delivery of consistently good customer service.

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[40568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the report by the National Energy Action and Energy Action Scotland, entitled Maximising the smart meter rollout for prepayment customers, published in June 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the recommendation that the rollout of smart meters to prepayment customers should be sped up and prioritised.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Smart meters bring significant benefits to prepayment consumers and have been invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Smart prepayment services enable consumers to top-up remotely without leaving home and without needing to reach inaccessible meters. They also allow consumers to track their balance easily so they do not unknowingly run out of credit. The Government welcomes the insights in the 'Maximising the smart meter rollout for prepayment customers' report and are pleased to see that it recognises the transformative experience that smart meters deliver to prepayment customers.

The rollout of smart prepayment meters continues to make good progress, and energy suppliers are installing second generation smart (SMETS2) meters in prepayment mode across Great Britain. The Government has taken a number of steps to ensure that consumers with prepayment meters can benefit from smart meters including, for example, putting in place an explicit objective for Smart Energy GB – the industry body responsible for leading national coordinated consumer engagement – to assist consumers with low incomes or prepayment meters.

The Government and Ofgem have been clear that we expect energy suppliers to ensure that their prepayment customers are able to receive smart meters as soon as practicable. We welcome recent commitments by energy suppliers covering over 90% of customers to support customers over winter, including stepping up smart meter installations for prepayment customers.

■ Heating: Housing

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[40569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what mechanisms the Government plans to implement to facilitate the decarbonisation of off-grid homes.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Clean Growth Strategy committed to 'phase out installation of high carbon fossil fuel heating in buildings not connected to the gas grid, starting with new build, during the 2020s'. As set out in the Energy White Paper and alongside the publication of the Heat and Building Strategy, we are planning to consult on new regulations to phase out heating systems using high carbon fossil fuels such as oil and coal in homes, businesses and public buildings off the gas grid during the 2020s.

The Government is also funding several schemes as part of its commitment to facilitate the decarbonisation of off-gas-grid homes and to make them greener on the path to Net Zero.

■ Morrisons: Fortress

Patrick Grady: [\[37494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Competitions and Markets Authority on the proposed takeover of Morrisons by US private equity firm Fortress.

Patrick Grady: [\[37496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he made of the potential merits of the Government exercising its powers under the Enterprise Act 2002 to intervene in the acquisition of Morrisons by US private equity firm Fortress.

Paul Scully:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State, BEIS officials and I have regular discussions with the Competitions and Markets Authority on a wide range of issues.

■ New Businesses: Females

Seema Malhotra: [\[37473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support women entrepreneurs.

Paul Scully:

The Government's business support schemes have been put in place to help eligible businesses to get through the pandemic, including those led by women from all regions and backgrounds. Information on these schemes and other resources is available via the free Business Support Helpline. In 2020, 44% of the Business Support Helpline's callers were women.

Start-Up Loans, part of the Government-backed British Business Bank, provides loans and intensive support to new entrepreneurs, including a year of free mentoring from industry experts. Since 2012, over 40% of Start Up Loans worth £280m have gone to women (up to June 2021).

The Government asked Alison Rose, CEO of NatWest Group, to carry out a review of female entrepreneurship, which was published in March 2019. In response to her report, we set an ambition to increase the number of female entrepreneurs by half by 2030, equivalent to 600,000 new entrepreneurs.

■ **Nuclear Power Stations: Construction**

Craig Whittaker:

[\[38236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to bring forward legislation to enable a financing mechanism for new nuclear power stations.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As we stated in our response to the consultation on a Regulated Asset Base (RAB) for nuclear published on 14th December 2020, we believe that a RAB remains a credible model for funding nuclear projects, as it should reduce the cost of finance and thereby reduce consumer bills. The Government is considering the model in detail and recognises the need for legislation to implement.

■ **Solar Power**

Sarah Olney:

[\[38372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to (a) facilitate and (b) encourage the roll-out of solar panels.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Solar is a key part of the government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector. Achieving our ambitious 2050 Net Zero target will require significant increases in renewable electricity generation, and we will need to increase deployment across a range of technologies, including solar PV.

Since 2010, we have quadrupled the electricity we generate from renewables – installing 99% of the UK's solar capacity and over 800,000 installations – exceeding out historic projections on solar PV deployment. We now have over 13.3GW of solar capacity installed in the UK, which is enough to power over 3 million homes.

■ **Sunscreens: Sales**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[38466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of sunscreen sold in the UK is made in the UK.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[38467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, where the main manufacturers of sunscreen are located in the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Department does not hold this information.

■ **Takeovers: Private Equity**

Patrick Grady:

[\[37495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to prevent private equity companies (a) taking over UK-based firms and (b) sending profits arising in the UK to overseas tax havens.

Paul Scully:

The UK is open for business, and we welcome investment in our economy. The details of mergers and takeovers are primarily a commercial matter for the parties concerned, and there is an established process for considering whether there are specific public interest reasons for Ministers to intervene in mergers under the Enterprise Act 2002. These include matters relating to national security, financial stability, media plurality and public health emergencies. The Government has recently strengthened those powers through the National Security and Investment Act 2021.

■ **Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**

Dan Carden:

[\[41183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential economic merits of setting a target for floating wind for 2040.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government has set an ambitious target of 1GW of floating offshore wind by 2030, as part of the wider 40GW by 2030 offshore wind target. This will stimulate development in projects and investment in the supply chain. In addition to our existing floating wind projects, Hywind Scotland and Kincardine, there are also a number of floating wind projects already in early development.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals**

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[36725\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the recruitment processes for the appointment of the (a) Chair and (b) other appointments to the independent Military Advisory Sub-Committee.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[36726\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) minutes and (b) decisions of the meetings of the independent Military Advisory Sub-Committee.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[36727\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether members of the independent Military Advisory Sub-Committee are required to declare any links they have with the Ministry of Defence while serving on that committee.

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[36728\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, why the communication of the decision not to award medals to nuclear test veterans was delayed for 8 months.

Chloe Smith:

The assessment of historic medals claims is a matter for the independent Advisory Military Sub-Committee (AMSC) whose terms of reference are publicly available on gov.uk.

The independent chair of the AMSC was appointed through open and fair competition via a public appointments process. The AMSC has a majority of independent members who were recruited for their working knowledge of HM Armed Forces; experience of public service; experience of assessment and decision-making. It is important that members of the Sub-Committee advising on the award of military honours have relevant knowledge and experience. Members are required to declare any conflicts of interest to the AMSC secretariat before any evidence is presented to the AMSC and prior to any discussion of a particular claim taking place.

The AMSC meets regularly to discuss cases. As an independent Sub-Committee, the AMSC may determine for itself which medals claims should be reviewed. I understand that the case for medallic recognition for Nuclear Test Veterans was considered at length by the Sub-Committee.

It is not possible to give specific timings on the duration required for the Sub-Committee to consider a case, as each claim will be different and each case is carefully considered. The details of cases must remain confidential until the decision-making process is final. To preserve the confidentiality of the honours process, the details of decisions are not published. The outcome of AMSC reviews are announced on gov.uk once the advice has been fully assessed, including (where appropriate) via the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals to The Sovereign.

■ **Coronavirus: Public Inquiries**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[38324\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the chair of the covid-19 public inquiry will be appointed.

Rachael Maskell: [\[38325\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the scope of the covid-19 public inquiry.

Sir George Howarth: [\[40615\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress he has made on the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021.

Hywel Williams: [\[40625\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on preparations for the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021.

Hywel Williams: [\[40626\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister will sponsor the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021.

Sir Mike Penning: [\[40755\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on the independent public inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 12 May 2021.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[40941\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021.

Patrick Grady: [\[40963\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on preparations for the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021.

Alan Brown: [\[40991\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[41224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

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

Further details will be set out in due course.

■ Development and Use of Supply Chain Finance (And Associated Schemes) in Government Review**Angela Rayner:**[\[38275\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken to implement the recommendations of the Review into the development and use of supply chain finance (and associated schemes) in government conducted by Nigel Boardman and published on 21 July 2021.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the Rt Hon Member to my [answer to PQ 24213](#) on 27 July 2021.

■ Earl Mountbatten of Burma: Disclosure of Information**Chris Evans:**[\[37458\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government has a timeframe for the full release of the Broadlands Archive, including the letters and diaries of Earl Mountbatten.

Chris Evans:[\[37459\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department advised Southampton University prior to 5 August 2011 that it would be unlawful for that university to give public access to any of the private (a) diaries and (b) letters of Lord or Lady Mountbatten.

Chloe Smith:

As the hon. member will be aware, there are several FOI exemptions that remain in place for historic records. As I said in previous answers, this case is currently before the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights) and it would not be appropriate to make further comment whilst this is subject to ongoing legal proceedings.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity**Cat Smith:**[\[40973\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether provisional driving licences will be considered valid voter ID.

Chloe Smith:

Yes. As set out in Schedule 1, Paragraph 15 of the Elections Bill, provisional licences will be accepted as a valid form of photographic identification for the purpose of voting at polling stations. The Bill outlines that a licence to drive a motor vehicle

granted under Part 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 will be considered acceptable, and this includes provisional driving licences.

■ Exports: Small Businesses

Seema Malhotra:

[\[37474\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the level of exports from small and medium sized enterprises (SME) as of 21 July 2021; and what assessment he has made of trends in the level of exports from SMEs in the last five years.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA response PQ37474 [UKSA Final Response to PQ 37474.pdf]

■ Lobbying: Disclosure of Information

Fleur Anderson:

[\[38432\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Independent report entitled Findings of a Review into the Development and Use of Supply Chain Finance in Government, published on 22 July 2021, what recent assessment he has made of (a) transparency in Government and (b) management of ministerial lobbying.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the hon. Member to my [written statement](#) of 15 July.

The Government will respond to Mr Boardman's findings, and any recommendations, in due course.

■ Military Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40668\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department undertook a value for money assessment prior to the decision to lease the A321 aircraft for VIP travel for the next two years.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40669\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he made of the potential cost to the public purse of the VIP A321 aircraft only being able to be employed by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons his Department took the decision not to place the contract to provide A321 aircraft for VIP purposes to a public tender.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40673\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many A321 aircraft chartered from CTM for use by the Government are to be painted in UK livery.

Stephen Morgan:

[\[41192\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department plans to launch an open competition for a replacement lease service when the lease through Corporate Travel Management of the A321 aircraft in Global Britain livery, registered G-XATW, expires in two years or at the end of its potential extension period of five years.

Julia Lopez:

As has been the case under successive Administrations, non-scheduled air travel is necessary at times for undertaking Government and Royal Household official visits. This may be to the timing and flexibility needed, for security reasons, or due to the location being visited. It can also provide better value for money in the cases of larger delegations (which can include journalists).

The Government has procured a single A321 aircraft for use by Ministers and senior members of the Royal Family. The aircraft was procured through an existing Crown Commercial Framework (RM6016 PSTVS Lot 4) in order to achieve a timely, beneficial and cost-effective solution for the government. Early market engagement concluded that a wet lease was able to offer the best balance between value for money, availability and operational flexibility.

The Cabinet Office ran a competition through the Framework and the winning supplier then offered three best options to meet the requirement. Based on this, cost estimates for the procurement of the aircraft were considered against a range of options and it was assessed that an initial term of 2 years, with the opportunity for annual extensions to the full life of the contract, offered the best balance between value for money and flexibility.

The decision to procure an aircraft was based on a range of factors including guaranteed availability; a biosecure aircraft; UK branding; and an aircraft with a transatlantic range. Before the contract is extended beyond the initial 2 years, an assessment will be made on the most cost-effective option that will range from extending the contract to launching an open competition for a new contract.

■ **Ministers: Coronavirus**

Sir Roger Gale:

[\[37343\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Ministers were required to self-isolate on 21 July 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

This information is not held by the Cabinet Office.

DEFENCE

■ **A400M Aircraft**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[36547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many A400M aircraft were operationally available on average in each week in June 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The weekly average number of A400M aircraft operationally available for the month of June 2021 is given in the table below:

WEEK BEGINNING	NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT
31 May 2021	6
7 June 2021	7
14 June 2021	7
21 June 2021	9
28 June 2021	8

■ **A400M Aircraft: Procurement**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[36548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many A400M aircraft his Department plans to purchase for the Royal Air Force.

Jeremy Quin:

The UK has ordered 22 A400M aircraft of which 20 have been received, with a further two to be delivered.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[40702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the estimated cost is of upgrading the A400M fleet with additional equipment to replace the C-130J Hercules in the special forces transport role.

Jeremy Quin:

It is longstanding policy not to comment on Special Forces equipment and capabilities.

■ **A400M Aircraft: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[36549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much (a) Airbus and (b) his Department has spent on tackling reliability issues with Royal Air Force A400m aircraft as at 20 July 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

There is no additional cost to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for the programme of work to improve the reliability of the A400M, which is funded by industry. The MOD is unable to comment on the cost to Airbus, which is a matter for the company.

Mr Mark Francois:[\[36551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has sought compensation or other financial recompense from Airbus following problems with the A400m aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

Airbus are contracted to design and supply the A400M aircraft, including the rectification of technical issues. Airbus are held to their contractual obligations by the appropriate commercial mechanisms including retention of payments.

■ A400M Aircraft: Special Forces**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[36550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his planned timetable is for the A400M aircraft to replace the C-130J Hercules aircraft in the special forces transport role; and what estimate he has made of the cost of converting the A400M aircraft to undertake the role previously performed by the C-130J Hercules aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

It has been the longstanding position of successive Governments not to comment on the capabilities of the UK special forces, as to do so would put personnel and operations at risk.

Capability performance is assessed against the contribution it will make to counter the threats we face, now and into the future. The A400M, as the successor to the C-130J, is a highly capable modern aircraft, offering many advantages over the current C-130J capability, including a greater range and payload capacity.

■ Afghanistan: Army**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[41141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he made of the size of the NATO-trained Afghanistan National Army prior to 16 August 2021.

James Heappey:

The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) had an authorised strength of 352,000 personnel prior to 16 August 2021. Actual numbers of personnel within ANDSF prior to the Taliban offensive into provincial capitals are estimated to be considerably below this number. The Defence assessment of the operational strength of ANDSF at that time is 60-70% of the authorised numbers: approximately 230,000.

■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals

John Healey: [\[37357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of locally employed staff and their family members eligible for assistance under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

James Heappey:

The number of Afghans brought to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) since it was established in April is now double the number anticipated this year, and the scheme will remain open indefinitely to those who are eligible.

For this reason, the number of locally employed staff and their families eligible for assistance under the ARAP continues to grow as we continue to receive and assess applications.

Operation PITTING was the largest UK military evacuation since the Second World War. Throughout its duration, many thousands of British nationals and their families, Afghan former UK staff and their families, and many highly vulnerable Afghan people were brought out of the country on over 100 RAF flights.

Neil Coyle: [\[40914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan nationals have worked for or with UK forces posted in Afghanistan since 2001.

James Heappey:

We owe a debt of gratitude to those who risked their lives working alongside UK forces in Afghanistan. The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) has seen thousands of eligible persons relocated to the UK, including British nationals and their families, Afghan former UK staff and their families, and many highly vulnerable Afghan people.

Records indicate that 4,013 locally engaged staff worked for UK forces in Afghanistan. Over the course of UK operations in Afghanistan, many Afghans have worked with British forces in a wide variety of contexts. As such it is not possible to quantify an exact number.

■ Afghanistan: Immigration

Fleur Anderson: [\[41334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will expand the Afghan Interpreters Scheme to people engaged in UK-linked initiatives and human rights activists at risk of being targeted by the Taliban.

James Heappey:

The Government is strongly committed to fulfilling its responsibilities to current and former locally employed staff in Afghanistan. The Afghan Relocation and Assistance

Policy (ARAP) scheme is not time-limited and will endure, remaining open indefinitely to Afghan allies who were directly employed by Her Majesty's Government.

For those not eligible under the ARAP scheme, including human rights activists and employees of UK-linked initiatives, the Home Office is establishing the details of the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). This scheme will provide protection for those identified as most at risk, such as women and girls. The Government has committed to take around 5,000 refugees in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years, making this one of the most comprehensive resettlement schemes the UK has ever established.

■ **Air Force: Military Aircraft**

John Healey:

[37360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of Royal Air Force aircraft are flying beyond their initial design service life.

Jeremy Quin:

The RAF does not fly its aircraft beyond the recommended lifetime of the main airframe for safety reasons.

However, to ensure we get the maximum benefit from the investment in our aircraft fleets and that they remain fit for continued frontline service in an increasingly technological and dangerous world, it is routine for aircraft fleets to be subject to upgrades and life extension programmes.

■ **Ajax Vehicles**

Nick Smith:

[38229]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether all variants of the Ajax vehicles will have the capability to travel at the intended maximum speed of 40mph when they enter service.

Jeremy Quin:

All variants of the Ajax vehicles are expected to be able to travel at speeds greater than 40mph when they enter service.

Mr Mark Francois:

[40693]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the maximum effective range is of the (a) 40mm main armament on the Ajax AFV and (b) the 7.62mm co-axial machine gun on the Ajax AFV.

Jeremy Quin:

I am withholding this information as its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[40694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to use the Challenger 2/3 main battle tank in the tracked reconnaissance role, in the event that the Ajax AFV programme is cancelled.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department remains committed to delivering Ajax.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[40724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the origin is of using the name AJAX for the new Army reconnaissance combat vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The then Chief of the General Staff directed that the SCOUT vehicle should be renamed to better reflect the multi-role capability that the platform would become under the Armoured Cavalry 2025 programme. The name was recommended by senior officials as one that, with the other variant names, sat within one family. The choice was approved by the then CGS before being formally revealed at DSEI in 2015.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many rounds of 40mm caseless ammunition the Ajax Armoured Vehicle would normally be expected to carry on operations.

Jeremy Quin:

The provision of this information could prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces and so I must withhold the detail my right hon. Friend has requested.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost is of 100 rounds of 40mm caseless armoured piercing ammunition for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 13 July to Question 32310.

Attachments:

1. 32310 - Ajax Ammunition [UIN 32310.docx]

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[40704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will review his policy that the cost of the 40mm ammunition for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle should remain commercially confidential; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The cost of the 40mm ammunition for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle remains commercially sensitive. I committed to write to the Defence Select Committee on this issue and will do so.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[37381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the structure of the reporting chain is for Ajax Fighting Vehicle programme within Defence Equipment and Support.

Jeremy Quin:

The reporting chain for the Ajax programme within Defence Equipment and Support is as follows, listed from the top down:

Chief Executive Officer (4*)

Director General (Land) (3*)

Director Land Equipment (2*)

Head Vehicle Demonstration and Manufacture (1*)

Ajax Delivery Team

Mr Mark Francois:[\[37382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which roles within Defence Equipment and Support negotiated the (a) 2010 development contract and (b) 2014 production contract with General Dynamics for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle family.

Jeremy Quin:

Negotiation of the Ajax development and production contracts was carried out by senior commercial officers within Defence Equipment & Support; supported by individuals in finance and project management roles, with senior level oversight and assurance.

John Healey:[\[38139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral contribution of the Commander of the Field Army during the meeting of the Defence Select Committee on 20 July 2021, what contingency plans his Department has developed in the event that Ajax does not come into service by 2025.

Jeremy Quin:

As both I and the Commander of the Field Army outlined on 20 July 2021, contingency planning is a constant process. Should there be a significant delay beyond the scheduled FOC, the Department will be able to mitigate any gap through a range of ground-mounted and alternative reconnaissance capabilities.

John Healey:

[38140]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department were first informed of the vibration linked issues surrounding the Ajax programme.

Jeremy Quin:

On 9 November 2020 my office was informed that Ajax training had been paused due to a safety concern relating to noise. I requested a formal submission (which was received on 13 November 2020) which made reference to vibration.

The timelines related to Noise and Vibration are being investigated as part of the ongoing Health and Safety Review and I refer the Rt hon. Gentleman to the Written Ministerial statement dated the 6 September 2021.

Nick Smith:

[38231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost of the Ajax programme is as at 22 July 2021; and what recent estimate his Department has made of that programme's full cost at the point of completion.

Jeremy Quin:

As published in the Infrastructure and Projects Authority Annual Report and Transparency data in July 2021; the forecast 10 year programme cost of the Armoured Cavalry programme including Ajax is £6,354 million.

The bulk of the anticipated expenditure (£5.5bn) related to the contract with General Dynamics UK for the demonstration, manufacture, and initial support of Ajax. This is a firm price contract.

Mr Mark Francois:

[40695]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who signed the 2014 Ajax AFV production contract on behalf of (a) General Dynamics and (b) his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

The 2014 production contract for Ajax was signed by the Vice President of General Dynamics UK Land Systems and the Ministry of Defence Commercial Director.

Mr Mark Francois:

[40696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who is the (a) Programme Manager, (b) Programme Director and (c) Senior Responsible Owner of the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme in his Department.

Jeremy Quin:

The role of Programme Manager is carried out by Lieutenant Colonel in the Army, whilst the Equipment Project Manager is a OF5 equivalent (Grade B1) Civil Servant in DE&S; the Programme Director is a Colonel in the Army. As these are below the rank of 2*/SCS 2 I am withholding their details from the public domain in line with departmental policy.

As at 19 August 2021, the SRO of the Armoured Cavalry 25 Programme, which includes delivery of the Ajax platform, is Major General Simon Hamilton. My Rt hon. Friend will recall that at the recent HCDC Hearing I announced our intention to appoint a new full-time SRO, who can focus 100% of their time on working with DE&S for its delivery.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Testing**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[36543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of General Dynamics employees that have reported injuries during their testing of the AJAX programme.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is aware that one General Dynamics employee has reported an injury during testing of the Ajax programme; this injury was unrelated to noise and vibration.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[36544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 29735 on Ajax Vehicles: Testing, whether compensation claims made by personnel assessing AJAX will be covered by (a) private insurance taken out by Millbrook testing and (b) his Department through an existing framework agreement with Millbrook testing.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to my letter of 19 July 2021, which explains the position on liability and insurance in relation to the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) contract with Millbrook. The MOD cannot state whether such insurance will answer any claims made by Army Personnel and it will obviously depend on the circumstances of each claim. More broadly, again, depending on the circumstances of each claim, Army personnel might be able to make a claim under the Armed Forces compensation scheme or against the MOD. Depending on those circumstances, the MOD might seek to involve its contractor, General Dynamics UK.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the vibration and noise problems with the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle Programme were first reported to (a) the Head of Defence Equipment and Support, (b) the Executive Committee of the Army Board and (c) Ministers.

Jeremy Quin:

The timelines related to Noise and Vibration are being investigated as part of the ongoing Health and Safety Review and I refer my right hon. Friend to today's Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS260).

John Healey:

[\[38137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is paying for ongoing safety tests for the Ajax programme following vibration linked concerns raised in recent trials.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is paying for the ongoing Millbrook noise and vibration tests and trials on the Ajax programme.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[40705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his timeframe is for the publication of the results of the ongoing inquiry into health problems experienced by armed forces personnel participating in the trials of the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle group; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The review being conducted by the Ministry of Defence's Director of Health, Safety and Environmental Protection into the safety procedures relating to vibrations and noise on the Ajax Programme is ongoing and I refer my Rt hon. Friend to the Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS260) issued earlier today.

■ **Antiaircraft Missiles**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[40710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the initial operating capability is for the Landceptor air defence system.

Jeremy Quin:

The capability to which my right hon. Friend refers is one of the sub systems which make up the Sky Sabre Ground Based Air Defence capability.

■ **Armed Forces: Coronavirus**

Hilary Benn:

[\[38142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether serving UK armed forces personnel who have been vaccinated while on duty overseas are able to apply for a NHS Covid Pass for travel.

James Heappey:

All UK Armed Forces personnel that have received a Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency-approved COVID-19 vaccine whilst overseas can access an NHS COVID Pass. This is obtained through the NHS web-based service (rather than the smartphone application).

■ Armed Forces: Families

John Healey:

[\[40594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 26 November 2020 to Question HL10461 on Armed Forces: Families, when he plans to publish the new UK Armed Forces families strategy.

Leo Docherty:

Following consideration of the recommendations made by Andrew Selous MP in his independent report, and engagement with stakeholders across Government, the Devolved Administrations and the charitable sector, it is anticipated that the new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy will be published this autumn.

■ Armed Forces: Private Education

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35549 on Armed Forces: Private Education, what ranks each of the 11 personnel under investigation for Continuity of Education Allowance fraud are.

Leo Docherty:

As these cases relate to ongoing investigations, to provide specific ranks could identify the individual and may adversely affect ongoing criminal and investigation proceedings.

The 11 personnel currently under investigation for Continuity Education Allowance fraud fall within the following broader banded categories:

BROADER BAND	NUMBER
Officers 1* and above	1
Officers below 1*	6
Other ranks	4

■ Armed Forces: Radio

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to upgrade Link 11 to Link 22 secure digital radio link.

Jeremy Quin:

Yes, the Ministry of Defence has plans to upgrade Link 11 to Link 22.

We plan to sustain Link 11 capabilities, until the out-of-service date of 2025, with some minor software upgrades to enhance the ability to forward data from Link 11 equipped platforms to Link 16 and Link 22 equipped platforms and systems.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 9 March 2021 to Question 23454 on Armoured Fighting Vehicles, whether the out-of-service date for Scimitar remains 2023.

Jeremy Quin:

The Out of Service Date for all vehicles in the Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) family, including Scimitar, remains 2023.

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[40725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is taking steps to develop the (a) Boxer and (b) Warrior into a reconnaissance vehicle to replace the Scimitar.

Jeremy Quin:

As announced in the Defence Command Paper "Defence in a Competitive Age", Warrior is being retired from service and Boxer will be the primary mechanised infantry platform for the army. AJAX will replace CVR(T) in reconnaissance roles. CVR(T) is expected to go out of service in 2023 and there may be a requirement for Warrior to be used in some reconnaissance roles until AJAX is brought into service.

■ BAe 146 Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the four BAe 146 aircraft based at RAF Northolt will be retired from service; when replacements for those aircraft will be procured; and how many such replacements will be procured.

Jeremy Quin:

The current fleet of four BAe 146 aircraft are planned to be retired from service on 31 March 2022. Replacements for those aircraft are currently under consideration as part of normal capability planning but no decisions have been made.

■ Defence Equipment: Communication

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which UK military assets Multifunction Advanced Data Link has installed.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 27 July 2021 to Question 35543.

Attachments:

1. 35543 - Defence Equipment; Communication [35543 - Defence Equipment Communication.docx]

■ European Fighter Aircraft

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[40701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many flying hours on average each of the Tranche 1 Typhoon aircraft is estimated to have accumulated before they are retired from service as set out in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

James Heappey:

There are 30 Typhoon Tranche 1 aircraft in the sustainment fleet and the projected average flying hours for each of the aircraft, when they reach their respective Out of Service Date, is 2544.8 flying hours.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the initial operational capability is for each of the three vessels in the Fleet Solid Support Ship programme.

Jeremy Quin:

The Initial Operating Capability (IOC) for the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) programme will be met through the achievement of the entry into service of the first FSS Ship and each subsequent ship will enter service at the same capability standard. The date for FSS IOC and individual ship in service dates will not be determined until the Full Business Case is submitted and will be reliant on the delivery schedule agreed when the manufacture contract is awarded.

■ General Dynamics UK

John Healey:

[\[38138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the amount of social value investment made by General Dynamics UK in the wider UK economy as a result of the Ajax programme contract.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ajax programme represents the biggest single order for a UK armoured vehicle in over 20 years. The project supports approximately 4,100 jobs across more than 230 UK suppliers. The social value including in relation to jobs and skills is therefore insignificant.

■ Hawk Aircraft

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[40708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to replace the Hawk T2 aircraft in RAF service; and what the planned out-of-service date is for that aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The planned out of service date for the Hawk T2 aircraft is 2040 and there are no plans required yet for its replacement.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which container is used to transport F-35B engines.

Jeremy Quin:

F135 engines for the Lightning are transported in specialist containers designed by the engine's manufacturer, Pratt and Whitney.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK's F-35B aircraft electronically report their maintenance state to Lockheed Martin.

Jeremy Quin:

The global F-35 Programme operates an electronic logistics system for maintenance, diagnostics, supply chain management, and fleet management with the goal of supporting F-35 readiness and maximizing maintainability. This includes reporting their maintenance state electronically via a sovereign data guard into the F-35 Hybrid Product Support Integration (HPSI) office, which is a joint Lockheed Martin and US Department of Defense body.

The Autonomic Logistics Information System (ALIS) is a F-35 Programme wide system designed to support the Air System. The cost of sustaining ALIS is included within the running costs of the F-35 Program where, as a Partner, the UK is currently responsible for paying 4.6% of these costs.

The UK will replace the ALIS support system with the more modern Operational Data and Integrated Network (ODIN) in line with the global F-35 Programme.

■ Merlin Helicopters

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the out-of-service date is of the Merlin HM2 helicopter.

Jeremy Quin:

On current plans, the out of service date for Merlin HM Mk2 is 2030. The Ministry of Defence keeps the out of service dates for all equipment under regular and routine review.

■ Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 27 July 2021 to Question 35545 on Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems, when that schedule review is expected to conclude.

Jeremy Quin:

The initial schedule review for CROWSNEST is currently being assessed by the Ministry of Defence's Cost Assurance and Analysis services. On current plans, a revised schedule will be scrutinised by a Ministry of Defence approvals process in late autumn 2021.

■ Military Aircraft: Procurement**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the last five annual payments were to the AirTanker consortium to provide 14 A330 aircraft, broken down by year.

Jeremy Quin:

The amounts paid annually to the Air Tanker consortium for the Voyager service over the past five financial years are set out below. Payments are made on a monthly basis.

FINANCIAL YEAR	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Amount (£million)	361	384	388	403	408

■ Military Decorations**Grahame Morris:**[\[36609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will revise the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal criteria to (a) remove the service cut-off dates and (b) provide equal opportunity to all veterans to receive the medal based on 15 years of service, with no misconduct for at least the last 15 years of service.

Leo Docherty:

The Government holds the professionalism, courage and contribution of all those who have served in our Armed Forces in the very highest regard.

Sir John Holmes' independent review of the policy governing the award of military medals, which concluded in 2014, was subject to detailed discussion by the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals. Sir John Holmes and the Committee were clear that there should be no retrospection and that the medal should not be made available to those who do not meet the eligibility criteria.

As such, there are no plans to extend the eligibility criteria for the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal to veterans who served before the medal was introduced.

■ Minesweepers

Mr Mark Francois: [40720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the planned out-of-service date is for the (a) Hunt class mine countermeasures vessels and (b) Sandown class mine countermeasures vessels.

Jeremy Quin:

On current plans, the Hunt Class Mine Countermeasures Vessels will leave service between 2029 and 2031 and the Sandown Class Mine Countermeasures Vessels will leave service between 2021 and 2025.

■ Ministry of Defence: Babcock International

Mr Mark Francois: [40714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has paid to Babcock and its subsidiaries in each of the last 10 financial years.

Jeremy Quin:

Ministry of Defence payments to Babcock International Group PLC and its subsidiaries, between financial years 2010-11 and 2019-20 are set out in the table below:

YEAR	VALUE (MILLION)*
2019-20	£2,231
2018-19	£1,864
2017-18	£1,790
2016-17	£1,691
2015-16	£1,548
2014-15	£1,488
2013-14	£1,312
2012-13	£1,333**
2011-12	£1,247**
2010-11	£1,257**

* Figures rounded to the nearest million ** Figures do not include Trading Fund spending.

This information, for the period since 2012-13, is also published in the Trade Industry & Contracts Statistical Bulletin, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-trade-and-industry-index>.

The figure for financial year 2020-21 is due to be published on 16 September 2021.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Data Protection**

John Healey: [\[37356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many data breaches from his Department were recorded each year since 2010.

James Heappey:

This data describes breaches with an incident type of loss or theft of physical documents recorded by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). From January 2010 to July 2021 there were 520 incidents, of which 163 were recorded as subsequently found. This figure includes incidents such as an inability to account for documents (as opposed to confirmed losses), losses within MOD establishments, and documents lost in the post beyond the control of the MOD. This data does not include cases which are still open, as it would not be appropriate to comment while they are still under investigation by the MOD.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Disclosure of Information**

Chris Evans: [\[37451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many leaks of classified documents his Department is aware of in the last six months.

Chris Evans: [\[37452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many investigations his Department has conducted into leaked information in the last six months.

Chris Evans: [\[37454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many leaks of classified documents his Department is aware of in the last 12 months.

Chris Evans: [\[37455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many leaks of classified documents his Department is aware of in the last 18 months.

Chris Evans: [\[37456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many investigations his Department has conducted into leaked information in the last 12 months.

Chris Evans: [\[37457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many investigations his Department has conducted into leaked information in the last 18 months.

James Heappey:

All incidents relating to leaks of classified documents in the past 18 months are currently being investigated by the Ministry of Defence. It would not be appropriate to

provide numbers and details of cases while they are still open and the outcomes of investigations not yet formalised.

Chris Evans: [37453]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department (a) has made an assessment of the circumstances in which information regarding Challenger 2 has been leaked and (b) is conducting an investigation into that matter.

James Heappey:

I assume the hon. Member is asking about the recent publication on a gaming website of a number of Challenger 2 specifications.

This incident was reported to the Army Warning, Advisory and Reporting Point on 19 Jul 2021 and a security investigation into the circumstances instigated. The investigation has since been transferred to the Royal Military Police and is ongoing. The Department takes protection of its information extremely seriously and will continue to take firm action in response to such incidents.

■ Ministry of Defence: Ethnic Groups

Ruth Jones: [37589]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Black and ethnic minority staff hold management positions in his Department.

Leo Docherty:

Defence has committed to a Diversity and Inclusion strategy and is working hard to achieve a more diverse workforce. That is why we have renewed our levels of ambition at the highest levels in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) as we work to fulfil the key objective in our 2018-2030 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to eliminate discrimination and improve diversity.

As at 30 June 2021, 633 civilian personnel working in MOD (Main) and Defence Equipment and Support had self-declared their ethnicity as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and had at least one other active position reporting to them. This means that 4.4 per cent of civilian managers had self-declared as BAME; an additional 11.4 per cent (approximate) of civilian managers either had no recorded ethnicity or had chosen not to declare.

Defence publishes biannual statistics on diversity declarations for MOD civilian staff. The latest edition can be found at the following link:

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

■ Ministry of Defence: Protective Clothing

Philip Davies: [38209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in his (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jeremy Quin:

Defence policy is that personnel should adhere to all applicable UK Government and Devolved Administration guidance on the wearing of face coverings.

In a small number of settings it may not be possible to wear face coverings (e.g. where it would impair communications in safety critical environments) and in these cases risks assessments and other mitigating steps are undertaken to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.

Ministry of Defence: Translation Services**John Healey:**[\[40595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons a £54 million contract for the Provision of Worldwide Linguistic Services in Support of UK MoD Operations – 700032337 was closed on 16 August 2021; and whether a supplier has been found.

Jeremy Quin:

The reason the contract was closed on 16 August 2021 was due to the drawdown and subsequent ending of Operation TORAL, which amounted to around 67% of the total contract value of £54 million. Following legal advice, the contract was closed and a new contract for the revised requirement is being procured under the Crown Commercial Services Language Services Framework (RM6141) Lot 5m.

Navy: Mesothelioma**John Healey:**[\[40596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the letter from the Minister for Defence People and Veterans to the Rt hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne on 30 July 2021, how many Royal Navy personnel have applied for compensation for mesothelioma in each year since 2016.

Leo Docherty:

The Number of Royal Navy personnel who have applied for compensation for mesothelioma in each year since 2016 can be found in the table below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	ROYAL NAVY PERSONNEL
2016 -17	94
2017 -18	63
2018 -19	55
2019 - 20	72
2020 - 21	70
2021 – 23 Aug 2021	27
Total	381

All claims for mesothelioma during 2016-17 and 2017-18 were made after a diagnosis had already been confirmed. From 2018 to date some claims for compensation have been made where, upon investigation, the formal diagnosis is not mesothelioma.

■ **Taiwan Strait: HMS Queen Elizabeth**

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[40727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether there are plans to sail the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait during its visit to the Indo-Pacific in July 2021.

James Heappey:

I can confirm that no element of the Carrier Strike Group sailed through the Taiwan Strait in July 2021. The Royal Navy will next navigate the Taiwan Strait when navigationally expeditious to do so and in accordance with international law and operational requirements. To preserve operational security, the Royal Navy does not discuss the specifics of the operational routings of ships in advance.

■ **Type 23 Frigates**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many operation spare gearboxes his Department holds for the Type 23 Frigate.

Jeremy Quin:

Two entirely complete units are currently held as spares, in addition to a range of component level spares which are also available.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[40726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish details of (a) the Type 23 Frigates in service in the Royal Navy and (b) the current status of those frigates in relation to (i) operational availability, (ii) training and (iii) maintenance.

Jeremy Quin:

As of 31 August 2021, of the 12 Type 23 frigates in service in the Royal Navy, eight are operationally available.

■ **Type 26 Frigates: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of (a) how often and (b) for how long the Type 26 Frigates will undergo maintenance after they have entered service.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of (a) how often and (b) for how long the Type 31 Frigates will undergo maintenance after they have entered service.

Jeremy Quin:

In respect of both the Type 26 and Type 31 Frigate programmes, it is too early to say how often the ships will undergo routine maintenance. This will be decided as part of the negotiations with industry for support solutions.

■ **Unmanned Air Vehicles**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[40703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) initial and (b) final operating capability is for the Protector unmanned aerial vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The Initial Operating Capability for the Protector aircraft is 2023 with Full Operating Capability in 2025.

■ **Warrior Armoured Vehicle**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[37379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme was cancelled.

Jeremy Quin:

Retiring Warrior early, rather than spending money on trying to extend a legacy capability, allows us to free up resources to invest in Boxer and modernising the UK Armed Forces. Such investment will include long-range precision missiles, unmanned systems and enhanced ISR.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[40728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his timetable is for removing the Warrior armoured fighting vehicle from operational service; and where he plans for those vehicles to go.

Jeremy Quin:

The detailed plan for transition from Warrior to Boxer is currently under development; the current Out of Service Date for Warrior, which is kept under review, is December 2025.

If and when vehicles are declared for disposal, potential options may include a Government to Government sale, commercial sale or recycling.

■ Warships: Repairs and Maintenance**Mr Mark Francois:****[40712]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department paid to Babcock for (a) submarine and (b) surface ship refit and maintenance in the financial year 2020-21.

Jeremy Quin:

During financial year 2020-21, the Ministry of Defence held a contract with Babcock for the provision of onshore support services at HM Naval Bases Devonport and Clyde. This included the refit and maintenance of our submarines and warships at those bases. It is not possible to separate those elements directly attributable to submarine and surface ship refit and maintenance within the contract, which also includes wider Naval Base operating costs. A separate contract with Babcock was also in place for HMS VANGUARD's deep maintenance project.

Total expenditure against these contracts in 2020-21 was £851million.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Broadband: Morley and Outwood****Andrea Jenkyns:****[41043]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of properties in Morley and Outwood that are capable of receiving services that deliver internet speeds of over 1 gigabit per second.

Matt Warman:

The government is committed to delivering lightning-fast, reliable broadband to everyone in the country. Our plan - to stimulate investment, bust barriers and drive competition - is working. This is the biggest build in UK history with 60% of all households to have access to gigabit-capable speeds by the end of the year - a huge leap forward from 2019, when it was 9%. By 2025 the government is targeting a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage.

In March this year we launched the first phase of the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit to ensure that hard to reach communities are not left out of the revolution in connectivity. In August, we announced more details about our procurement pipeline and specifically, for the 2.2 million hard to reach premises in England in Phases 1 and 2 of the delivery plan. Further detail is at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-gigabit-delivery-plan-summer-update>.

West Yorkshire is in Phase 2 of the delivery plan. Formal procurement is planned to start in the region in November 2022. Based on current data, around 133,000 uncommercial premises will be targeted across the West Yorkshire (and parts of North Yorkshire) procurement lot.

As these large subsidised contracts progress, Project Gigabit also continues to help communities with up to £210m available in Project Gigabit vouchers to help with costs of installing gigabit to people's doorsteps.

■ **Charities: Lotteries**

Craig Whittaker:

[38235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if the Government will take steps to ensure that potential proposed amendments to the Gambling Act in response to the Gambling Review do not adversely affect charity lotteries.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Review of the Gambling Act 2005 was launched on 8 December with a wide-ranging Call for Evidence, which closed on 31 March. We received c.16,000 submissions to the Call for Evidence from a range of stakeholders and members of the public. We are considering all submissions carefully, including evidence relating to society or charity lotteries, and aim to publish a white paper outlining any conclusions and proposals for reform by the end of the year.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Ethnic Groups**

Ruth Jones:

[37583]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Black and ethnic minority staff employed in his Department.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As of 01/08/2021 367 of 1917 employed Civil Servants in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport identify as black or another ethnic minority (19.1%). The percentage of staff who declare their ethnicity in the organisation is 91.2% so the actual number may be higher.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Protective Clothing**

Philip Davies:

[38200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what his current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in his (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

Throughout the pandemic, DCMS has followed, and continues to follow, the latest government guidance in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace, including any variations between the four nations of the UK.

In England, the BEIS 'Working Safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)' guidance provides sensible precautions employers can take to manage risk and support their staff. The guidance is available via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/offices-factories-and-labs#offices-7-2>.

It is for individual employers to determine which mitigations are appropriate to adopt as they review their workplace risk assessments in light of the updated guidance. Face coverings, which are no longer required by law, are one possible mitigation employers could adopt if the situation/context warranted it. DCMS fully supports individuals who choose to wear a face covering in the workplace.

■ Internet: Advertising

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[40573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will re-evaluate extending the scope of the forthcoming Online Safety Bill to include regulation of paid-for advertisements on online platforms in the context of user-generated content.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Online Safety Bill has been designed to tackle harms that are facilitated by user-generated content. Some types of advertising will therefore be in scope of the new regulatory framework. This includes posts by influencers and posts by companies on their social media feeds.

The legislation will not cover adverts which are placed directly or indirectly through a contract between an advertiser and an advertising service. This is to ensure that the scope of the framework remains targeted.

Government plans to address harms associated with paid-for advertising holistically, via the Online Advertising Programme. We issued a call for evidence on this last year, a consultation is planned before the end of the year.

■ Internet: Pornography

Fleur Anderson:

[\[38440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward proposals to strengthen age verification for legal pornography in the Online Safety Bill.

Caroline Dinenage:

The strongest protections in the draft Online Safety Bill, published in May 2021, are for children. Where pornography sites host user generated content or facilitate online user interactions (including video and image sharing, commenting and live streaming), they will be in scope of the Online Safety Bill.

The online safety regime will capture the most visited pornography sites, social media platforms, video-sharing sites, forums and via image or video search engines. Companies will be required to protect children from harmful content such as online pornography, or face enforcement action by the regulator, which could include significant fines or, in the most egregious cases, Ofcom can apply for access to be restricted in the UK.

The Government recognises the concerns that have been raised about protecting children from online pornography on services which do not currently fall within the scope of the Bill. The Government will use the draft Bill's pre-legislative scrutiny to

explore ways to provide wider protections for children from online pornography, including on sites that do not fall within scope of the duty of care.

■ Internet: Safety

Stuart Anderson:

[37597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to enhance online safety.

Caroline Dinenage:

In May we published the [Online Safety Bill](#) in draft. This is a major milestone in the development of a new regulatory framework to keep users safe online. For the first time, tech companies are going to be accountable to an independent regulator to keep their users safe. The draft bill will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny in this session, with the Joint Committee due to report by 10 December.

We are also taking steps to educate and empower users to make more informed and safer choices online. In July we published the first government [Online Media Literacy Strategy](#), which sets out the government's approach to improving media literacy capabilities among internet users in England. The Media Literacy Strategy will promote media literacy as a complementary tool to the new regulatory regime, providing coordination to the main organisations seeking to empower users with the skills and knowledge they need to stay safe online.

■ MV Empire Windrush: Monuments

Dr Matthew Offord:

[37438]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an estimate of the cost of raising the anchor of HMT Empire Windrush.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[37440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the depth that HMT Empire Windrush lies at.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government has adopted as best practice the Rules set out in the Annex to the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. The Rules indicate that the protection of underwater cultural heritage through in situ preservation should be considered as the first option. Consequently, no estimate has been made of the cost of recovering the anchor of HMT Empire Windrush (the wreck of which is understood to lie at a depth of c. 8,500 ft, 23 nautical miles off the coast of Algeria).

■ Night-time Economy: Coronavirus**Andrew Rosindell:** [37386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of vaccine passports on London nightlife.

Andrew Rosindell: [37387]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect of proposed vaccine passports on the nighttime economy in Essex.

Caroline Dinenage:

The government is committed to ensuring the safety of the public through minimising the risks of transmission of Covid-19 and by encouraging vaccination.

In the Prime Minister's announcement on the 19th July (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-at-coronavirus-press-conference-19-july-2021>) he requested that nightclubs and events where large crowds gather make use of the NHS Covid Pass on a voluntary basis until September. From the end of September 2021 vaccination will become a condition of entry in these circumstances once all adults have been offered the opportunity to receive both vaccination doses.

The evidence gathered from the Events Research Programme found that transmission is most likely when large crowds gather and covid-status certification has been shown to be one method of mitigating this risk.

From 19 July, the government 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.

The NHS Covid Pass has been designed to be quick and simple to use, so as not to place any significant burden on settings utilising the resource. Guidance on its use can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-pass/>

■ Optical Fibres: Water Supply**Jonathan Edwards:** [40843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Drinking Water Inspectorate on health and safety check requirements for the approval of fibre optic products for use in trials of feeding those cables through water pipes.

Matt Warman:

The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) has been involved in planning the Fibre in Water trial project from a very early stage and will remain key to its success throughout. The project will only allow trials using products which the DWI has fully certified as safe to use, and which meet critical requirements for security and resilience. The project will be steered by a joint governance board including DCMS, Defra, BEIS, Ofwat and Ofcom representatives with safe and resilient supply of both services as a central success factor.

■ Social Media: Intimidation**Jim Shannon:**[\[37471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has had recent discussions with social media representatives in the UK on tackling social media users who make death threats towards politicians.

Caroline Dinenage:

Ministers and officials regularly meet with a range of stakeholders, including from social media companies, on matters relating to online safety. The government published the draft Online Safety Bill in May. It will give online platforms new legal duties to tackle abuse and other harmful content on their services.

■ Sports: Injuries**Jim Shannon:**[\[38261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on bringing forward legislative proposals to reduce brain injuries in sport.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government, with the assistance of Laurence Geller CBE as ministerial adviser, is currently reviewing the issue of concussion in sport and I will report later this year on the steps that the Government intends to take.

The safety, wellbeing and welfare of everyone taking part in sport is absolutely paramount. The Government remains committed to working with sports to build on the positive work that is already taking place.

■ Telecommunications Systems: Disadvantaged**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[40844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what impact assessment he has made the proposed closure of the Public Switched Telephone Network in 2025 on those who (a) do not have internet and (b) are unable to access a broadband connection.

Jonathan Edwards:

[40845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support will be provided to people who (a) do not currently have an internet connection and (b) are unable to access a broadband connection, if the Public Switched Telephone Network is switched off in 2025.

Matt Warman:

The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) is privately-owned and the withdrawal is industry-led. Fixed-line operators - such as Openreach and Virgin Media - will cease to provide legacy copper services in a phased approach; with the network expected to switch-off entirely in 2025. The PSTN is increasingly unreliable and operators are concerned about their ability to repair, maintain and source spare parts.

Operators will be replacing the PSTN with 'voice over internet protocol' (VoIP) technology, which carries voice calls over a digital connection. For many consumers the change will involve plugging their existing landline phone into their router rather than into a wall socket. The change is expected to offer consumers clearer and better quality phone calls.

It should be noted that the closure of the PSTN will not affect fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) broadband (also known as 'superfast broadband') where copper cables extend to roadside cabinets before a fibre cable carries the connection to the telephone exchange. Fibre-to-the-cabinet broadband is currently available in 97% of the country and operators continue to roll out services across the country.

While PSTN withdrawal is an industry-led process, the Government and Ofcom are working together on matters relating to the withdrawal process. This includes close engagement with the emergency services, as well as other organisations providing critical national services.

Ofcom has a statutory duty to further and protect the interest of consumers, including those who are vulnerable. As part of this duty, Ofcom has rules in place, known as general conditions, which all providers must follow, that mandate communication providers to have procedures and policies in place to identify and support vulnerable consumers.

Ofcom has also published a [Vulnerability Guide](#) for providers, setting out their expectations and good practice on how vulnerable telecoms consumers should be supported. This includes steps providers can take to identify vulnerable consumers, and an expectation that all providers implement specialist teams in order to provide extra support.

The telecoms industry - via the Broadband Stakeholder Group - have been collaborating on this issue, and in June 2020 launched a consumer-facing website as a resource to inform the public of the process. This website was developed with the support of telecoms companies, Ofcom and DCMS and is funded by TechUK. The website can be accessed here: <https://www.futureofvoice.co.uk/>.

We would advise consumers who have questions about the PSTN withdrawal process, or would like further information, to contact their telecoms service provider who will be able to provide specific support.

■ **Television Licences: Older People**

Stuart C McDonald:

[40943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the BBC on (a) the cost of TV licences for over 75s and (b) the appropriateness of taking enforcement action, including prosecution, against people who have not paid for a licence.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The future of the over 75 concession, including cost, is now a matter for the BBC following the passage of the Digital Economy Act 2017.

The government remains deeply disappointed with the BBC's decision to restrict the over 75 licence fee concession to only those in receipt of pension credit. We recognise the value of free TV licences for over 75s and believe they should be funded by the BBC.

The BBC also remains responsible for enforcing and administering the TV licence. The BBC must ensure that it supports those affected by its decision on the over 75s concession and we expect it to do so with the utmost sensitivity.

■ **Television: Sports**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[41069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of amending the Broadcasting Act 1996 so that all Group A listed events must be aired on free-to-air television.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government does not have plans to review the listed events regime at this time. We believe that the current listed events regime works well to deliver the best outcome and strikes an appropriate balance between retaining free-to-air sports events for the public while allowing rights holders to negotiate agreements in the best interests of their sport.

■ **Wrecks**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[37441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many wrecks in UK territorial waters have been designated as of (a) historical, (b) archaeological and (c) artistic importance under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[37442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many maritime wrecks in overseas waters of (a) historic, (b) archaeological and (c) artistic importance have been designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[37443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how his Department enforces the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 in foreign and international waters.

Caroline Dinenage:

The powers conferred by the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 relate to wreck sites located in UK territorial waters. They do not extend to those located in the territorial waters of other nations or in international waters.

Currently, 54 wreck sites located in UK territorial waters adjacent to England, and 1 wreck site located in UK territorial waters adjacent to Northern Ireland, are protected under the terms of section 1 of the 1973 Act ('protection of sites of historic wrecks').

Responsibility for the operation of section 1 of the 1973 Act in Scotland and Wales is a devolved matter. The number of wreck sites currently protected under the terms of section 1 of the 1973 Act in UK territorial waters adjacent to Scotland and Wales is understood to be 0 and 6, respectively.

EDUCATION

■ Arts: Higher Education

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[41078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reversing reductions to the Higher Education Teaching Grant Budget for England in 2021-22 for performing arts and creative subjects.

Michelle Donelan:

In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, asked the Office for Students to reform the Strategic Priorities Grant for the 2021/22 academic year. The Strategic Priorities Grant is a limited funding pot provided by government to support the provision of higher education. Reprioritisation of this funding is needed to ensure value for money, and support strategic priorities across the sector, including provision of courses vital for the economy and labour markets, and continued support for disadvantaged students and underrepresented groups. The reforms he proposed include: the reallocation of high-cost subject funding (extra money given to providers to deliver expensive subjects) towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, STEM, and specific labour market needs; and the removal of the London Weighting element of the Grant.

The Office for Students (OfS) consulted on the Secretary of State's proposals and has recently published its conclusions. The consultation responses were carefully

analysed, and the issues raised were considered by both the OfS and the Secretary of State in reaching their respective decisions about the allocation of the Strategic Priorities Grant in 2021/22.

For the 2021/22 academic year, total funding for high-cost subjects, such as medicine and engineering, is 12% higher than last year, an increase of £81 million. The high-cost subject funding rate for arts and music courses has been set at £121.50; this is equivalent to a reduction of around 1% in combined funding (on a per-student basis) from a £9,250 tuition fee and Office for Students grant funding compared to 2020/21.

Despite the need to reprioritise taxpayers' money, the government continues to value performing arts and creative subjects. High-quality provision in a range of subjects is critical for our workforce and our public services, as well as being intellectually rewarding and culturally enriching for those studying them and wider society.

As part of the same reform programme, we have asked the OfS to invest an additional £10 million in our world-leading specialist providers, many of which specialise in arts provision. We want to ensure that such providers receive additional support, and that grant funding is used effectively to support students.

■ Assessments: Fees and Charges

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[40752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much exam boards have charged each educational establishment that falls into the exam boards criteria in the academic year 2020-21 compared to the academic year 2018-19.

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[40753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many moderators each examination board has employed in the academic year (a) 2020-21 compared to (b) 2018-19.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises that head teachers and staff have worked hard over last year to support their pupils. It would not have been possible for pupils to have received their results without the commitment and expertise of head teachers, teachers and support staff.

Awarding Organisations (AOs) are responsible for setting their exam fees, including any refunds on fees this year. The AOs have been clear that they do not intend to profit from reductions in costs this year. The Department understands that AOs have made commercial decisions on fees and refunds, taking into account the range of costs they incurred as part of their processes, which led to the awarding of qualifications. We are providing approximately £25 million to schools, colleges and exam boards to help with the delivery of 2021 Teacher Assessed Grades and the autumn series. The Department confirmed that it would directly fund AOs to support them with appeals costs and any autumn series losses they make, so that in turn they could increase rebates to centres. AOs have announced their rebates levels for the 2020/21 academic year as follows: AQA 26%, OCR 42%, Pearson 33% and WJEC

42%. Further details of individual AOs' fees and any refunds can be accessed on AOs' websites.

As AOs are independent bodies, the Department does not hold data on the number of moderators employed. The quality assurance process this year was not designed to moderate grades, but support teachers to make their professional judgements so that pupils received grades that are meaningful.

■ British Students Abroad: Remote Education

Matt Western:

[\[38379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that universities are offering home tuition fees to applicants who are UK nationals living in the EEA or Switzerland.

Michelle Donelan:

UK nationals and their family members living in the European Economic Area or Switzerland at the end of the transition period, who wish to study in England, will continue to be eligible for home fee status for courses starting before 1 January 2028.

This provision is set out in the Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations which higher education providers are required to follow when assessing a student's eligibility for home fee status.

■ Children in Care

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[41094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what processes his Department has in place to record the outcomes of placements of looked after children from England who are placed in (a) other nations of the UK and (b) overseas.

Vicky Ford:

Where the local authorities are placing a young person out of area, there are clear statutory requirements in place to safeguard young people. These require the placing authority to inform the host authority before confirming the placement and to check whether the host authority is aware of any concerns about the setting. The statutory responsibilities for looked after children remain with the placing local authority and Directors of Children's Services who must approve all distant placements.

Statistically, the department collects data on placement type, reason for placement change and three separate pieces of information in relation to the locality of placements. The location data includes:

- information about the distance the child is placed away from their home postcode
- whether the placement is located inside or outside their responsible local authority
- the country of the placement (England, UK or otherwise).

Figures on placements, distance from the home placement and the location of the placement, inside or outside the council boundary, were published in the underlying

data 'National - children looked after at 31 March by placement type, distance of placement and locality of placement' of the statistical release 'Children looked after in England including adoption: 2019 to 2020' at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2020>.

■ Children: Day Care

Tulip Siddiq:

[37544]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the accessibility of the Government's free childcare offer to (a) student nurses and (b) other students who rely on loans and grants rather than job-related income.

Vicky Ford:

All three and four-year-olds are eligible for 15 hours free early education per week, which includes children of parents undertaking full or part time study. This entitlement provides young children with high quality early education and helps to prepare them for school.

30 hours free childcare is an entitlement for working parents of three and four-year-olds. Its aim is to help working parents with the costs of childcare so that they can take up paid work or can work additional hours if they want to.

The Childcare Bill policy statement, published in December 2015, sets out that students are not eligible for the government's 30 hours free childcare entitlement, unless they are in work. Students who undertake paid work in addition to their studies and meet the income requirements will be eligible. To qualify, students do not have to physically work 16 hours a week, but they do need to earn the equivalent of a weekly minimum of 16 hours at national minimum wage or national living wage (currently just over £7,400 a year for parents aged over 23).

Students on a low income, or whose children have special educational needs, may also be eligible for the government's 15 hours free childcare per week entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds. The full criteria for this entitlement can be found on here: <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>.

Outside of the free early education entitlements, students who are parents may be eligible for support from the Student Loans Company, including the Childcare Grant and the Parents' Learning Allowance (PLA). More information on support available for students can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance>.

The PLA is available for full time undergraduate students with one or more dependent children to help with their learning costs. For the academic year 2021/22 students could receive up to £1,821 a year depending on household income.

With regard to student nurses, the government keeps the funding arrangements for all NHS health professionals' education under close review, to ensure that students are appropriately supported.

The government has introduced new maintenance funding for many healthcare courses. The Department of Health and Social Care offers £2,000 for parental support per academic year. This is available for eligible students attending a full time pre-registration healthcare course, including for student nurses, at English universities. More information can be found at <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-learning-support-fund/parental-support-formerly-child-dependants-allowance>.

Some students may also qualify for Universal Credit and may be eligible for the reimbursement of some of their childcare costs through Universal Credit. To qualify for the childcare costs element of Universal Credit, students need to be in paid work or about to start paid work, and the childcare costs must relate to childcare arrangements (with a registered provider) that enable them to take up or continue in this paid work.

Help with upfront childcare costs for parents starting work, or in full-time training, is also available to eligible Universal Credit claimants through Budgeting Advances and through a Flexible Support Fund award for the first payment of childcare costs. Further details on claiming Universal Credit as a student which includes a list of students who may qualify for Universal Credit can be found on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-and-students>.

We encourage all parents to view the full range of childcare support available, which can be found at: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk>.

Rachael Maskell:

[38309]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps parents can take to claim free childcare for the remainder of a term in the event that they have moved area well into a term and have missed the deadline for application as a result of the timing of their relocation.

Vicky Ford:

We provide funding to English local authorities for education, and this includes the statutory entitlement to free early years provision through the Dedicated Schools Grant for two, three and four-year-olds. As education is a devolved power, different funding schemes operate in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales.

Local authorities in England have a statutory duty to secure 570 hours of free early education a year over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year for two-year-olds who meet the eligibility criteria for the disadvantaged two-year-old offer, as well as for all three and four-year-olds. They also have a duty to secure an additional 570 hours of free childcare for three and four-year-olds of working parents who meet the eligibility criteria for the 30 hours entitlement.

In statutory guidance provided to local authorities, we advise that, as far as reasonably practicable, they should ensure that eligible children who move into their region from another local authority are able to take up a free entitlements place, regardless of when this is during the term.

To take up an extended entitlement place (also known as '30 hours'), eligible parents need to apply by 31 March for a place at the start of the summer term, 31 August for autumn term and 31 December for a place to start in the spring term.

We strongly encourage all eligible parents to continue applying for, and reconfirming, their 30 hours codes ahead of the deadline for the term they are eligible, even if they do not immediately plan to take up a place.

■ **Children: Disability**

Barbara Keeley:

[36602]

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 implications for his policies of the finding in that report that over half of local authorities have failed to meet their legal targets for providing Education, Health and Care plan assessments.

Vicky Ford:

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 make clear that local authorities must complete an education, health and care plan (EHCP) assessment within twenty weeks from when the request is received, unless certain prescribed exceptional circumstances that are spelt out in paragraph 9:42 of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice apply.

We use data to monitor local authority performance and to provide challenge and support to those local authorities where there are long-standing delays. Each year we also deliver a training programme to local authorities, health, and social care staff on their statutory duties for EHCPs and reviews, and we have continued to do this on a virtual basis.

In addition, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission re-started their revisit programme to areas that received a Written Statement of Action in May, with the full inspection programme re-starting in June. Our team of SEND Advisers and colleagues in NHS England are continuing to work with authorities with a Written Statement of Action to help improve performance.

More broadly, The Department for Education is currently undertaking a review of the SEND system, which is making good progress in identifying the reforms needed to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and their families.

■ **Citizenship: Secondary Education**

Paula Barker:

[41380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the quality of citizenship education for secondary age pupils; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding that education to older pupils to increase participation in democracy when individuals reach voting age.

Nick Gibb:

Citizenship education has been part of the National Curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 since 2002. The subject aims to prepare pupils to play a full and active part in society and covers topics such as parliamentary democracy, the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom, the power of Government and how citizens and Parliament hold it to account. Pupils are also taught about the different electoral systems used in and beyond the United Kingdom and how citizens can take part in democratic processes, including by voting, to influence decisions.

As part of the personal development judgment within school inspections, Ofsted is required to consider pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspection of personal development includes areas such as democracy and preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, which are important elements of citizenship. This approach enables important aspects of citizenship to be considered in a proportionate and integrated way.

The Department does not provide a national curriculum beyond Key Stage 4. Further education (FE) colleges have the flexibility to offer aspects of citizenship education if it is in the best interest of their students.

As part of 16-19 study programmes, FE colleges can offer a qualification regulated by Ofqual, with a small number of citizenship qualifications at level 2 and below being eligible to receive public funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Also, as part of 16-19 study programmes, students are expected to take part in meaningful non-qualification activities that develop their character, broader skills, attitudes, and confidence.

■ Coronavirus: Public Consultation**Layla Moran:****[38404]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has commenced a consultation with young people and families to collect evidence on the effect on them of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

There has been extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders in the development of the Department's education recovery initiatives. This has included discussions with pupils, parents, teachers, head teachers, education specialists and charities from across the country.

The Department has also been regularly surveying parents and carers of school pupils, and secondary school pupils throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. This has helped to inform our response on a range of issues and is also helping to shape our education recovery. The reports from these surveys will be published in autumn 2021.

Through the Mental Health in Education Action Group, which was first convened in March 2021, the Department has been looking at the effect of the COVID-19

outbreak on children and young people's mental health and is considering how to expand and improve support for those who need it. The Department plans to set up a series of sessions with children and young people in the autumn to discuss how the Department can support schools and colleges to develop effective and meaningful mental health support offers in collaboration with their pupils and students.

Ofqual has commissioned two external research firms to find out what pupils, teachers, parents, carers and other stakeholders think and feel about assessments in 2021, and about the disruption that pupils have experienced. One is running focus groups, while the other is running online surveys. Both are gathering this information on an ongoing basis, with the first interviews conducted in December 2020 and the last ones scheduled for after the publication of results in August 2021.

■ Democracy and Rule of Law: Education

Stuart Anderson:

[41273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will take steps to ensure that young people leave school with an effective education in (a) democratic processes, (b) the rule of law and (c) respect for others.

Nick Gibb:

All schools must offer a curriculum which is broad and balanced, and which prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. The Department expects all schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance.

Through citizenship, which is a statutory subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 of the National Curriculum, pupils are taught about Parliament, voting and elections, the legal system in the United Kingdom, different sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems. The subject helps to prepare pupils to play a full and active part in society and teaches them how to explore political and social issues, to weigh up evidence, to debate, and to make reasoned arguments. Pupils should also be taught about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.

Pupils are also taught about respect and tolerance through relationships education, which is compulsory for all school-aged pupils. The statutory guidance on relationships, sex and health education sets out the content to be covered for each subject, which includes teaching about treating everyone with respect regardless of their background and characteristics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>. Pupils are also taught about their legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality, particularly with reference to the protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

■ Financial Services: Education

Seema Malhotra:

[37475]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the development of financial literacy skills for (a) primary school and (b) secondary school children.

Nick Gibb:

Education on financial matters helps to ensure that young people are prepared to manage their money well, make sound financial decisions and know where to seek further information when needed.

Finance education forms part of the citizenship national curriculum which can be taught at all Key Stages and is compulsory at Key Stages 3 and 4:

<https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>. Financial education ensures that pupils are taught the functions and uses of money, the importance of personal budgeting, money management and managing financial risk. At secondary school, pupils are taught about income and expenditure, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions, financial products and services, and how public money is raised and spent.

The Department has introduced a rigorous mathematics curriculum, which provides young people with the knowledge and mathematical skills to make important financial decisions. In the primary mathematics curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on the essential arithmetic that pupils should be taught. This is vital, as a strong grasp of numeracy will underpin pupils' ability to manage budgets and money, including, for example, using percentages. There is also some specific content about financial education, such as calculations with money. The secondary mathematics curriculum develops pupils' understanding in relation to more complex personal finance issues such as calculating loan repayments, interest rates and compound interest.

The Department works closely with the Money and Pensions Service and other stakeholders such as Her Majesty's Treasury, to consider what can be discovered from other sector initiatives and whether there is scope to provide further support for the teaching of financial education in schools.

■ Higher Education: Antisemitism

Karen Bradley:

[38256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to promote (a) adoption and (b) implementation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism across higher education institutions.

Michelle Donelan:

There is no place in our society, including within higher education (HE), for antisemitism. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting the widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that HE providers take these issues seriously.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to the sector in October 2020, calling upon leaders to adopt the IHRA definition. He repeated this message in May, reinforcing the government's expectation that providers adopt the IHRA definition, stressing the even greater importance of doing so in light of increased number of antisemitic incidents recorded (as a result of the conflict in the Middle East). We are aware of over 100 HE providers which have now adopted the IHRA definition. This includes over 80 universities.

In his February 2021 strategic guidance letter, the Secretary of State also asked the Office for Students (OfS) to undertake a scoping exercise, to identify providers who are reluctant to adopt the definition. On 29 July 2021, the OfS announced they intend to publish a list of HE providers who have adopted the IHRA working definition of antisemitism in autumn 2021 alongside resources for providers.

The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers, but the government will continue to urge them to adopt the definition and ensure that HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

Adoption of the IHRA definition is only a first step, and while the government considers that adoption of the definition is crucial, it is not enough on its own. That is why I will continue to work with the sector to ensure it better understands antisemitism and does more to end it.

■ Higher Education: Ethnic Groups

Ms Lyn Brown:

[40806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to page 25 of the report, Higher Education awarding gaps and ethnicity in London: Going beyond BAME, published by AccessHE on 16 July 2021, what steps his Department is taking to tackle differences in higher education attainment by ethnic background.

Michelle Donelan:

It is vital that all young people entering higher education (HE) in the UK do so with the same opportunities as their peers to fully benefit from their chosen course of study.

Under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, the Office for Students (OfS) has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity for disadvantaged and traditionally under-represented groups. This includes non-continuation and attainment levels of students from those backgrounds.

The OfS has set itself and the HE sector targets to address longstanding inequalities, including to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between white and black students.

On 11 March 2021 the OfS published the access and participation data dashboard, which is used to identify gaps in access, continuation, attainment, and progression, at English providers delivering undergraduate provision by different student characteristics. This is available here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>.

In our latest strategic guidance to the OfS we asked them to urge providers to do more to ensure that all students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, are recruited onto courses that will deliver good outcomes. We have also asked that the OfS encourage universities to work with schools to meaningfully raise attainment in schools, as this is one of the strongest predictors of future participation in HE.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[40807]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the report, Higher Education awarding gaps and ethnicity in London: Going beyond BAME published by AccessHE on 16 July 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations made in that report.

Michelle Donelan:

It is vital that all young people entering higher education (HE) in the UK do so with the same opportunities as their peers to fully benefit from their chosen course of study.

Under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, the Office for Students (OfS) has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity for disadvantaged and traditionally under-represented groups. This includes non-continuation and attainment levels of students from those backgrounds.

The OfS has set itself and the HE sector targets to address longstanding inequalities, including to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between white and black students. In 2019-20, there was a difference of 18.3% between the proportion of white and black students getting a 1st or 2:1. The OfS has plans to eliminate the unexplained gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white students and black students by 2024-25, and to eliminate the absolute gap by 2030-31.

On 11 March 2021 the OfS published the access and participation data dashboard, which is used to identify gaps in access, continuation, attainment, and progression at English providers delivering undergraduate provision by different student characteristics. This is available here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>.

In our latest strategic guidance to the OfS we asked them to urge providers to do more to ensure that all students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, are recruited on to courses that will deliver good outcomes. We have also asked that the OfS encourage universities to work with schools to meaningfully raise the attainment in schools, because we know this is one of the strongest predictors of future participation in HE.

■ Israel and Palestinians: Education

Robert Halfon:

[40856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that educational initiatives in (a) schools and (b) universities promote peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Nick Gibb:

The conflict in the Middle East has caused grave concern around the world. The Department is committed to tackling all forms of hate and prejudice and promoting tolerance throughout the education system.

On 28 May 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, sent a letter to schools regarding the increase in antisemitic incidents, with advice on teaching about the conflict. The letter reminded schools of their legal duties on political impartiality. When political issues are brought to the attention of pupils, schools should offer them a balanced presentation of opposing views. The letter also stated that schools should not present materials in a politically biased way, and signposted reputable organisations that schools could work with to teach about the conflict in a balanced manner:

<https://twitter.com/GavinWilliamson/status/1398374786871537664>.

The Department is developing further guidance on political impartiality in schools that we hope will serve to reemphasise these points across the curriculum and help to ensure that educational initiatives in schools are appropriate.

More broadly, schools play an important role in supporting pupils to understand the world, teaching about respect for other people and for differences. Through the 'Educate Against Hate' website, resources have been made available to provide teachers, head teachers and parents with the information, guidance and support they need to challenge radical views.

Regarding higher education, on 14 May 2021, the Secretary of State for Education sent a letter to all universities reinforcing the Government's position on antisemitism and urging the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

■ Local Skills Improvement Plans**Anne Marie Morris:****[40907]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which Minister in his Department signed off on the selection of pilot areas for the Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazer pilot.

Gillian Keegan:

The decision as to which local areas would become Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazers was made by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education.

■ Medicine: Education**Sir Oliver Heald:****[903336]**

What steps his Department is taking to increase the number of places on medical courses available to undergraduates.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is committed to ensuring that the number and distribution of medical school places are in line with England's workforce requirements and continues to monitor the effectiveness of current arrangements.

Applications for medicine and dentistry made by the June deadline increased by over 20,000 this year compared to last year for all domiciles. We have increased the medical and dentistry caps so that providers can take on more students and we have run a brokerage scheme to help move over 80 students at oversubscribed providers into unfilled places.

In addition, we are providing up to £10m in grant funding for providers to take on more students in high-cost subjects, such as medicine, dentistry, nursing and other lab-based courses.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[38282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the early years sector in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what steps his Department is taking to support that sector in those areas.

Vicky Ford:

We have spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on early education entitlements, and the government continues to support families with their childcare costs. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced on 25 November 2020 a £44 million investment for 2021-22, for local authorities (including Coventry and all other local authorities in the West Midlands) to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers for the government's free childcare entitlement offers.

For 2021-22, we have increased the hourly funding rates for all local authorities by 8p an hour for the two-year-old entitlement and, for the vast majority of areas, by 6p an hour for the three- and four-year-old entitlement. This will pay for a rate increase that is higher than the costs nurseries may face from the uplift to the national living wage in April.

We have also increased the minimum funding floor, meaning no council can receive less than £4.44 per hour for the three- and four-year-old entitlements.

Further, we are varying our approach to funding the early years sector over this financial year, to give local authorities and providers better certainty over their funding income during a period of continued uncertainty due to the COVID-19 outbreak. For the Spring term 2021, we provided top-up funding for authorities which could show rising demand for our free early education entitlements during that term after a period of national lockdown. For the next three terms, we will fund each authority based on attendance data they provide to us for each term. This will ensure that our funding aligns with attendance, which should provide the very welcome reassurance for providers that funding for the entitlements will be commensurate with up-to-date data.

We have liaised closely with all local authorities during the COVID-19 outbreak to monitor attendance and sufficiency of supply of childcare. We have not seen a significant number of parents unable to secure a childcare place, in this term or since early year settings re-opened fully on 1 June 2020. Across England as a whole, including for Coventry North East, Coventry and throughout the West Midlands, in situations where parents have been unable to temporarily secure a childcare place, for example due to their usual setting being temporarily closed due to COVID-19, this has been able to be quickly resolved locally and local authorities (including Coventry) are not reporting significant concerns about sufficiency of supply issues, and have not reported any significant concerns at any point during the COVID-19 outbreak.

All early years settings continue to benefit from a range of business support packages to help support them during these unprecedented times. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has been supporting the early years sector by continuing to have access to a range of business support packages, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (where settings have experienced a drop in either their income from parents or government), Business Rates Relief Nurseries Discount and support from the Recovery Loan Scheme. Further information regarding these business support packages is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

We know that findings from the Childcare and Early Years Provider and COVID-19 survey have shown that in November and December 2020, 74% of group-based providers have made use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at any point.

We engage with local authorities on the accessibility of childcare on a regular basis and we continue to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate, and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Fleur Anderson:

[38438]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will review early years funding before the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Vicky Ford:

We keep early years funding and market sufficiency under regular observation and review.

We are making our usual preparations for the imminent Spending Review, which will conclude the government's funding for 2022 to 2023 and beyond.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Robert Halfon:

[37424]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's most recent statistics on attendance in education and early years settings, what assessment

his Department plans to make on the impact of high absence rates in the weeks leading up to the summer 2021 holidays on learning.

Nick Gibb:

Children and young people's education has been significantly disrupted because of COVID-19. Bubbles, contact tracing and isolation requirements have been the major drivers of this. The latest attendance figures are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The Department commissioned Renaissance Learning to provide a baseline assessment of education disruption for pupils in schools in England and monitor progress throughout the year to help target support across the system. The interim report for the 2020/21 academic year is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962330/Learning_Loss_Report_1A_-_FINAL.pdf.

Since June 2020, the Department has announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery in schools, colleges and nurseries. This funding includes more than £1.5 billion for a national tutoring revolution, £400 million for training and professional development, £200 million for summer schools this summer, a £650 million universal catch up premium, a recovery premium worth over £300 million in the coming year, and £17 million to support language development in the early years. These recovery packages provide a balance of flexible funding for schools and funding for those interventions that evidence tells us will make the most difference.

The Government is committed to an ambitious, long term education recovery plan. The next stage will include a review of time spent in school and 16 to 19 education and the effect this could have on helping children and young people to catch up. The findings of the review will be set out later in the year.

The Government's priority is for all children and young people to continue to be able to attend schools, colleges, and nurseries. The evidence is clear that missed face to face attendance can cause significant harm to children and young people's education, life chances, and mental and physical health. This harm disproportionately affects children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. To keep schools, colleges, and nurseries open and maximise the opportunity for children and young people to attend, head teachers, staff, pupils, and parents have worked tirelessly to implement measures which have helped to minimise the transmission of COVID-19 and to support the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, and staff.

Ensuring that attendance is maximised in the new year remains a high priority for the Department. We will continue to work closely with local authorities and schools to help them reengage pupils, provide best practice advice and support families where attendance is a concern. In supporting the attendance of vulnerable children, the Department continues to provide schools and local authorities with resources to help them overcome barriers to attendance. Social workers are expected to support the

attendance of children in need, as well as looked after children, by working with schools to follow up on absences.

Robert Halfon: [37426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the absence rate has been for pupils who are (a) in Year 10, (b) in Year 12 and (c) eligible for free school meals since schools re-opened to all pupils on 8 March 2021.

Robert Halfon: [37427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of absences due to covid-19 on schooling for (a) disadvantaged, (b) special educational needs, (c) disabled and (d) ethnic minority pupils.

Robert Halfon: [37428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the pupil absence rate is by local authority.

Robert Halfon: [37429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on the average length of time that individual students in each year group have been absent in circumstances resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The COVID-19 attendance rate for pupils eligible for free school meals, from 8 March 2021 to 7 June 2021, is published on Explore Education Statistics (Table 1B) which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

Year group is not collected as part of the daily data collected from educational institutions and rates for this groups are not available.

Based on the Autumn Census, 60% of pupils had some period where they did not attend in circumstances relating to the COVID-19 outbreak. Further details on this can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term>.

The Department understands that the COVID-19 outbreak has caused particular challenges for different groups of children and has acted swiftly to minimise its impact and ensured that schools remained open for vulnerable children throughout.

The Department has also continued to work closely with local authorities to support them to re-engage absent pupils and share good practice. The £3 billion investment in education recovery includes over £900 million that schools can use to support the children who have been most impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. The Government's Supporting Families programme continues to work with families where absence is a specific concern.

Data for autumn 2020 on pupil absence and not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19 outbreak is published at <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term>. This includes data broken down by free school meals, special educational needs and ethnicity. Attendance data is not published by disability.

National data on the attendance of pupils during the COVID-19 outbreak is published weekly at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

There are breakdowns of attendance rate by pupils eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs (educational health care plan). The coverage is from 8 March 2021 to 7 June 2021.

The COVID-19 attendance rate at local authority and regional levels is published on Explore Education Statistics (Table 1C) which can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

The Department collects the number of sessions recorded as not attending in circumstances related to the COVID-19 outbreak via the school census. This is collected as a total for each pupil across each term. It is possible to calculate the average number of sessions missed in a term but it is not possible to calculate the average length of each spell of non-attendance. 7% of sessions in Autumn Term 2020 were recorded as not attending due to COVID-19 circumstances. This represents 5 days (one week) per pupil. Data on pupil absence in schools in England, autumn term 2020/21 is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term>.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Munira Wilson:

[36780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his timetable is for publishing the results of the pilot on daily testing of school pupils who were contacts of covid-19 positive cases.

Nick Gibb:

The daily contact testing trial for secondary schools and colleges concluded in June 2021. The aim of the trial was to keep pupils in face to face education, while reducing the risk of community transmission of COVID-19. The results of the trial were published on 23 July and can be found here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2021-07-23-daily-contact-covid-19-testing-students-effective-controlling-transmission-schools> and http://modmedmicro.nsms.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/dct_schools_trial_preprint_20210722.pdf.

■ Pupils: Disadvantaged

Colleen Fletcher:

[40928]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the gap in attainment between students on free school meals and their peers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

At a national level, the Department monitors trends in the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils, defined as those eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years, looked after children and those adopted from care, and others using the disadvantage gap index. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others, measured using the disadvantage gap index, has narrowed by 13% at Key Stage 2 and 9% at Key Stage 4 between 2011 and 2019.

The disadvantage gap index is only calculated for England as a whole. The Department also publishes breakdowns by disadvantage status and free school meal status of several attainment measures at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 at national, regional and local authority level. The data for Key Stage 2 is available through the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-key-stage-2>. The data for Key Stage 4 is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-gcses-key-stage-4>. The Department has not made any recent assessment of the trends in this data for Coventry or the West Midlands.

The Department is committed to supporting all disadvantaged pupils in England and has put in place several policy measures to help schools address any barriers to success that these pupils face. Since 2011, we have been providing extra funding, including £2.5 billion this financial year, through the pupil premium to boost the progress and attainment of their disadvantaged pupils.

To ensure schools have the tools to make effective use of this funding, the Department established the Education Endowment Foundation, which carries out research to produce guidance reports for schools, setting out how they can use the additional funding to best improve their disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.

In addition to the pupil premium, we have announced over £3 billion of funding since June 2020 to support education recovery for children and young people in schools, colleges and nurseries. This will have a significant impact in closing gaps in attainment that have emerged. Recovery programmes have been designed to allow nurseries, schools and colleges the flexibility to support those pupils most in need, including the most disadvantaged. The Department has also expanded its reforms in two areas where the evidence is clear that investment will have a significant impact for disadvantaged children - high quality tutoring and teaching. This includes the Recovery Premium for the next academic year worth over £300 million, which is weighted so that schools with more disadvantaged pupils receive more funding. The £1.5 billion for tutoring will allow the Department to provide up to 100 million tutoring

hours for children and young people in England by 2024, expanding high-quality tutoring nationally so that small group tuition is available to every child who needs help catching up.

■ Remote Education

Munira Wilson:

[36779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is on the circumstances under which schools should deliver remote learning in place of face-to-face teaching to school and college pupils from September 2021.

Nick Gibb:

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. However, schools are expected to provide remote education for pupils who test positive for COVID-19, where they are well enough to learn from home.

The Department issued a new remote education temporary continuity direction for the 2021/22 academic year, providing clarity about what is expected and ensuring consistency with the last academic year:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-temporary-continuity-direction-explanatory-note>. Schools affected by the temporary continuity direction must provide remote education for state funded, school aged pupils whose attendance would be contrary to local public health advice, Government guidance or law relating to COVID-19. Schools must also have regard to the expectations for remote education, published here: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/statutory-obligations>. These remain the same as the last academic year.

Where remote education is needed, schools are expected to offer pupils 3 to 5 hours of remote education per day, dependent on key stage. This includes either recorded or live direct teaching, alongside time for pupils to work independently to complete assignments that have been set. Online video lessons do not necessarily need to be recorded by teaching staff at the school. Oak National Academy lessons, for example, can be provided in lieu of school-led video content.

Further education (FE) students have also returned to on site provision. Where students are unable to attend in person because they have tested positive for COVID-19, but are well enough to continue learning, or where public health advice, guidance, or law restricts attendance more widely, the Department expect FE colleges to deliver as many planned hours as is feasible remotely. FE colleges should also provide students with regular feedback on their progress and, as far as possible, provide live online teaching in lieu of face to face delivery.

A comprehensive package of support continues to be available to schools and FE colleges to help them meet the remote education expectations: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/>. This support includes a further £2.1 million to Oak National Academy, enabling it to operate from the start of the next academic year through to Easter 2022. The purpose of this funding is to enable Oak to provide

support to schools in developing the ability to switch from classroom teaching to remote provision immediately in case of COVID-19 restrictions or self-isolation.

To support access to remote education and online social care services, the Department has distributed over 1.35 million laptops and tablets to schools, trusts, local authorities and further education colleges for disadvantaged children and young people as part of a £400 million investment. The Department has also provided support for over 110,000 families to get online through uplifts in mobile data and 4G wireless routers. From Autumn 2021, grant funding will be available for schools and colleges to claim and provide internet connections to help disadvantaged pupils, where they have their education disrupted by COVID-19 during the autumn term.

■ Remote Education: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[37548]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support parents who have to stay at home as a result of their children being required to self-isolate and (b) limit the disruption to the education of children who are required to self-isolate as a result of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

Since 16 August, pupils under the age of 18 years old have no longer been required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Instead, pupils identified as a close contact will be given age appropriate testing advice. They will not need to self-isolate while they wait for the result of any tests. If the result is positive, they should self-isolate in line with the guidance.

Information on financial support can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme>.

Since June 2020, the Department has announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery for children and young people in nurseries, schools and colleges. Recovery programmes, as well as targeted help with provision of laptops and internet access, have been designed to allow head teachers the flexibility to support those pupils most in need to help them catch up after a period of disruption to their education or during periods of self-isolation.

The Department recognises that COVID-19 may cause further disruption in the 2021/22 academic year. We have issued a new temporary remote education continuity direction for academic year 2021/22, to provide clarity about what is expected and ensuring consistency with the last academic year, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-temporary-continuity-direction-explanatory-note>. Schools affected by the temporary continuity direction must provide remote education for state-funded, school-aged pupils whose attendance would be contrary to local public health advice, Government guidance or law relating to COVID-19. Schools must adhere to the expectations for remote

education published here: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/statutory-obligations>.

Where required, schools are expected to offer pupils 3 to 5 hours of remote education per day, depending on Key Stage. This includes recorded or live direct teaching alongside time for pupils to work independently to complete assignments that have been set.

A comprehensive package of support continues to be available to schools to help them meet the remote education expectations: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-remote-education>. The Department understands that this is a challenging time for parents, carers and children. We have published information for parents and carers on remote education and how they can best support their child while studying from home, where this is needed. This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>. This includes resources and advice to help parents and carers on how to establish a routine with their child, and how best to support mental health and wellbeing during this period.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Munira Wilson: [36778]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department is putting in place to tackle covid-19 outbreaks in schools from September 2021.

Lee Anderson: [38420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that pupils can return to full-time education in the 2021-22 academic year without interruption or risk of losing in-school teaching days during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's priority is for schools to deliver face to face, high quality education to all pupils. The evidence is clear that being out of education can cause significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, and mental and physical health.

To reduce transmission, the Department is keeping some measures in place across nurseries, schools and colleges to enable us to provide as normal an experience as possible as schools welcome pupils back in larger numbers. This will be supported by our ability to respond swiftly and consistently to any exceptional circumstances should it prove necessary and may include reintroducing additional control measures for a limited period to deal with outbreaks. These are set out in the contingency framework: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-restrictions-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

The Department has worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England to revise guidance for schools from Step 4:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>. The Department's aim is to balance the risks associated with

COVID-19 whilst moving to a position that minimises both the burden of implementing a system of controls on schools and the impact those measures have on young people's educational experience.

Schools are no longer asked to keep children and young people in consistent groups ('bubbles'). As well as enabling flexibility in curriculum delivery, this means that assemblies can resume, and schools and colleges no longer need to make alternative arrangements to avoid mixing at lunch. Nurseries, schools and colleges should continue to ensure good hygiene for everyone, maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, keep occupied spaces well ventilated and follow public health advice on testing, self isolation, and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Face coverings are no longer advised for pupils, staff, and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas. The Government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where pupils or staff may come into contact with people they do not normally meet. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school or college.

The Department will continue to keep these measures under review, in partnership with health experts and informed by the latest scientific evidence and advice.

Dame Meg Hillier:

[\[903334\]](#)

What progress has been made on catch-up learning for pupils in response to the disruption caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Gavin Williamson:

Since June 2020, we have announced over £3 billion to help children to catch up, including over £950 million in flexible funding to schools and £1.5 billion for tutoring. Over 500,000 children were invited to take part in summer schools nationwide. Over 200,000 have started tutoring, with more starting shortly.

■ Schools: Remote Education

Robert Halfon:

[\[37425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to monitor schools' ability to maintain remote support for pupils who are not attending school as a result of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises that head teachers and staff have worked hard to provide high quality on site and remote education, where it has been needed, to pupils.

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. The Department expects schools to provide remote education for pupils who test positive for COVID-19, where they are well enough to be educated from home, for the 2021/22 academic year.

The Department issued a new remote education temporary continuity direction for the 2021/22 academic year, providing clarity about what is expected and ensuring consistency with the last academic year, which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-temporary-continuity-direction-explanatory-note>. Schools affected by the temporary continuity direction must provide remote education for state funded, school aged pupils whose attendance would be contrary to local public health advice, Government guidance or law relating to COVID-19. Schools must also have regard to the expectations for remote education, published here: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/statutory-obligations>. These remain the same as the last academic year.

A comprehensive package of support continues to be available to schools and colleges to help them meet the remote education expectations: <https://get-help-with-remote-education.education.gov.uk/>.

Ofsted will return to a full programme of routine inspections from September 2021. As set out in the school inspection handbook, where remote education remains in place, inspectors may observe remote teaching and review materials.

■ Schools: Uniforms

Tulip Siddiq: [41095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children in (a) state and b) private schools in England are required to wear school uniforms.

Tulip Siddiq: [41096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the correlation between the wearing of school uniform and standards of behaviour.

Tulip Siddiq: [41097]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to issue guidance to schools on ensuring uniform procurement is consistent with Government policy on maintaining (a) environmental and (b) labour standards.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not collect detailed information on individual school uniform policies. The 2015 cost of school uniform report, commissioned by the Department, found that 99% of parents involved in the survey reported that their child's school required children to wear a school uniform. This survey did not include responses from parents whose child attended a private or independent school.

Throughout the passage of the Education (Guidance about Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021, the Department has engaged with a range of different stakeholders who have all advocated the benefits of correctly implementing a school uniform. The Department strongly encourages schools to have a uniform as it can

play a key role in promoting the ethos of a school, providing a sense of belonging and identity and setting an appropriate tone for education.

As the Act, and the required statutory guidance, is limited to the cost aspect of school uniform, it is ultimately for the governing body of a school (or the academy trust, in the case of academies) to decide how their uniform should be sourced. The guidance will make clear that schools should give high priority to cost considerations and value for money, which does not prevent them from taking into account other issues which are important to them, including sustainability and fair labour standards. Within the statutory guidance, the Department intends to outline the expectation that all schools should make second hand uniform available for all parents to acquire. Not only will this help parents to manage the cost of school uniform, but by extending the life cycle of garments, this will prove more sustainable.

■ Social Services: Females

Anna McMorris:

[\[37559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of girls aged (a) 11 to 14 and (b) 15 to 18 who have been referred to children's services with sexual exploitation and/or sexual violence assessed as a factor (i) in total in England and (ii) by local authority in England, in each year since 2018.

Anna McMorris:

[\[37560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of girls aged (a) 11 to 14 and (b) 15 to 18 who have been taken into care with sexual exploitation and/or sexual violence assessed as a factor (i) in total in England and (ii) by local authority, in each year since 2018.

Vicky Ford:

Information on the number of looked after children who have been taken into care as a result of sexual exploitation and/or sexual violence is not collected centrally by the department.

Information on the number of girls who have been referred to children's services with child sexual exploitation and/or sexual abuse (which includes sexual violence) identified as a factor at the end of assessment is provided in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. Regional data for referrals [Regional_Data_CSE.xlsx]

■ Special Educational Needs

Rachael Maskell:

[\[41022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling young people with special educational needs and disabilities to participate in further education through a student loan, including further education in a residential setting.

Rachael Maskell:

[41023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the ability of a young person with special educational needs and disabilities to gain (a) independence, (b) friendships and (c) skills through the residential aspect of specialist further education.

Rachael Maskell:

[41024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has taken of the potential merits of enabling young people with special educational needs and disabilities to attend a specialist residential college to undertake further education funded through a student loan.

Vicky Ford:

When deciding on the provision to be made for a particular young person with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), schools, colleges and local authorities must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice. If a young person has an education, health and care plan (EHCP), this should set out exactly what support they should be receiving.

EHCPs must be produced by the local authority in partnership with young people and their parents or carers, and have a clear focus on outcomes, including the support a young person will need to achieve them. Emphasis is also placed on making a positive transition to adulthood, which includes preparation for employment, independent living and, participation in society, including having friends and supportive relationships.

The department does not make assessments of the merits of specific types of provision for individuals. It is up to the local authority to decide, in consultation with parents and the young person, what the best provision for an individual young person would be. This may include specialist residential provision, based on the young person's circumstances and SEND. The local authority must secure the provision specified in the EHCP, providing the necessary funding, including for residential costs where appropriate.

■ Special Educational Needs: Reviews

Dan Carden:

[38401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the delay in the publication of the SEND Review on the support for disabled children and their families in their home.

Vicky Ford:

The Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Review is making good progress in identifying the reforms needed to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and their families.

The COVID-19 outbreak has inevitably frustrated the pace of the review and has materially altered the context for reform. That is why we continue to listen and work with system leaders to get this right by drawing on the best evidence available.

The government remains committed to publishing proposals for public consultation that will give children with SEND greater opportunities to succeed, by fundamentally improving the way we deliver support.

■ **Students: Coronavirus**

Matt Western:

[38378]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health on fully vaccinating all university students ahead of the 2021-22 academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

As the COVID-19 vaccination has been extended to all adults and young people over the age of 16, we urge students to be vaccinated as soon as they are eligible.

Students can access the vaccine via local sites run by GPs or community pharmacies, at larger vaccination centres and in some hospitals. Local areas may also decide to work with partners to set up “pop up” temporary clinics at locations convenient for students to access, for example, on university campuses.

We are pleased that universities are encouraging their students to take up the vaccine and recommend that students consult the COVID-19 vaccination Frequently Asked Questions published by NHS England that is available here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/covid-19-vaccination-faqs-students-in-higher-education-institutions/>.

Vaccination is not a requirement to study at university, but it is important in helping keep staff and students safe, and we are working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care on the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine to students in higher education.

■ **Students: Finance**

Tulip Siddiq:

[37549]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to introduce an alternative funding system for students who are prohibited from taking out interest-based loans.

Michelle Donelan:

I refer the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn to the answer I gave on 21 July 2021 to Question [34011](#).

■ Students: Loans**Matt Western:** [\[38380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on retrospectively changing the terms of student loans for UK graduates.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is currently considering its response to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding carefully. We are committed to driving up quality of standards and educational excellence and ensuring a sustainable and flexible student finance system. We will provide an update on our position as we conclude the post-18 review and are planning to consult in due course.

■ Swimming: Education**Grahame Morris:** [\[40847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will introduce compulsory education focused on water safety and drowning prevention for school aged children and young people.

Nick Gibb:

Swimming and water safety is a compulsory element of the physical education curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2. It sets out the expectation that pupils should be taught to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres, use a range of strokes effectively, and perform safe self rescue in different water based situations.

The Department has made new virtual water safety lessons available through Oak National Academy and has supported the Royal Life Saving Society UK's Drowning Prevention Week 2021. The Department is working closely with Swim England, Royal Life Saving Society UK and other organisations to support pupils returning safely to swimming and promoting water safety education.

■ Teachers: Science**Caroline Lucas:** [\[38234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will provide additional funding to support trainee and newly-qualified science teachers; what discussions he has had with the Royal Society of Chemistry on that matter; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Early Career Framework (ECF) reforms will create a step change in support for all early career teachers, including early career science teachers, providing a funded entitlement to a structured two year package of high quality professional development. The Royal Society of Chemistry was consulted as the ECF reforms were developed.

All state-funded schools offering statutory induction will receive additional funding to deliver the ECF reforms. The funding will cover 5% off timetable in the second year of induction for all early career teachers to undertake induction activities including training and mentoring. The funding will also cover 20 hours of mentoring across the academic year to allow mentors to support early career teachers in the second year of induction.

It is expected that most schools will use a Department for Education (DfE) funded training provider who will design and deliver a comprehensive programme of face to face and online training to support their early career teachers. Schools using a DfE funded, provider-led programme will also receive additional funding for mentor backfill for time off timetable for training.

In recognition of the challenging initial teacher training and induction that newly qualified teachers (NQTs) have experienced due to the COVID-19 outbreak, all state-funded schools that currently have an NQT who is due to complete induction this summer will be eligible for a one-off payment of funding. This will be the equivalent of an additional 5% off timetable for the next academic year so these teachers have additional time to invest in their development.

The Department offers a £24,000 tax-free bursary to teacher trainees training in the highest priority subjects, including chemistry and physics, along with prestigious tax-free scholarships worth £26,000. The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) scholarship programme provides selected ITT trainees with a range of support during their ITT year and beyond to enhance teaching ability and increase their subject knowledge.

A £7,000 tax-free bursary is also available for biology trainees. All science trainee teachers on tuition fee-funded ITT routes can apply for a tuition fee loan and maintenance loan to support their living costs. Additional student finance is also available depending on individual circumstances, such as the Childcare Grant.

Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses are available in Chemistry, Physics or Biology for ITT candidates who have a conditional offer to gain the depth of knowledge needed to teach their chosen subject.

The Department is also piloting two retention payment schemes for science teachers. The Teachers' Student Loan Reimbursement Pilot scheme aims to increase recruitment and retention of teachers in physics, chemistry and biology. It allows these teachers in 25 local authorities to claim back student loan repayments for up to 11 years after qualifying. Physics and chemistry teachers who completed ITT in the 2020/21 academic year will also be able to claim Early Career Payments (ECPs) of £2,000 each in the second, third and fourth years of teaching, or uplifted £3,000 ECPs if teaching in one of 39 local authorities.

■ Turing Scheme: Training

Amy Callaghan: [41300]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether staff working for the Turing Scheme delivery partner continue to be in receipt of training on the processing and assessment of applications to the Turing Scheme.

Amy Callaghan: [41301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his timetable is for notifying organisations on whether their application to the Turing scheme has been successful.

Michelle Donelan:

The Turing Scheme will provide funding for more than 40,000 participants from schools, colleges and universities to study and work across the globe during the 2021-22 academic year. 48% of these opportunities will be for disadvantaged participants.

Turing Scheme assessors received training early this year in preparation for bid assessment. The team that is processing applications and subsequent projects will receive ongoing training to support the delivery of the scheme.

All assessments on applications have been completed. All applicants have now been notified of the outcome of their application. A list of all funded organisations in higher education, further education and schools, as well as all destinations countries and territories, can be found on the Turing Scheme website at: <https://www.turing-scheme.org.uk/project-community/funding-results/>.

■ Universities: Antisemitism

Christian Wakeford: [903339]

What steps his Department is taking to tackle anti-Semitism on university campuses.

Michelle Donelan:

There is no place in our society, including within higher education (HE), for antisemitism. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting the widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that HE providers take these issues seriously.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to the sector in October 2020, calling upon leaders to adopt the IHRA definition. He repeated this message in May 2021, reinforcing the government's expectation that providers adopt the IHRA definition, stressing the even greater importance of doing so in light of increased number of antisemitic incidents recorded (as a result of the conflict in the Middle East). We are aware of over 100 HE providers which have now adopted the IHRA definition. This includes over 80 universities.

In his February 2021 strategic guidance letter, the Secretary of State for Education also asked the Office for Students (OfS) to undertake a scoping exercise, to identify providers which are reluctant to adopt the definition. On 29 July 2021, the OfS

announced they intend to publish a list of HE providers who have adopted the IHRA working definition of antisemitism in autumn 2021, alongside resources for providers.

The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers, but the government will continue to urge them to adopt the definition and ensure that HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

Adoption of the IHRA definition is only a first step, and while the government considers that adoption of the definition is crucial, it is not enough on its own. That is why I will continue to work with the sector to ensure it better understands antisemitism and does more to end it.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Paula Barker:

[41369]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the quality of teaching provided to university students during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether he plans to support students pursuing a reduction in fees charged during that period.

Michelle Donelan:

This has been a difficult and uncertain time for students, however, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and I have continued to work closely with higher education representative bodies, mission groups and the regulator throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. The government's clear and stated expectation throughout the COVID-19 outbreak is that universities are expected to maintain quality and academic standards and the quantity of tuition should not drop.

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

The OfS has and continues to take very seriously the potential impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on teaching and learning. It has actively monitored providers to ensure that they maintain the quality of their provision, that it is accessible for all, and that they have been clear in their communications with students about how arrangements for teaching and learning may change throughout the year. The OfS has also followed up directly with providers where they received notifications from students, parents or others raising concerns about the quality of teaching on offer.

If students have concerns about their tuition, 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.

Universities and other higher education providers are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees within maximum fee limits set by Regulations.

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

■ **Universities: Migrant Workers**

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[903337\]](#)

If he will take steps with Cabinet colleagues to assist Afghan scholars who have been validated by the Council for At-Risk Academics to take up their sponsored posts offered by universities in the UK.

Gavin Williamson:

The government is committed to providing protection for vulnerable people fleeing Afghanistan, including Afghan students and scholars. In its first year, the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK, who have been forced to flee the country, with up to a total of 20,000 in the long-term. Further details will be announced in due course.

■ **University of Oxford: Rother Valley**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[37621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students from Rother Valley constituency have been awarded places at the University of Oxford in each year since 2010.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[37622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students from Rother Valley constituency have been awarded places at the University of Cambridge in each year since 2010.

Michelle Donelan:

Enclosed is Department for Education analysis of the Higher Education Statistics Agency's student record data, detailing the number of undergraduate entrants to Oxford and Cambridge universities who were domiciled in Rother Valley constituency prior to study.

Attachments:

1. Undergraduate entrants to Oxford Cambridge from R [37621 37622 attachment undergraduate entrants to Oxford Cambridge from Rother Valley.xlsx]

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Welfare****Dr Dan Poulter:****[40836]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that future policy decisions relating to animal welfare are evidence-based.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra applies an evidence-based approach to policy decision-making which makes use of several sources. These include:

- externally commissioned research;
- collaboration with academia and other research organisations;
- internal evidence gathering by scientists, veterinarians, social researchers, economists, statisticians and operational researchers;
- expert committees including the Animal Welfare Committee and the Zoos Expert Committee;
- views provided by the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England;
- information and evidence provided by or obtained from other sources including non-governmental organisations, industry bodies and other stakeholders;
- information and evidence provided by or obtained from other government bodies, including the Devolved Administrations.

This year Defra's research and innovation interests were published, setting out the high-level research aims for Defra policies including with reference to animal welfare. This is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-group-research-and-innovation-interests-2021/defra-group-research-and-innovation-interests>

The Animal Sentience Bill currently before Parliament also provides for a new animal sentience committee to issue reports on how well future central government policy decisions pay all due regard to the welfare needs of animals.

■ Animal Welfare: Sports**Julian Sturdy:****[37466]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of regulation of animal welfare standards in (a) horseracing and (b) greyhound racing.

Victoria Prentis:

Ensuring the welfare needs of racehorses and racing greyhounds are met, both during their racing lives and afterwards, is a priority. In our recently published Action Plan for Animal Welfare, we have committed to ensuring that the horse racing sector addresses key animal welfare issues such as fatality levels. We also committed to

considering further protections for racing greyhounds including further steps to raise welfare standards at trainers' kennels. The Action Plan for Animal Welfare can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/action-plan-for-animal-welfare>

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) 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 allows action to be taken where there is evidence of cruelty to an animal or a failure to provide for that animal's welfare needs. This includes where animals are raced as well as where they are kept. The 2006 Act is also backed up a statutory code of practice for both dogs: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-dogs> and horses: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-welfare-of-horses-ponies-donkeys-and-their-hybrids>

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA), British racing's governing and regulatory body, is responsible for the safety of racehorses at British racecourses. The BHA works alongside the RSPCA and World Horse Welfare to make horseracing as safe as possible.

The Horse Welfare Board's five-year Horse Welfare Strategy (HWS) "a life well-lived" was published on 20 February 2020. The HWS contains 20 recommendations for improving the welfare of horses bred for racing. The HWS recommends that, as a minimum, the penalties for misuse of the whip need to increase and that the BHA should conduct a consultation on the use of the whip. This consultation ran until 6 September 2021.

The welfare of racing greyhounds at all greyhound racing tracks in England is regulated by the Welfare of Racing Greyhound Regulations 2010 (the 2010 Regulations). The 2010 Regulations were reviewed in 2016, both by Defra and the House of Commons' Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. The review found that, judged against their original objectives, the regulations have been broadly effective. The review also identified areas where the industry themselves should be taking further action and Defra have been working closely with the main industry regulatory body, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB), to ensure these actions are taken. This includes the annual publication of injury, euthanasia and retirement statistics, and addressing welfare issues at GBGB affiliated trainers' kennels.

I would encourage anyone with evidence that a racehorse or racing greyhound has suffered unnecessarily to get in touch with either the BHA or the GBGB and share their concerns. In the most severe cases of misuse, an individual may be investigated under the 2006 Act, as well as receiving significant sanctions from the sport.

■ Animal Welfare: Trade Agreements

Dr Dan Poulter:

[40835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure animal welfare policy is incorporated in trade policy.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government's manifesto commitment was clear that in all of our trade deals, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

Our Action Plan for Animal Welfare sets out our approach to animal welfare in trade policy and may be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/985332/Action_Plan_for_Animal_Welfare.pdf .

Our approach includes pressing for WTO rules which treat animal welfare criteria as a key consideration in trade discussions and seeking cooperation commitments in our new trade agreements to encourage shifts worldwide towards higher welfare forms of livestock production.

■ Bees: Conservation

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[36538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect on maintenance of the bee population in the UK of proposals for a sugar tax.

Victoria Prentis:

We are grateful to Henry Dimbleby and his team for their work on the independent review examining our food system and the vital role it plays in all our lives, which included their proposal for sugar and salt reformulation tax. The proposals put forward in the review are independent of Government. We will be developing a food strategy White Paper within the next six months setting out our own ambitions and priorities for a food system that delivers healthy and affordable food for all people.

Sugar is sometimes purchased by beekeepers in order to feed their bees and as was the case following the first report from this independent review, we will continue to work collaboratively across Government to evaluate the impacts of each recommendation made by the review.

The overall size of the honey bee population is dependent to a large extent on the number of individuals who wish to keep bees. Under the Healthy Bees Plan 2030, Defra works in partnership with beekeeping stakeholders on a range of measures to maintain a healthy honey bee population in England and Wales. For example, UK beekeepers benefit from an extensive programme of apiary inspections and bee health training and advice provided by the National Bee Unit.

We need to ensure that our food systems are sustainable and resilient systems which deliver for people, nature and climate, to support our exceptional British food and drink producers, protect and enhance the nation's health and the natural environment for generations to come. The Government's food strategy White Paper will set out how we will achieve that.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Testing

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[41044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the total percentage of bovine TB tests involving the use of tuberculin that have produced false positives.

Victoria Prentis:

The Single Intradermal Comparative Cervical Tuberculin test, commonly known as the 'comparative skin test', is the primary official antemortem test for tuberculosis (TB) in cattle in the UK and Ireland. This test has a very high specificity at standard interpretation of 99.98%, giving on average only one false positive result for every 5,000 to 6,000 uninfected cattle tested.

It is not possible to determine that a positive bovine TB (bTB) test in any species was actually a false positive result. However, the high specificity of the tests used, combined with the fact that they are often deployed in parts of the country with a high prevalence of bTB (or in herds with known or suspected infection), means that positive test results have a high predictive value. Post-mortem examinations of test positive animals do not always result in the detection of visible lesions of bTB and attempts to culture the bacterium in the laboratory may prove unsuccessful. In such cases this may be because the infection has not progressed to the stage at which definitive confirmation of disease is possible. In other words, absence of visible lesions of bTB at post-mortem examination or negative culture results do not indicate absence of infection in a bTB test-positive animal.

■ Cats and Dogs: Meat

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[38332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many recorded instances there have been of the sale of (a) dog and (b) cat meat in (i) West Yorkshire and (ii) England since 1 January 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has seen no evidence that dog or cat meat is being sold or consumed in this country.

There are strict rules for food businesses on slaughter and production of meat for human consumption in the UK and dog or cat meat would not be permitted under these requirements. We also have specific laws on the sale of food in England which are enforced under the Novel Foods Regulation 2018. These regulations make it an offence to sell dog or cat meat in England.

The UK is a nation of animal lovers and citizens of this country find the consumption of dog and cat meat inconceivable. This Government strongly agrees with this view and is appalled by the prospect of dogs or cats being consumed.

■ Climate Change and Ecology

Luke Pollard:

[\[36757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 June 2021 to Question 14214 on Climate Change and Ecology, whether the Government plans to declare a climate and ecological emergency.

Rebecca Pow:

This Government was the first of any major economy to set a net zero target in law, building on the legal framework to prevent and adapt to the effects of climate change in the Climate Change Act. The Environment Bill now requires a new, historic legally binding target to be set to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

■ Dangerous Dogs

Chris Evans:

[\[40861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to introduce the ability to rehome section one listed dogs to prevent their euthanasia.

Victoria Prentis:

Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 prohibits the owning or keeping of four types of dog: the Pit Bull terrier, the Dogo Argentino, the Fila Brasileiro and the Japanese Tosa.

Despite the general prohibitions on these types of dog, an individual prohibited dog can be kept by its owner or by the person for the time being in charge of the dog if a court judges that the dog is not a danger to public safety. In its assessment, the court must consider the temperament of the dog and its past behaviour, whether the proposed keeper is a fit and proper person, and may consider any other relevant circumstances, such as whether the dog can be kept in a suitable environment. If the court considers these criteria to be met, the dog can be listed on the Index of Exempted Dogs and must be kept under strict conditions, including being on a lead and muzzled in public.

The Dangerous Dogs Exemption Schemes (England and Wales) Order 2015 sets out the circumstances where an exempted prohibited dog may be transferred to a new keeper should the current keeper become seriously ill or die. The Government is not planning to introduce additional abilities to enable exempted prohibited dogs to be transferred to new keepers.

■ Dogs: Imports

Tim Farron:

[\[40814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to prevent puppies being imported to the UK and sold via third parties.

Victoria Prentis:

The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill was introduced in Parliament on 8 June. The Bill allows us to protect the welfare of pets by introducing restrictions to crack down on the low welfare movements of pets into Great Britain and includes powers to introduce new restrictions on pet travel and on the commercial import of pets on welfare grounds, via secondary legislation.

The Government launched a consultation on 21 August on our proposed restrictions to the commercial and non-commercial movement of pets into Great Britain, including our proposal to ban the commercial and non-commercial movement of puppies under the age of six months into Great Britain. We will take into account the views of the public and will continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that our final measures are well considered and are guided by the latest evidence.

The ban on commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens in England, also known as Lucy's Law, came into force in April 2020. Defra recognises that raising awareness of deceitful sellers is another integral step towards tackling low-welfare and illegal supply of puppies. That is why we launched the communications campaign "Petfished" in March 2020 to raise the public's awareness of the consequences of buying from a low-welfare seller and challenging the assumption that it is easy to spot bad practice. The campaign also signposts to resources available to help them make a good decision and source from responsible breeders or rehoming centres in the UK.

■ Flood Control: Finance

Olivia Blake:

[\[38474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many nature-based flood defence projects have been fully-funded by his Department in the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

Between 2015 and 2021 Defra funded around 130 projects which included nature-based solutions to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk. In addition to Government financial support, many of the projects benefitted from financial and in-kind contributions from project partners and stakeholders.

We will be undertaking an assessment of the benefits of the 2015-21 Capital Investment Programme linked to its intended social, economic and environmental impacts. This will help us understand what was achieved and will provide evidence to improve future programmes and policies. There will be a report in 2021.

■ Food Supply

Sarah Champion:

[38268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of staff involved in food safety testing having to self-isolate as a result of covid-19 on food supply chains.

Victoria Prentis:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is engaging closely with the sector to monitor industry concerns relating to their own food safety testing in the light of reduced staff availability from positive Covid-19 tests and a requirement to self-isolate, with a view to taking risk management steps as required to minimise impacts for consumers. The addition of FSA roles to the self-isolation exemptions list will also help to mitigate the risk over the coming weeks.

The FSA has also assessed Official Laboratories at the beginning and throughout the pandemic. This has shown that labs are operational and could access services from other Official Labs were there to be an increase in absences. The FSA has not received any recent reports from labs on concerns around reduced staff numbers as a result of self-isolation, and this is being continually monitored.

In view of the impact of the pandemic on local authority (LA) services, on 16 June the FSA issued specific advice in the form of a LA Recovery Plan on its expectations of LAs with regard to the delivery of food law official controls from 1 July 2021. LAs should inform the FSA as early as possible should they be unable to deliver against the plan during the recovery period.

Overall, the UK has a resilient food supply chain built on strong domestic production and open markets, and which has continued to respond strongly to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and labour shortages. We have been working with colleagues across Government and with the industry to ensure that our food supply chain has the support that it needs. Overall, the UK has a resilient food supply chain built on strong domestic production and open markets, and which has continued to respond strongly to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and labour shortages. We have been working with colleagues across Government and with the industry to ensure that our food supply chain has the support that it needs. This includes enabling critical sites across the food supply chain to carry out Daily Contact Testing to minimise disruption from self-isolation, and ensure that food supply continues to operate. So far, the roll out of DCT has focussed on over 500 of the largest sites across the food chain, including supermarket and wholesale distribution centres, large manufacturing sites and processing plants.

Since 16 August those who are fully vaccinated, participants of approved vaccine trials or those unable to have the vaccine for medical reasons are exempt from self-isolation if they are a close contact of a positive case. Children and those under the age of 18 years and 6 months are also exempt if they are a close contact. These groups still need to self-isolate if they develop symptoms or if they test positive. Those who are no longer required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of a

positive case continue to be advised to take a PCR test. Age-appropriate testing will be advised for those under the age of 18 years and 6 months.

■ Furs

Kim Leadbeater: [\[41400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to ban the sale and import of fur in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

On 31 May, Defra published a formal call for evidence on the fur trade in Great Britain (GB). This was a key step in helping us to meet the commitment set out in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare to better understand the fur sector in GB and gather evidence from those with an interest in it. We received around 30,000 responses from businesses, representative bodies and individuals, demonstrating the strong public interest in this area.

We will use the evidence gathered to inform any future action on the fur trade in GB, in line with the Government's commitment to improving animal welfare standards. A summary of responses setting out the results and any next steps in this policy space will be published in due course.

■ Furs: Trade

Kate Osborne: [\[37601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the concluded Fur Market in Great Britain Call for Evidence, whether the Government plans to take steps to tackle the killing of animals for fur.

Victoria Prentis:

Fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000, and 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Whilst there are existing import restrictions on seal, cat and dog fur, we still import other fur from abroad. Following our departure from the EU, the Government is considering further steps it could take in relation to the fur trade.

The Government wants to hear from all interested parties as we look to develop proposals and form views on what the fur trade might look like. In order to do this, the Government has concluded a call for evidence to provide both stakeholders and the public with the opportunity to provide evidence and views on this important matter. We will publish a summary of responses shortly.

■ Horses: Slaughterhouses

Julian Sturdy: [\[40893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the evidence on animal welfare standards at some horse abattoirs presented in the BBC Panorama documentary

entitled The Dark Side of Horse Racing, broadcast on 24 July 2021; and whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to update protections for racehorses and former racehorses in response to that evidence.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to the highest standards of animal welfare, including at slaughter.

Provided the animal is fit to transport and the journey time is not excessive, slaughter in an approved abattoir is a humane option for some horses, especially if the owner cannot afford euthanasia by a vet.

Legislation sets out strict requirements to protect the welfare of horses when slaughtered and official veterinarians of the Food Standards Agency are present in all approved slaughterhouses to monitor and enforce animal welfare requirements.

Following a recent review of the welfare of animals at the time of killing legislation, published on 27 January 2021, and as part of our Action Plan for Animal Welfare, we are carefully considering a wide range of welfare at slaughter improvements that could be made and will consult in due course.

■ **Meat: Consumption**

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[40571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to recommendation in the report published in July 2021 by the National Food Strategy that meat consumption in the UK should be reduced by 30 per cent by 2030 to protect people's health, the environment and the planet, whether his Department plans to take steps to (a) incentivise investment in alternatives to animal-based foods and (b) support business innovation in the plant-based protein sector.

Victoria Prentis:

We are grateful to Henry Dimbleby and his team for their work on this independent review examining our food system and the vital role it plays in all our lives. We are committed carefully to consider the Independent Review and its recommendations and will be responding in full with a White Paper in the next six months. The White Paper will set out the Government's ambition and priorities for a food system that will deliver for people, nature and climate, and support our farmers to produce the high-quality, high-welfare produce for which they are renowned.

■ **Meat: Labelling**

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[38147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to require labelling of meat to show animals slaughtered without prior stunning; if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing more detailed food labelling to promote animal welfare, including the method of slaughter; and if he will make statement.

Victoria Prentis:

There are currently no regulations that require the labelling of meat with the method of slaughter, but where any information is provided voluntarily it must be accurate and not misleading to the consumer. The Government expects the industry, whether food producer or food outlet, to provide consumers with all the information they need to make informed choices about the food they eat.

The Government has committed to consult on what can be done through labelling to promote high standards and high welfare across the UK market. We will shortly launch a call for evidence to assess the impacts of different types of labelling reforms for animal welfare, including method of slaughter. This will feed into the Government's wider work on food labelling to ensure that consumers can have confidence in the food they buy and to facilitate the trade of quality British food at home and abroad.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**Geraint Davies:****[40574]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the report on emissions from non-road mobile machinery (NRMM) engines published by Ricardo Energy and Environment, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on (a) banning or (b) limiting the use of NRMM engines, including those used in the transportation of food.

Rebecca Pow:

Neither the Secretary of State nor I have had any discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on this subject to date.

In January 2017, new legislation came into force with more stringent emission limits for major air pollutants from engines used in NRMM. It extends the scope of existing legislation to cover all sizes of petrol and diesel engines used in NRMM and it improves the legal framework. As of January 2019, new emission standards are mandatory for new engines being sold, for the first tranche of categories.

The Government also announced that it will remove the entitlement to use red diesel from April 2022 for many sectors, which will have benefits for air quality as red diesel is currently a cheaper fuel option for use in NRMM, whether for power lawnmowers, refrigerated lorries or excavators. This change will incentivise diesel fuel users to improve the energy efficiency of their machinery, invest in cleaner alternatives, or just use less fuel. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has also recently launched a [Red Diesel Replacement competition](#), to support the development and production of innovative clean energy technologies that affected businesses can switch to.

In addition, following recent work to improve the evidence base about different NRMM and their emissions, which involved working with industry and sector experts, we are now considering next steps. As set out in the Clean Air Strategy, the Government is considering the options to reduce emissions from non-road mobile

machinery, and this research will help ensure that we have a robust and accurate evidence base from which to consider policy options.

■ Nature Conservation

Olivia Blake: [38473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps (a) his Department and (b) Natural England have taken to define an irreplaceable habitat.

Rebecca Pow:

A definition for irreplaceable habitat is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework - see link: [Annex 2: Glossary - National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

As part of the implementation of biodiversity net gain through the Environment Bill, Defra and Natural England will be preparing guidance on this.

■ Palm Oil

Rachael Maskell: [41013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with UK food manufacturers on ending the manufacture of food products using palm oil.

Rachael Maskell: [41014]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with supermarkets on ending the sale of products using palm oil.

Rachael Maskell: [41015]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will end the sale and use of palm oil in food imports and production by 2030.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government is committed to supporting sustainable palm oil production, import and use. Oil palm is a very efficient crop, producing more oil per hectare than other vegetable oil crops. Substitution of other oils (e.g. soybean, rapeseed, sunflower), which typically require significantly more land to produce, may lead to greater deforestation as more land is converted to agricultural use. The Secretary of State has therefore not had any discussions with supermarkets or manufacturers on ending the sale or manufacture of products using palm oil, and does not support a movement away from the sale and use of palm oil in food imports and production.

The Government is working closely with industry, including with supermarkets and manufacturers, to support sustainable production and use of palm oil. In 2012, the Government established the UK Roundtable on Sourcing Sustainable Palm Oil which brings together key UK businesses and supports them to shift to fully sustainable palm oil supply chains. Latest reports show that 70% of palm oil and palm kernel oil imports into the UK were certified sustainable in 2019 – up from 16% in 2010.

Following recommendations from the Global Resource Initiative in 2019, we are also introducing world-leading due diligence legislation to make it illegal for larger businesses in the UK to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. Forest risk commodities are those associated with wide-scale deforestation, and we will consult later this year on which specific commodities to regulate through secondary legislation. This is just one piece of a much larger package of measures that we are putting in place to tackle deforestation and we are working internationally to tackle the drivers of deforestation and protect the world's vital intact forests.

As part of our Presidency of COP26, we launched the Forest Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) dialogue in February of this year, bringing together major producer and consumer countries of agricultural commodities to work together to support economic development and sustainable production whilst protecting forests and other vital ecosystems.

The Government works with other consumer countries through the Amsterdam Declarations Partnership to increase the market for sustainable palm oil. To this end, we also provide support to develop new market standards and approaches to deforestation-free palm oil through Partnerships for Forests, a UK government programme (£120 million, 2015-23) which works with businesses to catalyse investment into sustainable land use and forest protection.

■ **Palm Oil: Imports**

Rachael Maskell: [\[41012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much palm oil the UK imports annually.

Rebecca Pow:

According to Eurostat data, the UK imported 475,000 metric tonnes of palm oil and palm kernel oil in 2019.

■ **Pesticides: Licensing**

Daniel Zeichner: [\[40932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what consultation his Department is taking as part of the pesticide authorisation process between the submission of an application for a new pesticide and the decision on that application by the (a) Health and Safety Executive and (b) a Minister in his Department following the UK's departure from the EU.

Daniel Zeichner: [\[40933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what consultations are undertaken as part of the pesticide authorisation process between the submission of an application for a derogation to use a banned pesticide and the decision relating to the application by (a) the Health and Safety Executive and (b) a Minister in his Department following the UK's departure from the EU.

Daniel Zeichner:

[40934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether new processes for determining pesticide use applications will be compliant with the environmental decision-making aspects of the Aarhus Convention.

Victoria Prentis:

EU Exit legislation has carried across the statutory requirements of the EU regime relating to standards of protection. We now operate an autonomous GB pesticides regime, and decisions on standards are a matter for the UK Government and Devolved Administrations. EU pesticides legislation continues to apply in Northern Ireland, under the terms of the NI Protocol.

Decisions on pesticide authorisation are based on expert assessment by the Health and Safety Executive. The independent UK Expert Committee on Pesticides advises on novel scientific issues. The scientific risk assessment relies upon detailed data requirements and processes, carried across from EU law at the end of the Transition Period.

Risk assessments made for pesticide active substance approvals are subject to public consultation. These assessments establish the key risks posed by pesticide substances in representative conditions of use. There are requirements in the retained pesticides regulation to make the applicant's summary dossier, the draft assessment report (on which a period of time is permitted for written comments) and the conclusion publicly available. There are no similar requirements in the regulation in respect of applications for emergency authorisation. We continue making decisions on pesticides use based on scientific risk assessments, while aiming to achieve high levels of protection for people, wildlife and the environment.

The Government is committed to the continued effective implementation of our international obligations under the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental matters. The Government strongly supports the contribution the Convention makes to enhancing environmental protection and remains committed to its objectives. The three pillars of the Convention have been implemented via a number of measures, including legislation such as the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

■ **Plants: Imports**

Fleur Anderson:

[37605]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy not to implement proposals for additional labelling of plant imports in 2022.

Victoria Prentis:

There are no current plans for additional labelling of plant imports in 2022 for phytosanitary reasons.

Certain high priority plants imported from the EU have been imported with phytosanitary certificates since 1 January 2021, and the remaining categories of

regulated plants and plant products imported from the EU will require a phytosanitary certificate from January 2022. This is in line with the arrangements which already apply for such imports from non-EU countries. Unlike plant passports which were required for imports of plants from the EU before the end of the transition period, and were attached by industry, phytosanitary certificates are single documents issued officially and covering whole consignments.

Normal international rules on labelling apply to seed and other propagating material imported into GB for marketing. Where the UK participates in an OECD scheme, seed and forest reproductive material must carry an OECD certificate and labelling, and for agricultural seed also have an ISTA Orange International Certificate. The label must include 'GB rules and standards'. This will show that seed meets standards for variety identity, variety purity and seed quality equivalent to GB standards.

Standard seed of vegetables and ornamental plant material can be marketed under retained EU labelling requirements.

■ **Pollution: Environment Protection**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[38310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of light pollution on the environment.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra has published or contributed to a range of assessments of the impact of artificial light on the environment, including on insects and wider biodiversity, as well as global and national assessments of the drivers of environmental change more generally.

A range of measures are in place to ensure that light pollution is effectively managed through controls in the planning system, the statutory nuisance regime and improvements in street lighting.

We will continue to take action both to minimise risks and to improve our understanding of the impacts of light pollution, including working with our academic partners to keep emerging evidence under review.

■ **Sanitary Protection: Chemicals**

Jessica Morden:

[\[40785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that harmful chemical products are not used in disposable and reusable period products.

Rebecca Pow:

Period products are regulated under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 which require that only safe products are placed on the market. Producers are responsible for the safety of the products they place on the market and have to

provide relevant information and adequate warnings so that the risks can be assessed.

Both the [French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety](#) and the [Swedish Chemical Agency](#) have carried out studies that have considered the safety of these products. Both studies concluded that the risks were low.

If there were significant concerns about the presence of hazardous substances in a product, then there are measures in the UK REACH legislation, such as a UK REACH restriction, that could be taken to address this. However, we would need to be convinced that there was clear evidence before considering such action.

■ Slaughterhouses: Kent

Gordon Henderson: [\[40862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to take steps to encourage the expansion of abattoirs in Kent.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra recognises the role small abattoirs play in supporting the rural economy.

Defra is working with industry to find innovative solutions to support abattoirs. The Rural Development Programme for England Growth Programme, which is delivered by the Rural Payments Agency, is currently supporting a farmer-led mobile abattoir project which is trialling the use of a compact system for the on-farm slaughter of livestock. The project is due to be operational in autumn 2021 and, if successful, could be replicated elsewhere.

However, any decision to establish a new abattoir would be a commercial decision for the abattoir themselves.

■ Tobacco: Rules of Origin

Ben Lake: [\[41135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on relaxing the rules of origin requirements for (a) cigars and (b) cigarillos.

Victoria Prentis:

Rules of Origin are a standard feature of all free trade agreements. The Rules of Origin in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement ensure the vast majority of UK exports will benefit from zero tariffs, while protecting industry from unfair competition from products from other countries being imported through the EU.

Overall, businesses have been adjusting well to the new rules and continue to trade effectively. The Government appreciates that increasing business understanding of the rules is a key factor in facilitating tariff-free trade.

The Trade and Cooperation Agreement establishes a Specialised Committee on Customs and Rules of Origin, through which we can work with the EU to resolve implementation issues. EU exporters facing problems accessing the UK market may also wish to engage with the European Commission regarding difficulties faced due to Rules of Origin.

The Government is confident that the general provisions and product specific rules secured in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement will support UK-EU trade across the vast majority of sectors, with valuable facilitations agreed which reflect the nature of UK-EU goods trade.

■ UK Internal Trade: Plants

Fleur Anderson:

[37604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to streamline the plant passport system.

Victoria Prentis:

The plant passport system exists to protect our industry and our natural environment from plant pests and diseases, and to ensure consumers receive the highest standard of products. It also helps maintain the UK's reputation as a nation with high plant health standards, with businesses from which plants and plant products can be sourced reliably and safely. We have worked with key stakeholder groups through our Plant Health Advisory Forum to ensure that policies are pragmatic and minimise burden to businesses where possible, while protecting biosecurity, and we have taken a number of measures to streamline the plant passport system.

For example, we allow single plant passports to cover trolleys of mixed plants and plant products when they are supplied to retailers, to avoid operators having to label each individual plant. This system maintains the traceability of such plants and plant products without unnecessarily impacting businesses. We have also introduced a free e-learning module for traders to use to make compliance with the plant passport system easier.

It has also been communicated that amateurs and hobbyists do not need to issue plant passports. Therefore, home gardeners growing plants to be given to charity or to swap with other home gardeners (with no intention of making profit) do not need to be authorised to issue plant passports, acknowledging that regulating such plants movements would be disproportionate to the biosecurity risk involved.

Pre-printing of many plant passports is also made simpler because traceability codes on plant passports are not required on plants ready for sale to the final consumer, but only on plants for commercial growing on.

Furthermore, under EU legislation plant passports of 'Protected Zone' commodities were supplied to consumers in all cases, even face to face sales in retail outlets. In Great Britain this is no longer required as we believe that such a policy would be overly burdensome and disproportionate to the biosecurity risk. Since leaving the EU we have also removed the need for some commodities which are of a low plant

health risk in Great Britain, such as rice seed and citrus fruit with leaves, to be passported.

Finally, we intend to consult stakeholders on the introduction of electronic plant passports to ensure that legislation to enable their implementation is fit for purpose. Introduction of an electronic plant passport system would give operators more options in how to participate in the plant passport system.

■ **Water: Safety**

Grahame Morris:

[40848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce a public awareness campaign targeting young people on water safety and drowning prevention.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency encourages safe and responsible recreation on inland and coastal water and is responsible for safety on waterside assets it owns, operates or occupies (such as locks, weirs and bridges). It has published advice on how to stay safe while visiting waterways: www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-around-water. The Environment Agency is also a member of the [National Water Safety Forum](#).

Local councils often play an important role in ensuring that people stay safe around water in public spaces in their areas. The Local Government Association has published a water safety toolkit for councils: [Water safety toolkit | Local Government Association](#).

Fire and rescue services have also been pivotal in raising public awareness in this area, through their work with landowners and partner organisations.

Water safety is a vital life skill, which is why it is a mandatory part of the curriculum for Physical Education at primary school. The Department for Education recognises that children have missed out on opportunities to learn to swim due to COVID-19 restrictions and is working closely with Swim England and other swimming and water safety organisations to support pupils returning safely to swimming and promoting water safety education.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Anoosheh Ashoori**

Lisa Nandy:

[36626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 11 June 2021 to Question 14158 on Iran: Detainees, what progress his Department has made on its review of detained UK dual national Anoosheh Ashoori's application for diplomatic immunity; and when his Department plans to (a) complete and (b) announce a decision on that review.

James Cleverly:

We have received Mr Ashoori's application for diplomatic protection. The Foreign Secretary is considering the matter carefully. We remain committed to securing Mr Ashoori's immediate and permanent release. We have been supporting Mr Ashoori's family since we became aware of his detention. The Foreign Secretary has remained in contact with the family to reinforce the UK's efforts to bring him home. He last met them on 2 August.

■ Azerbaijan: Armed Conflict**Sarah Olney:**[\[36719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help support people affected by the conflict in Azerbaijan.

Wendy Morton:

On 1 September I announced £500,000 to support the UNDP in enabling effective mine action work in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region, including territories returned to Azerbaijan following last year's conflict. The region is one of the most heavily contaminated with land mines in the world and the money the UK has given will eventually allow people to live safely and without fear of harm from unexploded ordnance. This funding complements the £1 million the UK gave last year to the ICRC in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. The UK Government continues to consider what further support we might provide to both the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the coming months as they recover from the conflict.

■ Bangladesh: Freedom of Expression**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[40911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterpart in the Bangladeshi government on the compliance of that country's new digital security legislation with international human rights law.

Nigel Adams:

The Digital Security Act (DSA) was passed by the Bangladesh Parliament in 2018. Local and international human rights groups raised serious concerns about its broad and vague provisions, granting law enforcement authorities extensive powers to police the online space. The DSA is widely viewed as a means of suppressing opposition and limiting freedom of speech.

In May 2021, the British High Commissioner in Dhaka highlighted concerns to the Bangladesh Law Minister and the International Adviser to the Prime Minister about the sweeping powers of the DSA, which continue to pose challenges for independent and credible media and civil society in Bangladesh. In July, the Deputy High Commissioner reiterated UK concerns to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also urged Bangladesh to focus on improving the conditions for a free and independent media and the protection of human rights. We continue to work with like-minded

partners and urge the Government of Bangladesh to ensure that the DSA is in compliance with international human rights law.

■ Belarus: Politics and Government

Catherine West:

[\[41113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the attacks on Belarusian opposition activists in exile; and whether he plans to take diplomatic steps in response to those attacks.

Wendy Morton:

The Government condemns the intimidation and persecution of political opposition figures and activists by Lukashenko's regime. We have raised our concerns directly with the Belarusian authorities in Minsk and to the Belarusian Ambassador in London. The UK stands in solidarity with all those working for a more democratic future for Belarus, and I was pleased to welcome leader of the Belarusian democratic opposition, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, to the UK in August to discuss the UK's unwavering support for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

■ Climate Change: Developing Countries

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[40815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report, published in 2014, which states the value of family planning and reproductive health services in regions of high climate vulnerability, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of changing eligibility for International Climate Finance on encouraging the implementation of adaptation and resilience programmes that are focused on removing barriers to those services.

Wendy Morton:

UK International Climate Finance (ICF) reaches those most in need and we are committed to doubling our ICF to £11.6bn over the next five years. In our adaptation programming we prioritise locally-led action with a strong grounding in the local context and needs, targeting marginalised groups. We have also committed to increasing gender-responsiveness of climate finance through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25, which we are working to champion through our COP Presidency.

■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Famine

Sarah Olney:

[\[36718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support people affected by the famine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and what steps his Department plans to take to support those people so affected in that country in the future.

James Duddridge:

Preventing famine is one of the UK's top priorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since 2017, UK aid has provided 1.97 million people with food aid, cash and vouchers to reduce food insecurity and treated over 300,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition in DRC. The UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention, Nick Dyer, visited DRC in July to discuss with the Government of DRC and the humanitarian community how best to tackle the crisis. I also discussed the importance of tackling the humanitarian situation when I visited DRC in November 2020. This included my discussions with President Tshisekedi during my visit, and again during our telephone call in March. Over the coming year, the UK will continue to prioritise humanitarian assistance for food insecure people and malnourished children and work with the Congolese Government and international partners to address the underlying causes of the crisis.

Ethiopia: Politics and Government**Fleur Anderson:**[\[38433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing sanctions and other diplomatic measures to encourage the Government of Ethiopia to (a) tackle famine and violence and (b) seek a political solution to the crisis in that country.

James Duddridge:

The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns on the humanitarian situation and the need for a political dialogue to bring a lasting peace to Tigray directly with Prime Minister Abiy on 5 August. I also raised these issues with the Ethiopian Minister of Peace, Muferihat Kamil Ahmed, on 15 July. The UK will consider the full range of policy tools at our disposal to protect human rights and deter violations of international humanitarian law. It is longstanding practice not to speculate on future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Email**Fleur Anderson:**[\[36794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he or any of the Ministers in his Department use personal email addresses to conduct Government business.

Nigel Adams:

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.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[37555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether there will be any (a) voluntary and (b) compulsory redundancies as part of the FCDO Outcome Delivery Plan: 2021 to 2022.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary said on 18 June 2020, there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger between FCO and DFID.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[37556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the reduction in the overseas aid budget, what plans he has to make (a) voluntary and (b) compulsory redundancies in his Department.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary said on 18 June 2020, there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger between FCO and DFID.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[37557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral evidence of the then Secretary of State and Acting Permanent Secretary of the Department for International Development to the International Development Committee on 6 July 2020 on Humanitarian crises monitoring: impact of coronavirus, HC 292, whether it remains Government policy that there will be (a) no reduction in headcount in either London or East Kilbride and (b) no compulsory redundancies.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary said on 18 June 2020, there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger between FCO and DFID.

■ **Haiti: Earthquakes**

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[41042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to support the Haitian Government since the earthquake in that country.

Nigel Adams:

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake the UK announced that up to £1 million of support was available for the response effort. This is in addition to our significant contributions to the UN, the Red Cross and the Start fund. A UK Emergency Medical Team has completed its assessment mission of the needs caused by the earthquake,

and the UK funded an expert to join the UN's Disaster Assessment and Coordination mission, conducting an initial assessment and coordinating the international response. 1,300 UK-funded shelter, hygiene and lighting kits were sent to Haiti from the UK and Panama. The UK has also provided funding to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which is assisting with operations and coordination. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel Wave Knight was deployed offshore from Haiti until 29 August, supporting the US humanitarian response by serving as a landing pad for US helicopters. The Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), of which the UK is a founding donor, has agreed a pay out of approximately \$40 million. Further UK support remains available if required.

■ Hamas

John Lamont: [\[37558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Hamas's military capabilities.

James Cleverly:

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

■ International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Steve McCabe: [\[36518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 5 July 2021 to Question 22172, for what reason he has not approached his US counterpart to discuss collaboration on the international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Steve McCabe: [\[36519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his Answer to Question 22172 on 5 July 2021, what plans he has to discuss the merits of potential collaboration on the international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace with his US counterpart.

James Cleverly:

The UK government shares the objective of increasing understanding and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. UK officials remain in close contact with the US Government regarding the International Fund. The US is at a very early planning stage, and once more information is available, we will consider options for collaboration.

■ Iran: Nuclear Fuels

John Lamont: [\[38377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the IAEA report, Verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in

light of United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), what recent assessment his Department has made of whether Iran's uranium enrichment programme is now at levels only countries seeking to make atomic weapons reach.

James Cleverly:

On 19 August, the UK issued a joint statement with France and Germany underlining our grave concern at the latest reports of the IAEA. These reports confirm that Iran has produced uranium metal enriched up to 20% for the first time, and has significantly increased its production capacity of uranium enriched up to 60%.

60% enrichment constitutes an important step towards developing a nuclear weapon. No State without nuclear weapons has ever before produced Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU). We urge Iran to halt all activities in violation of the JCPoA and return to the negotiations in Vienna as soon as possible with a view to bringing them to a swift, successful conclusion.

■ **Iran: Prisoners**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[36625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions the Government has held with the Iranian Government on the possibility of prisoner exchanges for the purposes of securing the release of British-Iranian dual nationals held arbitrarily in Iran.

James Cleverly:

Securing the immediate and permanent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran is a top priority. The Foreign Secretary has repeatedly pressed for this, most recently on 20 August, as has our Ambassador in Tehran. We do not accept any of our dual nationals being used as diplomatic leverage. All decisions we take in these cases are based on what we believe will be in the best interests for these detained British nationals.

■ **Israel: Arms Trade**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[37483\]](#)

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

James Cleverly:

The Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. The Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

■ Israel: Bedouin**Zarah Sultana:**[\[41319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the demolition of 27 structures in Humsa - Al Bqai'a, the northern Jordan Valley, including residential units and animal shelters.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises the demolition of Palestinian property with the Government of Israel, most recently on 13 July, over the repeated confiscation and demolition of donor-funded assistance and structures at Humsa al Bqai'a. We continue to monitor the situation in Humsa al Bqai'a closely. Officials from the British Consulate General in Jerusalem visited on 19 July, releasing a joint statement with our likeminded partners urging Israel to halt settlement construction, demolitions and confiscation of Palestinian property.

■ Jerusalem: Palestinians**Zarah Sultana:**[\[41327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 July 2021 to Question 25803 on Jerusalem: Palestinians, whether the Government has taken diplomatic steps to oppose the eviction of Palestinians in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly raises the issue of forced evictions from their homes with the Government of Israel. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We monitor the situation in Silwan closely, and officials regularly visit and attend related court hearings. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions.

■ Malawi: Climate Change**Patrick Grady:**[\[40966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he, his Ministers or officials had with the Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change and UK International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for the COP26 Presidency on the Government's decision to reduce funding to aid and climate change programmes in Malawi (a) before and (b) after her visit to that country in August 2021.

James Duddridge:

Despite the fiscal pressures caused by the COVID pandemic, the UK Government remains a world-leading donor, spending 0.5% of GNI on aid to fight poverty, tackle climate change and improve global health; and we are committed to maintaining our

five-year pledge to spend £11.6 billion on climate finance for developing countries. Earlier this year, cross-Whitehall Ministerial and senior official level discussions, convened by the Foreign Secretary, informed strategic decisions on how to allocate the UK's ODA budget of more than £10 billion for 2021/22. This included discussions with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

In Malawi, the UK remains a significant development partner with support across a range of sectors including health, education, anti-corruption, private sector development, and climate and environment. Minister Trevelyan saw the positive impact of UK aid during her visit to Malawi earlier this month in her capacity as COP26 Champion for Adaptation and Resilience.

■ Nigeria: Abduction

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[36540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Nigerian counterpart on the kidnappings of students from Christian Schools and health centres in Kaduna State during 2021.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government condemns recent abductions and killings of students, healthcare workers and civilians in Nigeria's northern states, including Kaduna State, and calls for the release of those still held captive. Both Christian and Muslim communities have been affected.

We regularly raise concerns over insecurity, including kidnaps, with the Nigerian Government. For example, I [Minister Duddridge] discussed the impact insecurity has on education with the Nigerian Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Education in July in the margins of the Global Education Summit.

■ Nigeria: Politics and Government

Stephen Doughty:

[\[37480\]](#)

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

James Duddridge:

The UK Government follows political developments in Nigeria closely and has regular engagement with the Nigerian Government. The Prime Minister discussed a range of issues with President Buhari in the margins of the Global Education Summit in July. I [Minister Duddridge] visited Nigeria in April and held discussions with the Foreign Minister and the President's Chief of Staff. In particular, we are monitoring increasing insecurity and the ongoing work of the judicial panels of inquiry which were established to investigate allegations of police and military brutality following last October's #EndSARS protests. We are also urging the Nigerian Government to continue dialogue with Twitter to lift the Nigerian Government's recent ban on Twitter.

The UK Government is deeply concerned by the security situation in Nigeria where terrorism, intercommunal violence and criminality, including recent kidnappings of

schoolchildren, are affecting communities. I [Minister Duddridge] met the Nigerian Foreign Minister again in July, along with Nigeria's Minister of State Education, where we discussed insecurity and the impact it was having on education. We are committed to helping Nigeria tackle the terrorist threat and are providing humanitarian and stabilisation assistance to support communities in need. We are engaging with local actors who are working to find solutions to intercommunal violence.

■ **Nizar Banat**

John Howell:

[\[38226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Palestinian counterpart on the death of Palestinian journalist Nizar Banat.

James Cleverly:

We continue to call upon the Palestinian security forces and the Palestinian leadership to undertake necessary reform and to demonstrate their respect for Palestinians' human rights, including by delivering swift and transparent investigations into Nizar Banat's death and the policing of subsequent protests.

■ **Nnamdi Kanu**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[37478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what reports he has received from the Nigerian Government on the circumstances of the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu; and what consular assistance his Department has provided to Mr Kanu.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is seeking clarification about the circumstances of Mr Kanu's arrest from the Nigerian Government. We are also taking active steps to secure consular access and provide assistance to Mr Kanu. We are in regular contact with the Nigerian authorities and remain in contact with his family and legal representatives. Our current priority is Mr Kanu's health, welfare and fair treatment.

■ **North Korea: Human Rights**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[38242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the human rights situation in North Korea.

Nigel Adams:

The UK remains extremely concerned by the appalling human rights situation in North Korea, as we made clear alongside G7 leaders on 13 June, and G7 Foreign Ministers on 5 May. As set out in the FCDO 2020 Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report published on 8 July, we continue to work with partners to hold the North Korean government to account and urge the DPRK to cooperate fully with relevant UN human rights mandate holders and allow them immediate and

unhindered access to the country. The UK continues to press annual debate on the DPRK's human rights issues in the UN Security Council. We keep our Global Human Rights (GHR) sanctions regime under review following the designation in July 2020 of the DPRK's Ministry of State Security (Bureau 7) and the Ministry of People's Security (Correctional Bureau).

Fiona Bruce:

[\[38243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the progress made in implementing the 2014 UN Commission of Inquiry Report on human rights abuses in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the context of the APPG on North Korea report, published on 20 July 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The international community has a responsibility to respond to human rights violations in North Korea. The UK continues to press for annual debate in the UN Security Council on DPRK human rights issues. We welcome and support the annual Human Rights Council and UNGA Third Committee resolutions on human rights in North Korea which stress the importance of following up recommendations from the UN Commission of Inquiry Report on Human Rights in the DPRK and provide the basis for further work on a credible framework for accountability for human rights violations in the country.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[38244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the July 2021 report of the all-party Parliamentary group on North Korea.

Nigel Adams:

The UK government notes the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on North Korea Inquiry into Human Rights Violations in North Korea from 2014-2020, published on Tuesday 20 July. We will review the APPG Report's findings and recommendations and consider how the UK government can continue to address the appalling human rights situation in the DPRK.

■ Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[41123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact report, Management of the 0.7% ODA spending target in 2020, published 20 May 2021, which GNI forecasts and outturn data are used to inform decision making on Official Development Assistance by his Department.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) consider a range of economic data, where suitable, including but not limited to, GNI forecasts from the

Office for Budgetary Responsibility and GNI outturn data from the Office for National Statistics when making decisions on Official Development Assistance.

■ **Pakistan: Religious Freedom**

Tommy Sheppard: [\[38298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of whether non-Muslim pupils at educational institutions in Pakistan are required to receive Islamic religious education.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government continues to be concerned about the inclusion of Islamic religious content as part of compulsory subjects in Pakistan's educational institutions. We have asked the Pakistan Government to ensure Islamic religious teachings are restricted to relevant subjects and not included in those where they are not directly related to student learning outcomes. We have also facilitated a coalition of civil society actors that is working with the Pakistan Government to promote inclusion in education. Members of this group have supported the government to develop a curriculum for a new subject of "Religious Studies", which examines Pakistan's five major religions, and which minority students may opt to take instead of Islamic studies.

Tommy Sheppard: [\[38299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to recommendation of the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief's report entitled Religious Minorities of Pakistan: Report of a Parliamentary visit, published in September 2019, what recent support the Government has provided to Pakistan to encourage teacher training on respect for minorities.

Nigel Adams:

UK-funded education programmes in Pakistan cover professional development for teachers. The UK Government has supported the development and delivery of teacher training modules on equity and inclusion, which have been delivered to over 100,000 teachers. We are now working with the Government of Pakistan to improve the teacher-training curriculum to include modules on peaceful coexistence, tolerance and respect for minorities; and delivering this training so that teachers can teach their students these values.

Tommy Sheppard: [\[38300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the recommendation of the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief's report entitled Religious Minorities of Pakistan: Report of a Parliamentary visit, published in September 2019, what representations his Department has made to Pakistan's provincial governments on the return of nationalised Christian and Ahmadi colleges and schools.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government continues to engage with representatives of Christian and Ahmadi communities in Pakistan to understand their concerns about, and implications of, the nationalisation of their colleges and schools. During his recent visit to Pakistan, Lord Ahmad hosted a roundtable and discussed this issue, including the recent nationalisation of Edwardes College Peshawar, with interfaith leaders, the Chairperson of the Council of Islamic Ideology, and members of Pakistan's Parliament on 23 June. Lord Ahmad also met with Pakistan Federal Education Minister, Shafqat Mahmood, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education Minister, Shahram Khan, and Sindh Education and Labour Minister, Saeed Ghani, during the Global Education Summit on 28 July. These discussions focussed on ensuring girls' access to education, supporting continuity of education during the pandemic, and promoting inclusivity and respect for all religions. As part of our wider support to the education sector, the UK Government has facilitated a coalition of civil society actors that is working with the Government of Pakistan to promote inclusion and rights of children from minorities and other marginalised groups.

■ Palestinians: Education and Teachers**Steve McCabe:**[\[36522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the total amount of UK funding that has contributed towards the salaries of carefully vetted teachers and education workers in the Palestinian Territories since 2017.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO's programme spend is publicly available on devtracker. UK funding to the Palestinian Authority since 2017 to support the salaries of carefully vetted teachers and education workers is available here: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300050/transactions>

■ Palestinians: Elections**John Howell:**[\[38227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Palestinian counterpart on the postponement of nationwide elections.

James Cleverly:

We are disappointed that elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories have been postponed. The Palestinian people should be allowed to enjoy their democratic rights - and Israel must allow voting for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, in line with the Oslo Accords. We urge further work towards genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians, which is crucial to the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. To this end, we call on all Palestinian factions to seek common ground and to work together to pursue a positive path towards democracy.

We continue to encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights.

■ **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

Karen Bradley:

[\[38255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that UK aid is being used to promote the values of human rights, democracy and press freedom in (a) the West Bank and (b) Gaza.

James Cleverly:

Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in freedom, prosperity, and security. UK Aid helps promote the values of human rights by providing humanitarian and protection assistance in Gaza, including support to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees. The UK is working with the Palestinian Authority (PA) - and with Palestinian civil society - to make the security sector more accountable to its citizens, ensuring complaints of mistreatment or arbitrary detention are properly investigated. Our Transparency and Accountability programme is working to help the PA become more accountable to its citizens. Our Conflict Security and Stability Fund is supporting women and girls and people with disabilities to advocate for their rights and provided services to support victims of gender based violence. We work only with implementers and partners that have strong safeguards in place, which reduces risk and ensures the maximum impact of UK aid for Palestinians.

■ **South Africa: Civil Disorder**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[36669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance his Department has provided to UK nationals residing in areas of South Africa affected by recent violence and looting; and what advice his Department is offering to those who may be trapped in their homes as a result of that disruption without access to food and essential supplies.

James Duddridge:

We are concerned by the recent violence in South Africa. The UK supports President Ramaphosa's emphasis on the importance of the rule of law. The Integrated Review sets out the UK's commitment to fighting threats to democratic values and open societies around the world.

The South African Government put a number of measures in place to restore calm and secure shopping malls, petrol stations and key transport routes, including the deployment of the South African National Defence Force to support the police.

We regularly encourage British nationals in South Africa to monitor FCDO travel advice, as well as local media for real-time information about their area. We updated our travel advice continuously during the unrest in July, including via our social media channels. For British Nationals requiring assistance in South Africa our High

Commission is contactable 24/7. They can call +27 12 421 7500 and follow the prompts for consular assistance.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[38312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what consular (a) assistance and (b) advice his Department has put in place for British nationals residing in areas of South Africa in response to the recent outbreak of violence in that country.

James Duddridge:

We are concerned by the recent violence in South Africa. The UK supports President Ramaphosa's emphasis on the importance of the rule of law. Our Integrated Review sets out the UK's commitment to fighting threats to democratic values and open societies around the world.

We regularly encourage British nationals in South Africa to monitor FCDO travel advice, as well as local media for real-time information about their area. We updated our travel advice continuously during the unrest in July, including via our social media channels.

■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Coronavirus

Stephen Doughty:

[\[37481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) financial assistance and (b) in-kind support his Department has provided (i) directly and (ii) through COVAX to countries in sub-Saharan Africa since the start of the covid-19 pandemic.

James Duddridge:

The UK has played a leading role in supporting global access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines from the outset of the pandemic and stands side by side with our international friends and partners during this deeply challenging time to tackle COVID-19. The UK has provided its financial support for vaccines through the COVAX Advance Market Commitment. The UK is one of the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, having committed £548 million to the initiative which, through match funding, leveraged \$1 billion from other donors in 2020. Our early funding has been key to helping COVAX secure deals with manufacturers to supply up to 1.8 billion doses of safe and effective vaccines for up to 92 low- and middle-income countries by early 2022. Over 215 million safe and effective vaccines have now been delivered globally through COVAX to 138 participants. This includes 38.7 million doses for 42 African countries.

The UK is proud that our G7 Presidency secured agreement from leaders to support vaccinating the world in 2022 and to share and finance an additional 1 billion doses over the next year to accelerate vaccine roll-out. This includes a commitment from the UK to share 100 million doses, 80% of which will go to COVAX to enable it to provide further support to countries in need. 9 million of these doses have already begun to be delivered, with 5 million doses shared through COVAX to countries in

Africa as selected by the COVAX allocation process. 4 million doses have been donated bilaterally, with Kenya among those countries that have received doses.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[37536]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to support travellers who are overseas if the country they are visiting is suddenly placed onto the Red list in the context of the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

British nationals should inform themselves of the risks in a country, including the latest COVID situation, by following FCDO Travel Advice. British nationals should not travel to red list countries or territories. Those already overseas should follow the public health advice of the country which they are in, including current COVID-19 restrictions. British nationals requiring assistance in country should contact their nearest embassy, consulate or high commission. Our consular staff endeavour to give appropriate and tailored support to British nationals overseas and their families in the UK, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

This support includes providing assistance to return to the UK where it is appropriate. The assistance the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) can provide to British nationals abroad is set out in the publication: Support for British nationals abroad: A Guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>). Those returning to the UK should check current COVID-19 related restrictions (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control>). Individuals returning from red listed countries must enter managed hotel quarantine. This programme is run by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) with information, including for those in financial hardship or seeking exemptions, available on www.gov.uk/guidance/booking-and-staying-in-a-quarantine-hotel-when-you-arrive-in-england.

■ Turkey: Fires

Catherine West:

[41112]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has offered aid and assistance to the Turkish authorities to tackle wildfires in the Mediterranean and Aegean coastal regions.

Wendy Morton:

At the outset of the wildfires we offered our sympathy and support to the Turkish Government. The Foreign Secretary and I were in direct contact with our Turkish counterparts, and our Embassy in Turkey held urgent discussions with Turkish disaster relief authorities. Although Turkey had sought fire-fighting aircraft, which regrettably we could not supply, we were able to offer other technical support and capacity building expertise. The Turkish Government appreciated our support but confirmed they no longer needed such assistance.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Tim Farron:

[\[38223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to improve the primary health care estate.

Edward Argar:

The Department and NHS England and Improvement will discuss the need for improvements in the NHS estate, including primary health care, ahead of the next Spending Review. Further infrastructure funding, and how it will be allocated, will also be confirmed.

■ Accident and Emergency Departments

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[38295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Health and Care Bill on which body or individual would have responsibility for ensuring any person who needed emergency care would receive it after April 2022.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill proposes the establishment of integrated care boards (ICBs) which will take on the commissioning functions and responsibilities of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) as well as some of those held by NHS England. Once statutory ICBs are established, they will be responsible for arranging for the provision of emergency care for everyone for whom they are responsible. Regulations will be made to expand ICB core responsibility to ensure that each ICB is responsible for everyone in its area who needs emergency care, to recreate the duty currently on conferred on CCGs.

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Mental Illness

Dan Jarvis:

[\[38640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he is making available to NHS Accident and Emergency staff to carry out mental health assessments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS Accident and Emergency staff do not carry out mental health assessments under the Mental Health Act (1983).

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement are expanding the provision of liaison mental health services in all general hospitals. This is to ensure that when people with mental health needs present to A&E or in general hospital wards, staff are able to refer to specialist on-site mental health support. At the time of the last national survey in 2019, all hospitals with an A&E reported having

a liaison mental health service for the first time. 75% of them were operating 24/7 vs only 39% in 2017

On 22 July 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement announced consultation on the potential to introduce five new waiting time standards. These include a proposed standard that patients referred from Accident and Emergency should be seen face to face within one hour, by mental health liaison or children and young people's equivalent service.

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Offences against Children

Anna McMorris: [\[37562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of girls aged (a) 11 to 14 and (b) 15 to 18 who have presented to A&E with sexual exploitation and/or sexual violence assessed as a factor in each year since 2018.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

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

■ Accident and Emergency Departments: Standards

Damien Moore: [\[41208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to reduce waiting times at A&E departments.

Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published the 2021/2022 priorities and operational planning guidance. This includes guidance to transform community and urgent and emergency care to prevent non urgent attendance at emergency departments, improve timely admission to hospital and reduce length of stay.

£450million has been invested to upgrade accident and emergency (A&E) facilities, with funding awarded to over 120 separate National Health Service (NHS) trusts.

NHS trusts have used the new funding to expand waiting areas and increase the number of treatment cubicles, helping them boost A&E capacity.

■ Aducanumab

Julian Sturdy: [\[38253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to assess whether the new Alzheimer's drug Aduhelm can be made available to patients in England.

Julian Sturdy: [\[38254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to engage with the manufacturers of the new Alzheimer's drug Aduhelm to ensure that drug is priced at a level to facilitate widespread prescription.

Jo Churchill:

Aducanumab (Aduhelm) does not currently have a marketing authorisation for use in the United Kingdom. Subject to marketing authorisation approval, companies have freedom of pricing for new active substances under the voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access agreed between the Government and industry.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) assesses all new medicines and makes recommendations on whether they represent a clinically and cost-effective use of National Health Service resources and should be routinely funded. NICE has begun its appraisal of aducanumab for treating mild cognitive impairment and mild dementia caused by Alzheimer's disease and currently expects to publish final guidance in May 2022, subject to licensing. Commercial discussions between NHS England and the company may take place in parallel with NICE's appraisal, in line with NHS England's Commercial Framework.

Antimicrobials**Rosie Cooper:**[\[37404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to re-launch the Joint-Industry Government Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance; and if he will make a statement.

Rosie Cooper:[\[37405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to re-establish a formal Government to industry dialogue on steps to accelerate the discovery and development in anti-microbials; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

We will re-launch the Joint Government/Industry Working Group on antimicrobial resistance later this year. The group's work will include collaboration on the discovery and development of new antimicrobials, in particular with respect to the United Kingdom's pilot scheme to test an alternative, subscription reimbursement model for use of new antibiotics on the National Health Service.

Babies: Screening**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[36539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether research has been conducted on the use of pulse oximetry as an additional test in screening all babies in the context of the Newborn and Infant Physical Examination programme.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) looked at the evidence to use pulse oximetry (PO) as an additional test in the Newborn and Infant Physical Examination programme in 2019. The UK NSC recommended that there were still crucial gaps in the evidence to determine whether PO could be offered within a population screening programme to all newborn babies, as it was unclear

whether PO would benefit or cause harm in finding babies with mild hypoxaemia or abnormally low oxygen blood levels.

The UK NSC supported the call for further research to help explore the uncertainties of the offer of PO in all babies, before a final recommendation is made. In 2020, the National Institute of Health Research made a call for evidence and a feasibility report is underway.

■ Cancer: Children

Emily Thornberry:

[\[38181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on the practical, regulatory and governance barriers to international childhood cancer research consortia opening UK arms of existing international trials.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State has not had any official conversations with his cabinet colleagues on the practical, regulatory and governance barriers to international childhood cancer research consortia opening United Kingdom (UK) arms of existing international trials. However, we are committed to maintaining a thriving UK clinical trials environment that allows us to collaborate effectively globally and maintains and enhances the attractiveness of the UK as a site for international clinical trials.

■ Cancer: Clinical Trials

Emily Thornberry:

[\[38180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his Cabinet colleagues on improving the availability of and access to clinical trials in the UK for families affected by brain and childhood cancers.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State has not had any specific conversations with Cabinet colleagues on improving the availability of and access to clinical trials in the United Kingdom for families affected by brain and childhood cancers. We are determined to make it as easy as possible for the public to identify the availability of, and access to, research happening across the country, including brain and childhood cancers, and enable them to take part. We have launched the “Be Part of Research” study search application and website, which helps people to find out about health research, including clinical trials, of interest to them.

We are also working with the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission to increase high quality brain tumour research.

■ Cancer: Waiting Lists

Rachael Maskell:

[\[38327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish a cancer catch-up plan to ensure that the cancer treatment list is tackled in a timely manner.

Jo Churchill:

In March 2021, NHS England and NHS Improvement published the 2021/22 Priorities and Operational Planning Guidance which sets out the recovery aims for cancer to diagnose and treat those patients who had not commenced their treatment during the pandemic. Between March 2020 and May 2021, there have been 2.68 million urgent referrals and over 664,000 people treated for cancer. In May 2021, general practitioner urgent referrals for suspected cancer were 14% higher than in May 2019. In April, referrals have reached over 10,500 per day and nearly 11,000 in May.

■ Cancer: Young People

Zarah Sultana:

[\[41332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to (a) develop and (b) fund a comprehensive blueprint of psychological care for young people with cancer.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans to develop and fund a blueprint for psychological care for young people with cancer. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement have established a task and finish group to review psychosocial support for people affected by cancer, including young people. Furthermore, the NHS Long Term Plan states that where appropriate every person, including young people, diagnosed with cancer should receive a Personalised Care and Support Plan based on holistic needs assessment, end of treatment summaries and health and wellbeing information and support, including for mental health needs.

Clinical commissioning groups develop strategic clinical plans covering a wide range of health care services based on their local population needs, and will use these plans to decide how to best use their budgets to deliver high quality care to their patients. In doing so they use their clinical expertise to assess and prioritise those treatments that provide the safest and most effective outcomes for the population.

■ Care Homes: Closures

Rachael Maskell:

[\[37511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the CQC is taking to ensure that care company managers and their associates are not able to (a) re-establish care businesses and (b) receive a license if their reason for closure was non-payment of wages or pensions.

Helen Whately:

Service providers must register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which must be satisfied about their fitness and compliance with the requirements of the relevant regulations and enactments. As part of the registration process, the CQC will consider whether the applicant has been registered previously under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 or predecessor legislation. In such cases their regulatory history is taken into account when assessing a new application for registration.

Should there be a concern about the past non-payment of wages or pensions, the CQC would consider this alongside any other relevant regulatory history in coming to a judgement about the applicant's compliance and likely continued compliance with the requirements. However, the payment of wages and pensions is principally a matter between an employer and its employees.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus**Richard Fuller:**[\[40819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) feasibility and (b) efficacy of providing monthly covid-19 antibody tests to care homes.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made on the feasibility and efficacy of providing monthly COVID-19 antibody tests to care homes. However, social care workers in England have been eligible for a free antibody test at National Health Service test sites through and the at-home testing service since Summer 2020 for adult social care staff to access antibody tests if they wish to do so.

■ Care Homes: DNACPR Decisions**Rachael Maskell:**[\[37516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of care homes issued with blanket Do Not Attempt Resuscitation orders applying to all residents during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not record Do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions in health or care settings. However, we have established a Ministerial Oversight Group to monitor their use and adherence to guidance.

It is unacceptable for DNACPR decisions to be applied in a blanket fashion to any group of people.

■ Cerebral Palsy: Medical Treatments

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[36585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to make Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy surgery fully available on the NHS; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

NHS England routinely commissions selective dorsal rhizotomy palsy, for patients who meet certain criteria, in five hospitals across England with known expertise and recent clinical experience for this procedure.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Rosie Cooper:

[\[37403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of using digital cytology for cervical cancer screening programmes on (a) capacity and (b) resource flexibility.

Jo Churchill:

The merits of digital cytology cannot be assessed at this time as the technology is in initial development and not yet ready for commercial use. Once fully developed, NHS England and NHS Improvement will validate whether the technology is suitable for cervical screening samples.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Research

Alex Norris:

[\[38397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much Government funding has been provided to ME research in each of the last three years.

Edward Argar:

The following table shows the funding for research into myalgic encephalomyelitis through the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation in the last three years.

FINANCIAL YEAR	£
2018-19	£862,212
2019-20	£691,516
2020-21	£907,848

Janet Daby:

[\[41247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of increasing funding for research into ME and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Edward Argar:

The Government invests in health research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Medical Research Council (MRC), through UK Research and Innovation. The NIHR and MRC both welcome high-quality applications for research into all aspects of myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), otherwise known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). No assessment has been made of the merits of increasing funding for research into ME/CFS. While it is not usual practice for the NIHR and MRC to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, the MRC has had a cross-board highlight notice on CFS/ME open since 2003.

■ **Coronavirus****Neil O'Brien:**[\[36756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a breakdown of the number of people currently in hospital with covid-19 by age group, with each age group in turn broken down by their vaccination status.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England does not collect data in the format requested.

Public Health England publishes the age/sex breakdown of hospitalisations for COVID-19 for the most recent four week period on a weekly basis in the slide set and excel sheet which accompany the National flu and COVID-19 surveillance report, available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2021-to-2022-season>.

The analysis is based on data from a sentinel network of acute National Health Service trusts contributing enhanced data.

■ **Coronavirus: Contact Tracing****Rachael Maskell:**[\[36668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason access to contact tracing data for local directors of public health has moved from level Local 0 to Local 4.

Jo Churchill:

In order to address capacity challenges locally and nationally due to rising case rates, a decision was taken in early July to re-introduce a four hour digital journey across all national and local contact tracing. Individuals testing positive have four hours to self-complete the contact tracing survey before they pass on to local authorities, moving from a Local 0 to Local 4 approach. Due to the parameters of the Contact Tracing and Advice Service system, this decision was made for all local authorities and the national team. As a result of this change, over 30% of cases are now self-completing via SMS/email, increasing capacity both locally and nationally and enabling more cases to be reached within 24 hours.

Cat Smith:

[\[40972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who have turned off contact tracing on the NHS covid-19 app.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not hold data in the format requested.

We do not hold a cumulative total of the number of individuals who have contact tracing paused.

■ **Coronavirus: Databases**

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[38494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the time taken to publish the covid dashboard with new data.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom Coronavirus Dashboard is updated with new data at 4pm daily, including weekends and Bank Holidays. Information is collated from all four nations separately and published on the same day that the data are available. UK metrics can only be shown when there are data available for each nation. Testing data are available for the devolved administrations Monday to Friday.

Cases, deaths and vaccinations data are updated for England, Scotland and Northern Ireland seven days a week, while Wales do not publish data on Saturdays. The published data typically covers events occurring up to either the current or previous day. Data on hospitalisations and patients in mechanical ventilation beds are published every week day for all four nations. Scotland typically publish hospital admission numbers with a lag of four to five days and this means the UK total has the same lag.

In England, hospital trust level data is released every Thursday containing admissions data up to the end of the previous Sunday.

■ **Coronavirus: Death**

Mr Steve Baker:

[R] [\[37465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the number of daily non-covid-19 deaths for as long as he publishes the number of daily deaths from covid-19 in England.

Jo Churchill:

While Public Health England publishes the number of daily deaths following a positive test for COVID-19, monthly mortality analysis and data on daily deaths is published by the Office for National Statistics.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Mr Mark Harper: [R] [40740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the prospect of reaching herd immunity against covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has not made an estimate of when herd immunity to COVID-19 will be reached in the United Kingdom.

Charlotte Nichols: [41350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce covid-19 (a) case numbers and (b) hospitalisations.

Jo Churchill:

The Government will continue to build on its existing strategy for tackling the pandemic. This includes the successful roll-out of the vaccination programme, which has substantially weakened the link between cases and hospitalisations and the test, trace and isolate system, which is vital in managing the virus. As set out in 'COVID-19 Response: Summer 2021' the Government may need to take further measures to help manage the virus during periods of higher risk, such as winter, but will as far as possible prioritise strengthened guidance and seek to avoid imposing restrictions that have significant economic, social and health costs.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Dan Jarvis: [36641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his department has issued to NHS staff in the event of treating patients who refuse to wear face masks.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not offered specific guidance to NHS staff in the event of treating patients who refuse to wear face masks. PPE guidelines are set by the Infection Prevention and Control Cell (IPC) which is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/990923/20210602_Infection_Prevention_and_Control_Guidance_for_maintaining_services_with_H_and_C_settings_1_.pdf

NHS staff are advised to follow local Trust rules, which incorporate IPC guidelines.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Mr Clive Betts: [37355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who are double-vaccinated who are alerted by the NHS Covid App on the 15 August 2021 will have to isolate for 10 days.

Jo Churchill:

Fully vaccinated individuals who are alerted by the NHS COVID-19 App on 15 August that they are a contact of a confirmed case can leave isolation from 16 August. The App will provide updated advice for those identified as contacts from 16 August. If an App user is self-isolating because they have symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19, they should complete their self-isolation period.

Sarah Champion:[\[38267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of exempting fully vaccinated staff involved in food safety testing from covid-19 self-isolation requirements.

Jo Churchill:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) view inspection staff such as Veterinary, Meat Hygiene Inspectors and Plant Inspection Assistants as critical to maintaining the integrity and smooth running of the food chain. Inspection staff have been included in the new scheme in England where, following advice, they may be able to leave self-isolation to attend work. We will participate in the controls and checks put in place to allow this scheme to run and maintain the food supply chain.

Theresa Villiers:[\[40736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to allow people who have previously had covid-19 and who test positive for antibodies to avoid self-isolation after being in contact with someone who has tested positive for covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

From 16 August 2021, those who are fully vaccinated, participants of approved vaccine trials, individuals under 18 years and 6 months of age, and those unable to have the vaccine for medical reasons, are not required to self-isolate if they are a contact of a positive case. These individuals will instead be advised to take a polymerase chain reaction test or given age-related public health advice (in the case of young children).

Individuals who do not fall within the categories above, regardless of a positive COVID-19 antibody test result, are legally required to self-isolate if they are the contact of a positive case. There are currently no plans to change self-isolation regulations for people who previously had COVID-19 and who subsequently test positive for relevant antibodies.

Rachael Maskell:[\[41020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of how many times NHS Test and Trace has contacted people between 1 June 2021 and 31 August 2021 giving them incorrect or erroneously extended isolation period dates.

Jo Churchill:

There are robust quality control measures in place across the service, however, there has been no specific estimate made in relation to this point.

■ Coronavirus: Research**Sir Graham Brady:** [\[38143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2021 to Question 154773, if he will take steps to ensure the immediate publication of findings from any of the eight projects jointly awarded by the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation looking into the routes of transmission of covid-19 in different environments or groups of people, in the event that they report during the Parliamentary summer recess.

Edward Argar:

These studies will now be completing between August 2021 and January 2022.

Additionally, the National Institute for Health Research funded researchers are expected to publish their main study findings in peer-reviewed open access journals.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Anne Marie Morris:** [\[36645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) rate of false positives in PCR tests in the 90 days after contracting covid-19 and (b) impact of the accuracy of PCR tests on people travelling and being required to quarantine on return.

Jo Churchill:

The false positive rate of the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test is very low at 0.005%. This does not change in the 90 days following infection as false positives are caused by external factors such as contamination during sampling and laboratory processing.

Public Health England has not made a formal assessment of the impact of the accuracy of PCR tests on people travelling and being required to quarantine on return. The day two PCR test aims to identify COVID-19 infection that has been incubating during the duration of the travel. In order to test positive at or before day two, it is likely that individuals were infected in advance of their journey. PCR therefore provides an accurate way of identifying and containing travel-associated COVID-19 cases to prevent onward transmission.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[36729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect of a negative covid-19 lateral flow test result on individual behaviour.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England is currently assessing the potential effects of a negative COVID-19 lateral flow test result on individual behaviour. A protocol for this study is available on the Open Science Framework at the following link:

<https://osf.io/mcfyd>

The results of this research will be published in the autumn.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[37504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the Government has used an old address database for booking covid-19 lateral flow tests.

Jo Churchill:

Local Authorities and private landlords who own testing sites providing lateral flow tests are responsible for the provision such addresses. These details are then submitted to NHS Test and Trace to maintain and update as necessary. Older address databases are not in use.

Sir Alan Campbell:

[\[40621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make day two PCR tests (a) cheaper and (b) a standardised cost across all providers.

Jo Churchill:

Since requirements were introduced for international travel testing, the costs of travel testing have fallen significantly. We have invited the Competition and Markets Authority to conduct a review into pricing and standards in the market for international travel tests.

The Government has announced there will be a rapid internal review of the pricing and service standards of all providers of day two and day eight tests. It has also been announced that the cost of NHS Test and Trace tests for international arrivals has been reduced from £88 to £68 for green list arrivals or fully vaccinated amber list arrivals and from £170 to £136 for two tests for amber list arrivals who are not fully vaccinated.

Andy Slaughter:

[\[40738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of each covid-19 PCR test (a) administered at a testing centre or other NHS setting, (b) self-administered at home and (c) overall.

Jo Churchill:

The cost to the NHS Test and Trace (NHSTT) of each COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test varies with a few factors including which lab the sample is processed at and releasing this information would disadvantage us in contract negotiations with current and new suppliers.

The National Health Service budget has not funded PCR testing. PCR testing is provided by the NHS Test and Trace team using a separate budget administered through the Department. The breakdown of the audited NHS Test and Trace expenditure for the 2020/2021 financial year will be published as part of the Department's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts.

Paul Blomfield:

[\[40864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 July 2021 to Question 10360 on Travel: Coronavirus, how many covid-19 testing

providers have (a) received a five-day warning and (b) been removed from the list of providers on GOV.UK as a result of poor test turnaround times.

Jo Churchill:

Due to commercial sensitivities, the Department does not publish the specific reasons for organisations being removed from the GOV.UK listing. In the last two weeks, 57 COVID-19 test providers have been removed from the GOV.UK listing and a further 84 have been issued with a warning.

Julian Sturdy:

[40881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of extending covid-19 daily contact testing to workers and workplaces outside of the critical sectors already identified by the Government instead of requiring people to self-isolate.

Jo Churchill:

We are currently reviewing the potential merits of extending workplace daily contact testing to additional sites outside of the critical sectors already identified by the Government. Our initial focus is on completing the extension of the workplace daily contact testing scheme to 2,000 sites, as announced on 26 July. As of 16 August, contacts who are fully vaccinated do not have to self-isolate, but daily contact testing will continue in approved sites for contacts who are not yet fully vaccinated.

Rachael Maskell:

[41019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has undertaken sensitivity testing of the Innova SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Qualitative Test when the test is used according to the instructions set out in the guide published by his Department and NHS Test and Trace entitled Your step-by-step guide for Covid-19 self testing.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has undertaken sensitivity testing of the Innova SARS-CoV-2 Antigen Rapid Qualitative Test when the test is used according to the instructions set out in the guide published by the Department and NHS Test and Trace, entitled 'Your step-by-step guide for COVID-19 self-testing'. The results are available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999866/asymptomatic-testing-for-SARS-CoV-2-using-antigen-detecting-lateral-flow-devices-evidence-from-performance-data-Oct-2020-to-May-2021.pdf

Devices are also tested for robustness, usability and evidence of cross-reactivity with seasonal coronaviruses.

Post-marketing surveillance is performed on approved devices at regular intervals to ensure they remain fit for purpose against new variants.

Emma Hardy:

[41174]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made to the potential merits of T-Cell Immunity tests in informing a person's individual immunity to covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

T-cell tests are utilised in specific groups for clinical or research purposes including the Protective Immunity from T-Cells in Healthcare workers, the Vivaldi study in Adult Social Care home residents and staff, and in clinically assessing those who may be immunocompromised. Work is ongoing to compare, contrast and standardise cellular assays for larger scale screening.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Michael Fabricant:

[36517]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the proposed autumn Covid-19 booster vaccination programme will include a modified vaccine with improved efficacy against the (a) delta and (b) other covid-19 variants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) interim advice on a potential COVID-19 booster vaccination programme states that vaccines designed specifically against variants of concern will not be available in time for booster revaccination this autumn. The use of variant vaccines will be considered by the JCVI in due course.

Final decisions on the timing, scope and cohort eligibility of any COVID-19 vaccine booster programme will be confirmed once the JCVI has provided their final advice. The JCVI's advice will take into account the latest epidemiological situation, additional scientific data from trials such as COV-Boost, surveillance of the effectiveness of the vaccines over time and emerging variants.

Allan Dorans:

[36766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure people receive confirmation of having received a covid-19 vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Coronavirus Record Service shows an individual's dates of vaccination, the vaccine administered and the vaccination site, which is available at the following link:

www.coronavirus-record.service.nhs.uk

The NHS COVID Pass also shows vaccination details or test results and is available through the NHS App, NHS.UK and by letter, which can be requested through NHS.UK or via 119. Individuals will usually be able to get their pass within 24 hours of having received a vaccination.

Andrew Rosindell:**[37388]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect of proposed vaccine passports on covid-19 transmission at large events.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The NHS COVID Pass shows an individual's COVID-19 vaccination details or test results to manage the risk of transmission and provide additional reassurance that events organisers are taking measures to reduce these risks. The evidence shows that use of the Pass does reduce transmission at large events as the vaccines are effective at preventing infection. There is also further evidence that should vaccinated individuals become infected there is a reduced risk of transmission to others of approximately 40 to 45% after one dose.

Andrew Rosindell:**[37389]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the measures his Department needs to take to safeguard medical details recorded through a system of covid-19 vaccine passports.

Jo Churchill:

A full Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) was conducted to assess and mitigate privacy and data security risks. The DPIA remains a live document subject to regular iterations and reviews in line with the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation Articles 35 and 36. NHSX has also published a Privacy Notice on COVID-19 status certification, which is available at the following link:

<https://covid-status.service.nhs.uk/help/privacy-notice/>

Andrew Rosindell:**[37390]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons a negative covid-19 test is not an acceptable alternative to a vaccine passport when entering large events.

Nadhim Zahawi:

A negative COVID-19 test is an acceptable proof of COVID status when entering large events. COVID status can be demonstrated through the NHS COVID Pass which can be accessed through the NHS App, the NHS website, or as a letter that can be requested by ringing 119. To get a pass, individuals either need to be fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine used in the United Kingdom; have evidence of a negative polymerase chain reaction test (PCR) or lateral flow test taken within the past 48 hours; or provide proof of a positive PCR within the last 180 days and following completion of the self-isolation period. Customers should also be able to show text or email confirmation of test results. The Government continues to keep these requirements under review.

Andrew Rosindell:

[37391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment on the length of time that covid vaccination passports will be needed to enter large events.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This policy will be kept under review and no assessment of the length of time such a requirement will be needed has yet been made.

Andrew Rosindell:

[37392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid vaccination passport information will be destroyed in the event that vaccination passports are not required.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS COVID Pass does not store, share or further process any personal, health or vaccination data, nor does it capture any new information. All the information displayed in the NHS COVID Pass is derived from the National Immunisation Management System (NIMS), the System of Record for the NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme in England. NIMS retains vaccine data for six years from the last event date and is reviewed at that point to determine if there is a need to retain it longer.

The NHS COVID Pass service will continue to evolve in line with Government certification policy.

John Howell:

[37418]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of collecting data on the (a) number of people who have contracted covid-19 after receiving two doses of a vaccine and (b) average length of stay for those double-vaccinated people who have been admitted to hospital.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England monitors the number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and whether they have received one or two doses of the vaccination. This data is used to calculate vaccine effectiveness estimates which are available at the following link:

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

NHS Digital collects data on the number of people who have contracted COVID-19, patients who have received one or two doses of a vaccine and hospital data that can be used to calculate average length of stay. These three datasets can be linked where possible to track patient outcomes for vaccinated people.

Caroline Lucas:

[37420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to include unpaid carers and adult household contacts of clinically extremely vulnerable people on the priority list for a booster covid-19 vaccine; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) interim advice is that COVID-19 booster vaccinations should first be offered to the most vulnerable.

The JCVI's interim advice recommends a two-staged approach, with individuals in stage one offered a booster vaccine as well as a flu vaccine, as soon as possible from September 2021. Individuals in stage two offered a booster vaccine as soon as practicable after stage one, with equal emphasis on deployment of the flu vaccine where eligible. The JCVI advises that unpaid carers and the adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals should be offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine.

Final decisions on the timing and scope and cohort eligibility of any COVID-19 vaccine booster programme will be confirmed once the JCVI has provided their final advice.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[37534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of covid-19 vaccines for recipients of solid organ transplants.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Public Health England has been monitoring the effectiveness of vaccinations in clinical risk groups with immunosuppression, which includes recipients of solid organ transplants. From the evaluation of the vaccine programme, the data shows that completion of the two dose schedule correlates well with protection from both disease and severe outcomes, including hospitalisation and death.

Virus Watch, supported by the UK Research and Innovation and National Institute for Health Research COVID-19 Rapid Response initiative and NHS Test and Trace, provided information regarding patients' antibodies and included immunocompromised patients as part of their cohort. This suggests some protection against COVID-19 but is only one measure of protection and excludes cellular immunity.

Tulip Siddiq:[\[37547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) investigate reports that GPs have been refusing to register people whose immigration status is yet to be decided for a covid-19 vaccination and (b) ensure that every adult, regardless of immigration status, is able to register for a covid-19 vaccination.

Jo Churchill:

The General Practice COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21 Enhanced Service Specification (the contract under which general practices deliver COVID-19 vaccinations) enables practices to vaccinate unregistered patients within their eligible priority cohort, therefore increasing accessibility.

Different types of vaccination delivery are being used to help to make access easier for all groups, regardless of immigration status. Pop-up and walk-in services, in particular, continue to be very successful.

NHS England and NHS Improvement continues to remind General Practitioners (GPs) regularly about the need to vaccinate everyone in the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation eligible population, regardless of immigration status or whether they are registered with a GP. The most recent reminder was sent on the 20 July and also contains useful references and signposts to support materials.

NHS England and NHS Improvement advise that they escalate any reports and evidence of inappropriate registration refusals to local commissioners so that these can be investigated and addressed directly with GP practices to ensure registration decisions are made in line with national guidance.

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[38162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he has published on mixing covid-19 vaccine doses in people aged under 40; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Mixing COVID-19 vaccines is not currently advised, unless in exceptional circumstances as there is currently limited evidence of effectiveness and the duration of protection. Guidance on when mixing COVID-19 vaccines may be appropriate has been published in the Green Book, which provides guidance for public health professionals on use of COVID-19 vaccines in the vaccine deployment programme. This advice is also reflected in the guidance on the vaccination programme for healthcare practitioners.

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[38284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the merits of funding research into the efficacy of covid-19 vaccines and treatment options for people with blood cancer and blood disorders.

Jo Churchill:

While Government-funded therapeutics research is not specifically focused on people with blood cancer or blood disorders, many of these patients are immunocompromised, which is a priority cohort for research into therapeutic and prophylaxis treatments such as monoclonal antibody therapies, novel antivirals, and repurposed compounds.

As part of the COVID-19 Immunity National Core Study, UK Research and Innovation is providing £4 million towards the OCTAVE study. The OCTAVE study will examine the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in clinically at-risk groups. This includes vaccine responses in patients with certain immunosuppressed conditions, such as blood cancer and blood disorders.

Helen Hayes:[\[38357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government plans to take to ensure that landlords support social care providers in (a) evidencing covid-19 vaccine status of care home workers and (b) complying with the rules applicable to care homes in cases where the social care provider is not the landlord of the care premises.

Helen Whately:

The regulations place the requirement on the service provider or registered manager to check the vaccine status of those entering their building.

The operational guidance for COVID-19 vaccination of people working or deployed in care homes aimed at service providers, registered persons, local authorities, workers, agency staff and residents of Care Quality Commission-regulated care homes will be published shortly. Landlords will be encouraged to consider the guidance and work with social care providers to ensure the relevant requirements are met.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[38448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase take-up of the covid-19 vaccine among people aged between 18 and 24; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of offering incentives to encourage the take-up of that vaccine.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are keen to ensure all those aged 18 and above take up their offer of vaccination. There has been a major programme of work to drive this by increasing the accessibility of the vaccines in targeted locations in areas of lower vaccine uptake. On the 26th June, NHS England launched the 'grab a jab' weekend – with pop up vaccination sites set up in football stadiums, theatres, supermarket car parks and shopping centres, which allowed vaccinations to take place without needing to book in advance. There has also been a targeted communications campaign aimed at outlets which typically attract younger audiences. This has involved cascading messages through channels such as TikTok and Snapchat, as well as partnering with influencers, content creators and large retail corporations to drive up vaccine uptake within this cohort.

The Government continues to evaluate all options available to further boost uptake. The Department is currently assessing the potential merits of incentives, although a final decision has yet to be made.

Hilary Benn:[\[40603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS England plans to use the flu vaccine list to prioritise patients, including those with asthma, for the covid-19 booster vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published interim advice on a potential Covid-19 booster vaccination programme on 30th June 2021 which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jcvi-interim-advice-on-a-potential-coronavirus-covid-19-booster-vaccine-programme-for-winter-2021-to-2022/jcvi-interim-advice-potential-covid-19-booster-vaccine-programme-winter-2021-to-2022>

The JCVI's interim advice is that COVID-19 boosters are first offered to the most vulnerable. They advise a two-staged approach, with individuals in Stage 1 offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine as well as a flu vaccine, as soon as possible from September 2021, and individuals in Stage 2 offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine as soon as practicable after Stage 1, with equal emphasis on deployment of the flu vaccine where eligible. Adults aged over 50 years old, and those aged between 16 and 49 who are in an influenza or COVID-19 at-risk group, are included in Stage 2.

It is important to note that the JCVI's advice is interim to inform planning, and this may be subject to change.

Sir Alan Campbell:**[40616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) recommendation of 4 August 2021 that covid-19 vaccinations should be extended to 16 to 17-year-olds, if he will publish a detailed briefing on the material changes that were provided by the JCVI from their position set out in the JCVI statement on COVID-19 vaccination of children and young people aged 12 to 17 years: 15 July 2021, published on 19 July 2021, that stated that the benefits of universal vaccination in children and young people below the age of 18 do not outweigh the potential risks.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The minutes of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) meetings in which the COVID-19 vaccination of children and young people were discussed, including those between 15 July and 04 August 2021, will be published on GOV.UK in due course. Any additional briefing will not be published.

Minutes of the JCVI meetings can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation#minutes>.

Mr Mark Harper:**[R] [40741]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria he plans to use to determine (a) whether to implement a booster covid-19 vaccination programme in autumn 2021 and (b) which population groups that programme should cover.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published interim advice on a potential COVID-19 booster vaccination programme on 30th June 2021 which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jcvi-interim-advice-on-a-potential-coronavirus-covid-19-booster-vaccine-programme-for-winter-2021-to-2022>

The JCVI's interim advice is that COVID-19 boosters should first be offered to the most vulnerable. The JCVI advises a two-staged approach, with individuals in Stage 1 offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine as well as a flu vaccine, as soon as possible from September 2021 and individuals in Stage 2 offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine as soon as practicable after Stage 1, with equal emphasis on deployment of the flu vaccine where eligible.

It is important to note that this is interim advice to inform planning and this advice may be subject to change before being finalised. Final decisions on the timing and scope and cohort eligibility, including the groups listed above, of any COVID-19 vaccine booster programme will be confirmed once the JCVI have provided their final advice, alongside considerations related to COVID-19 vaccine supply.

Adam Holloway:**[40751]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risk that routine requests by NHS vaccination centres for NHS and National Insurance numbers may make people who are in the UK illegally less likely to engage with the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No such assessment has been made.

However, a National Health Service (NHS) number or national insurance number is not needed to make a booking for a COVID-19 vaccine or when attending a vaccination appointment.

As vaccination against COVID-19 is offered to every eligible adult living in the United Kingdom free of charge, regardless of their immigration status. No immigration checks are needed to receive a COVID-19 vaccination and the NHS is not required to report undocumented migrants to the Home Office.

John Howell:**[40817]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department have taken steps to enable people who participated in the Novavax covid-19 vaccine trials to travel internationally; and what support his Department has provided to the European Medicines Agency for the registration of that vaccine.

Marsha De Cordova:**[41230]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterpart on accepting the Novavax covid-19 vaccine for international travel.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government continues to make the case that anyone on a COVID-19 vaccine trial should be treated the same in terms of certification as someone who has received a deployed vaccine. Our Chief Medical Officer has written to all of his counterparts in the European Union and European Economic Community on this matter. Discussions are ongoing with other countries, including through groups such as the Group of Seven, the European Commission and the World Health Organisation to shape the approach taken around the world to sharing health status for travel.

The Vaccines Taskforce and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) are working with Novavax to help ensure their COVID-19 vaccine is authorised as quickly as possible. The decision to license a vaccine is made by the MHRA.

Shabana Mahmood:[\[40820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce covid-19 vaccine wastage; and what action is taken with unused vaccines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

No vaccines should be wasted. All vaccination centres should have a backup list of people in the cohorts currently being vaccinated, who can be called in case doses would be wasted. This is in line with the Enhanced Service Specification for the COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21.

We have put in place robust mitigations throughout the vaccination programme to reduce wastage, manage expiry dates, and avoid vaccine destruction, including, where there is data to support it, looking at the extension of expiry dates.

The United Kingdom is also one of the largest donors to COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX). We will donate at least 100 million surplus doses within the next year, with the first batch of five million already delivered last month.

Andrea Jenkyns:[\[41045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with a phobia of needles will be made aware of when a version of a covid-19 vaccine which does not require needles is approved for use.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department will ensure that a comprehensive announcement is made if a COVID-19 vaccine that can be delivered without the use of a needle is approved.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency continues to monitor and engage with developers and producers of both currently approved and new COVID-19 vaccines and offers scientific advice on new technical developments. We are unable to comment on products that are not approved for use in the United Kingdom due to commercial and market sensitivities surrounding the approval processes.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[41296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) capacity and (b) capability of community pharmacies to continue to help with the covid-19 vaccination programme; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made.

■ **Dementia: Research**

Sarah Olney:

[\[38371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that funding continues to be available for dementia research.

Edward Argar:

The Department funds research on health and social care through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The usual practice of the NIHR is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including dementia. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

We are currently exploring ways to significantly boost further research on dementia, including medical and care interventions.

■ **Dental Services: Morley and Outwood**

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[38342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to increase access to NHS dentists for people in the Morley and Outwood constituency.

Jo Churchill:

Morley and Outwood was one of 18 constituencies across Yorkshire and the Humber that received additional funding from NHS England and NHS Improvement as part of the region's Access Scheme, which has been extended until the end of March 2022. NHS England and NHS Improvement is currently evaluating the model and considering the most effective way to support practices to improve access for patients, within the funding available.

■ **Dental Services: Tunbridge Wells**

Greg Clark:

[\[38213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of unmet demand for NHS dentistry in Tunbridge Wells constituency.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not made an assessment of unmet need for Dentistry in Tunbridge Wells. NHS England has a duty to assess and commission services to meet the need for National Health Service dentistry in all areas of England.

■ Dental Services: York**Julian Sturdy:****[40887]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the Government's NHS funding increase by 2024 that will be allocated to NHS dental capacity in York.

Jo Churchill:

No estimate has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement are responsible for commissioning primary dental care services to meet local need.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Correspondence**Mr Nicholas Brown:****[38146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what target his Department has for responding to correspondence from hon. Members; and what recent assessment he has made of his Department's performance against that target.

Edward Argar:

The Department's target for correspondence from hon. Members is to reply to 90% of cases within 18 working days. The recently published cross-Government league tables for 2020 are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-on-responses-to-correspondence-from-mps-and-peers>

During 2020 we received 31,509 cases from hon. Members compared to 10,467 in 2019. Our performance against the target was 18% in 2020 compared to 67% for 2019. The Department is currently working to improve response times for 2021.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Directors**Fleur Anderson:****[36797]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which of his Department's non executive directors were appointed through open competition.

Edward Argar:

The Department currently has three non-executive board members. Kate Lampard and Gerry Murphy were appointed through separate open competitions. Doug Gurr was appointed directly by Ministers from a pool of appointable candidates from an open competition for non-executive directors for NHS England.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Ethnic Groups**Ruth Jones:** [\[37585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Black and ethnic minority staff employed in his Department.

Edward Argar:

The Department published the report 'Equality in 2020: how DHSC met the public sector equality duty' on 24 June. This includes the most recent statistics published on the number of black and ethnic minority staff employed in the Department. The report shows that 43.1% of staff declared their ethnicity. The data on number of staff is rounded to the nearest five to maintain anonymity. In September 2020, the Department employed 2,435 members of staff. Of these, 210 identify as black or ethnic minority, 840 as white and 1,385 are undeclared.

We are committed to achieving a representative workforce and providing equality of opportunity. We monitor protected characteristics across the Department, although declaration of ethnicity is voluntary.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Protective Clothing**Philip Davies:** [\[38206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in his (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

A COVID-19 risk assessment has been carried out following the framework provided by the Health and Safety Executive. In line with this assessment, the Department does not currently require face coverings to be worn by staff in departmental buildings. Those who do wish to wear them will be supported to do so safely.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions**Martyn Day:** [\[41036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 33282, tabled by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk on 14 July 2021.

Edward Argar:

I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer of 19 August to Question [33282](#).

Martyn Day: [\[41037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to answer Question 33283, tabled by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk on 14 July 2021.

Edward Argar:

I refer the Rt hon. Member to the answer of 19 August to Question [33283](#).

■ Depressive Illnesses: Electroconvulsive Therapy

Ms Lyn Brown:

[38218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to (a) Electroconvulsive Therapy for Depression: A Review of the Quality of ECT versus Sham ECT Trials and Meta-Analyses, published by Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry on 2 April 2020, and (b) A second independent audit of electroconvulsive therapy in England, 2019: Usage, demographics, consent, and adherence to guidelines and legislation, published by Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice on 16 March 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the use of electroconvulsive therapy in cases of depression.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have no plans to do so. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is responsible for assessing the safety and efficacy of treatments. NICE provides guidelines on when doctors should consider using electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) based on the available clinical evidence. Its guidance 'Depression in adults: recognition and management', includes recommendations on when ECT could be considered a treatment option for complex and severe depression. The Department expects commissioners and providers of services to pay due regard to these guidelines, which are kept under regular review.

■ Dermatitis: Medical Treatments

Sir Paul Beresford:

[37346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to develop (a) national clinical guidelines and (b) quality standards for the management of atopic eczema in adults and adolescents.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent, expert body responsible for developing authoritative, evidence-based guidance for the National Health Service. NICE has received a referral from NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a guideline on atopic dermatitis or eczema in those aged over 12 years old, which will be commissioned for development in due course. There are no plans for NICE to develop a quality standard on atopic dermatitis in those aged over 12 years old.

Jim Shannon:

[38263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact on patients of the delay in technology appraisals for new eczema treatments as a result of ongoing capacity constraints at NICE.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not made a specific assessment. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is operationally independent from the Government. NICE is committed to publishing guidance close to the point of licensing

wherever possible and is working on timelines for all appraisals that have been delayed as a result of operational challenges, including capacity constraints. In the absence of NICE guidance on the use of a medicine, National Health Service commissioners should make decisions locally based on an assessment of the available evidence.

■ Dermatitis: Waiting Lists

Sir Paul Beresford: [\[37345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the waiting times for referral for atopic eczema patients on patient access to treatment; and what plans his Department has taken to reduce such waiting times in dermatology services.

Jo Churchill:

No formal assessment has been made.

■ Dermatology: Coronavirus

Sir Paul Beresford: [\[37344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what impact assessment has been undertaken of the effect of covid-19 on the provision of NHS dermatology services.

Jo Churchill:

There has been no central formal impact assessment. Local systems delivering dermatology services carry out their own assessments.

■ Diabetes: Health Services

Kim Leadbeater: [\[41397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the total NHS expenditure on diabetes (a) prevention and (b) treatment services in each year since 2017.

Jo Churchill:

Information on total diabetes spend is not collected or held centrally as services for diabetes services are commissioned locally.

However, since 2017/18 NHS England has invested around £120m of transformation funding into local services to target variation and improve performance in the treatment and care of people living with diabetes.

■ Earwax: Health Services

Marsha De Cordova: [\[41231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of reintroducing NHS ear wax syringing services.

Jo Churchill:

General Practices (GPs) do offer National Health Service (NHS) ear wax syringing services if they consider it clinically necessary. If the procedure is seen as clinically necessary by the GP, the procedure will take place at the practice, or the patient will be referred to an appropriate local NHS service depending on the arrangements in place in the local area.

GP practices are increasingly recommending self-care methods (e.g. use of olive oil drops) as the primary means to support the safe removal of ear wax.

Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services**Sarah Champion:****[40910]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's timeframe is for (a) evaluating the adult community eating disorder waiting time pilots and (b) deciding whether to introduce an access standard for adults with an eating disorder.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The adult community mental health waiting time pilots, including those for eating disorders, have been evaluated. A summary report containing learning from this field testing was published on 22 July 2021 and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/mental-health-clinically-led-review-of-standards-models-of-care-and-measurement/>

NHS England and NHS Improvement then launched a public consultation on the mental health standards that have been developed with the pilot and early implementer sites. The standards being consulted on include the proposal for adults presenting to community-based mental health services, including for adult eating disorder services, to start receiving help within four weeks from referral. This consultation closed on 1st of September 2021.

NHS England and NHS Improvement will analyse the consultation responses which will inform a recommendation to the Government on whether and how to implement any new standards in due course.

Electroconvulsive Therapy**Ms Lyn Brown:****[38216]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) breaches of current standards and guidelines on electroconvulsive therapy the Care Quality Commission has identified in each of the last 10 years and (b) practitioners of electroconvulsive therapy have had their license to practice (i) restricted or (ii) removed in each of the last 10 years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) do not hold data centrally on the number of breaches related to electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). The CQC's records also do not separately identify records of breaches or other regulatory action related to ECT

specifically. The General Medical Council (GMC) is the regulator of all medical doctors practising in the United Kingdom (UK). Its role is to set and enforce the standards all doctors must adhere to and it is responsible for ensuring that medical practitioners have the necessary skills and knowledge to join the UK medical register.

The GMC does not have data readily available on practitioners of ECT who have had their licence to practise restricted or removed.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[38217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Electroconvulsive Therapy Accreditation Service (ECTAS) requires member (a) practitioners and (b) clinics to meet its accreditation standards in order to continue operating as members; and what role ECTAS has in providing information to the Care Quality Commission on adherence to standards and guidelines on electroconvulsive therapy.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Electroconvulsive Therapy Accreditation Service (ECTAS) is an organisation of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and arrangements for participation are a matter for the College. The Care Quality Commission may consider ECTAS accreditation as part of the evidence used in its regulation. However, it does not receive details of the accreditation process or of members within the scheme.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Mark Pawsey:

[\[37462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department will be using to reach the UK's agreed position on Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) ahead of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control ninth Conference of the Parties (COP9) since the UK has left the EU; and if will publish that information ahead of COP9.

Jo Churchill:

Ahead of the ninth Conference of the Parties (COP9) of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the Government will be considering domestic and international evidence on electronic nicotine delivery systems. This will include Public Health England's seventh Vaping in England report, which was published in February 2021. No further information will be issued by the Department ahead of COP9.

■ Emergency Services: Quarantine

Sarah Champion:

[\[37482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for making all emergency service providers exempt from self isolation requirements.

Jo Churchill:

We have no plans to do so.

■ Emergency Services: Sirens

Mark Pritchard:

[\[40793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with representatives of the emergency services on (a) proposals for an agreed national standard for decibel levels for sirens on emergency vehicles and (b) the noise pollution impact of those sirens on (i) pedestrians, (ii) cyclists, (iii) other road users and (iv) residential areas.

Edward Argar:

No such discussions have been held.

■ Endometriosis

Beth Winter:

[\[38458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce diagnosis times for endometriosis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

A call for evidence was launched to inform the priorities, content and actions of the Women's Health Strategy which included questions on gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis. We are currently analysing the responses and we aim to publish the Women's Health Strategy later this year.

The National Institute of Health Research hosted research to explore the experience of women who present with endometriosis-like symptoms in primary care. The results will inform our understanding of delays in diagnosis.

■ Flour: Folic Acid

Jessica Morden:

[\[36593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to respond to the consultation on the fortification of flour with folic acid.

Jo Churchill:

We will provide further updates on the response after the summer recess.

■ General Practitioners

Sarah Olney:

[\[36720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce pressure on GP services.

Jo Churchill:

We have made an additional £270 million available from November 2020 until September 2021 to ensure general practice can continue to provide necessary care. Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are also encouraged to make use of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, representing an average of 12 to 13 additional full time equivalent members of staff in post for each PCN. The NHS England and NHS

Improvement's Access Improvement Programme is supporting practices which are experiencing the greatest challenges to embed new ways of working, such as remote consultations as part of total triage.

John Howell:

[37417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has issued guidance to GP practices encouraging a return to face to face working from 19 July 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Face-to-face appointments have been available throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and approximately half of all appointments in June 2021 were delivered in person. NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to general practitioner practices on 19 July to set out that practices should offer a blend of face-to-face and remote appointments, with remote triage where possible. The letter is available at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/B0783_Primary-Care-letter_190721-002.pdf

Patients' input into the choice of consultation mode should be sought and practices should respect preferences for face-to-face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary, for example the presence of COVID-19 symptoms.

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[38280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on patient access to GP services in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Colleen Fletcher:

[38283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) financial and (b) other steps his Department is taking to ensure GPs can meet patient demand for services in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England.

Jo Churchill:

General Practices (GPs) are open and have been throughout the pandemic. Appointment numbers have risen from the lowest point in April 2020 with 0.83 million appointments per working day to 1.22 million in June 2021 (excluding GP delivered COVID-19 vaccination appointments). Compared to June 2019 this is a 2.8% increase (1.19 million). In June 2021 there were 20,200 estimated appointments per working day in Coventry and Warwickshire. This is a 29% increase from 2020 and a 3% increase compared to 2019. Increased numbers of patients in Coventry and Warwickshire are having appointments on the day or the day after requesting one, with 63% occurring on the day or the day after, which is well above the national position of 55%. To ensure GPs and their teams are able to provide the necessary care for all patients during this busy time, we have made available an additional £270

million from November 2020 until September 2021. Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are also encouraged to make use of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, representing an average of 12-13 additional Full-Time-Equivalent members of staff in post for each PCN.

■ **General Practitioners: Rother Valley**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[38483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GPs there were in Rother Valley constituency in each year since 2010.

Jo Churchill:

The data requested is not held centrally.

■ **Hassockfield Immigration Removal Centre: Health Services**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[38422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 33332, what discussions have taken place between NHS England and Spectrum Community Health CIC, the chosen healthcare provider for the new Derwentside immigration removal centre, to ensure that women detained there will be able to access a female nurse or doctor if requested.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such discussions have taken place.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have confirmed that Spectrum Community Health CIC will endeavour to ensure that female general practitioners and other healthcare professionals are available, and that women in Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre are offered the option to choose to see a female healthcare professional wherever possible.

■ **Health Services**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[38296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Health and Care Bill on which body or individual is responsible for providing (a) secondary medical care and (b) ophthalmic services after April 2022.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill proposes the establishment of integrated care boards (ICBs) that will take on the commissioning functions and responsibilities of clinical commissioning groups, as well as some of those held by NHS England. Once statutory ICBs are established, they will be responsible for arranging the provision of secondary medical care. For ophthalmic services, the Bill will enable the Secretary of State to directly confer commissioning functions for ophthalmic services on ICBs at

an appropriate time. NHS England will have the ability to delegate those functions to, or exercise them jointly with, ICBs.

■ Health Services: Coastal Areas

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[38148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2021, health in coastal communities, published on 21 July 2021, what steps he plans to take to improve (a) health outcomes and (b) recruitment and retention of NHS staff in coastal areas; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to levelling up health outcomes across the country, including in coastal communities. Reducing health inequalities will be a core aim of the new Office for Health Promotion (OHP). Under the professional leadership of the Chief Medical Officer, the OHP will bring together evidence, data and intelligence on what drives better and more equal health outcomes and develop strong relationships across government and the National Health Service (NHS) to drive change.

The Government is committed to ensuring that all parts of the country, including coastal areas, have the NHS workforce that they need. Health Education England (HEE) is undertaking a range of work with partners to ensure that there are enough NHS staff training and working in all areas of the country, including coastal areas. This includes reviewing the distribution of medical specialty training places to help ensure that trainee doctors are in the right parts of the country. HEE has also commissioned 11 universities to deliver nursing or midwifery degrees with blended learning elements, which will broaden their reach to under-served populations such as coastal areas.

■ Health: Children

Sarah Olney:

[\[38374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that the 0 to 19 Public Health Nursing Service continues to support the delivery of the Government's Healthy Child Programme in Hampshire.

Jo Churchill:

Local delivery models for the Healthy Child Programme vary and local authorities are encouraged to use the national commissioning guidance. We will continue to work with the Local Government Association, professional bodies and locally through Public Health England centres, to share evidence and guidance that allows councils to make the best decisions to meet local need.

■ Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[37409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the implementation of NHS England's

commissioning policy for percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for primary degenerative mitral regurgitation in adults, which was published in July 2019.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[37410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of patients eligible for percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for primary degenerative mitral regurgitation annually; and how many patients have been treated with percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for primary degenerative mitral regurgitation in each year since the treatment was first commissioned by the NHS.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[37411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to commission more centres to provide percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for primary degenerative mitral regurgitation, in line with NHS England's commissioning policy of July 2019.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to provide access to mitral valve leaflet repair by commissioning on an interim basis from the three National Health Service trusts that supported the clinical evaluation of this procedure. All cardiology services in England were made aware they should continue to refer patients to these centres in advance of a formal provider selection taking place.

Data submitted to the National Institute for Cardiovascular Outcomes research (NICOR) registry indicates that 94 patients in 2018 and 175 patients in 2019 had mitral valve leaflet repair. Cardiology activity and completeness of NICOR data submissions were significantly impacted during 2020 due to COVID and therefore data is incomplete for that year. Overall, NHS England and NHS Improvement estimate that 4,000 patients may be considered for the mitral valve leaflet repair procedure and approximately 400 patients would be referred for the procedure per year after five years.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have confirmed the commissioning of a minimum of nine centres to provide percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for primary degenerative mitral regurgitation.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[37412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when clinicians can start mitral valve repair for primary degenerative mitral regurgitation in the newly commissioned centres, as set out in the NHS England commissioning policy of July 2019.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[37413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the NHS has to commission percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for functional mitral regurgitation.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[37414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the proportion of adults with mitral regurgitation who are ineligible for surgical repair.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have confirmed a minimum of nine centres to provide percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair. Once these centres have been commissioned and clinical teams are trained in this procedure the service can commence. NHS England and NHS Improvement plan to consider the commissioning of percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for functional mitral regurgitation, in accordance with their methods for policy development. The proportion of adults with mitral regurgitation who are ineligible for surgical repair increases with age. In patients over 80 years old, approximately 50% may be ineligible for surgical repair.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[37415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the NHS has to commission transcatheter tricuspid valve leaflet repair routinely.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have no plans to commission transcatheter tricuspid valve leaflet repair.

■ Hepatitis: Disease Control

Alex Norris:

[\[38398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to eliminate Hepatitis C in by 2025 in line with the elimination goals of the World Health Organisation.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have announced a programme to eliminate hepatitis C in England by 2025 and meet the World Health Organization's target of 2030.

Alex Norris:

[\[38399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Government plans to work with relevant stakeholders towards achieving Hepatitis C elimination following the abolition of Public Health England.

Jo Churchill:

The national hepatitis C elimination team at NHS England continues to work with a full range of partners to eliminate hepatitis C in England by the World Health Organization's target of 2030. The new UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Promotion. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, clinicians, pharmaceutical industry partners, other Government Departments, the third sector and those with lived experience are participating in this programme.

Alex Norris:**[38400]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to help ensure that Hepatitis C elimination is prioritised as part of integrated care systems' plans from April 2022 in support of the national Hepatitis C elimination programme.

Jo Churchill:

The hepatitis C elimination programme is currently managed by a specialist team at NHS England and NHS Improvement. Policy, interventions, and funding are developed and delivered through 22 nationally commissioned local clinical teams or Operational Delivery Networks. The national team work collaboratively with both regional teams and local systems to ensure the delivery and oversight of diagnostic and treatment pathways at a local level. As integrated care systems become operational, subject to the passage of legislation, the programme will work with them to ensure that all opportunities to identify and support patients are realised.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Philip Davies:**[38193]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people in hospital with covid-19 were (a) in hospital with another condition and contracted covid-19 while in hospital and (b) admitted to hospital with covid-19 in each of the last three months.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information requested on the proportion of people who were admitted to hospital with COVID-19 and those who contracted the virus in the last three months is not available. The following table shows the number of patients diagnosed with COVID-19 whilst in hospital between 7 April and 30 June.

MONTH	NUMBER OF PATIENTS
7 - 30 April	1,957
May	1,479
June	2,799

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

Note:

1. Data is only available from 7 April 2021.

The following table shows the number of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 between 1 April and 30 June.

MONTH	NUMBER OF PATIENTS
April	5,258
May	2,569
June	4,158

Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/healthcare>

Note:

1. Data only includes confirmed cases.

■ Hospitals: Food

Andrea Jenkyns: [\[38334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of non-Halal and Kosher meat options in hospitals.

Edward Argar:

The 2020 Hospital Food Review and expert panel is now in place and a programme of work has commenced to implement its recommendations. This will include the sourcing of food.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists

Paula Barker: [\[41375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of NHS reforms on tackling the backlog of elective care patients requiring urgent treatment and/or operations that have been delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and what the timeframe is for clearing the backlog for routine hospital treatment.

Edward Argar:

The reforms in the Health and Care Bill will support the National Health Service (NHS) to respond to challenges, both now and in the future, to tackle key issues such as patient waiting times.

The Department is unable to set a decisive timeframe for clearing the backlog for routine hospital treatment due to uncertainty around how many patients who did not seek treatment as a result of the pandemic will be coming forward and when.

The Department continues to support the NHS to step up activity as much as possible and tackle the backlog as a priority, with a particular focus on those who have been waiting the longest.

■ Human Papillomavirus: Screening

Rosie Cooper:

[\[37400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing mRNA-based human papillomavirus testing for primary cervical screening throughout England.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[37401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the comparative effectiveness of mRNA-based human papillomavirus primary cervical screening offers and DNA-based screening.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[37402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment his Department has made of the effect on patient experience of mRNA-based human papillomavirus testing for primary cervical screening and DNA-based screening.

Jo Churchill:

In November 2015, the United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) recommended the use of human papillomavirus (HPV) as the primary screen test for cervical screening, replacing cytology-based screening, as it was more accurate in detecting cervical cancers.

Laboratories can choose to use either deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) or messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA)-based (HPV) testing platforms as both are approved for use in the national cervical screening programme.

Public Health England assessed the performance of both mRNA and DNA-based HPV testing platforms prior to their implementation in the national cervical screening programme. Both platforms were effective and performed to the level required. The type of HPV platform used does not have an impact on patient experience or effectiveness.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Derek Twigg:

[\[40611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the expansion of eligibility for flu vaccination to the over 50s in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Derek Twigg:

[\[40613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to improve uptake of the flu vaccination among people aged between 50 and 64 in 2021-22.

Derek Twigg:

[40614]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to improve the uptake of the flu vaccine among people aged 50 to 64 in 2021-22.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Last winter, the seasonal flu programme was extended on 1 December 2020 to include those aged 50 to 64 years old who were not in a clinical risk group. Of this group, 35.2% were vaccinated by the end of the season, with an estimated 2,669,568 vaccinations given.

For the 2021/22 flu season, we will continue to vaccinate all 50 to 64 year olds and will build on record uptake rates from the 20/21 winter. As a result of earlier advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and building on lessons learnt, 50 to 64 year olds will be eligible to book their appointment from the beginning of the season to allow more people to get vaccinated earlier.

In total, over 35 million people will be eligible for a free seasonal flu vaccine this year. The Department is in regular contact with flu vaccine manufacturers to ensure there is a sufficient amount of flu vaccines available to meet uptake ambitions for eligible cohorts.

Andrew Rosindell:

[40722]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the free flu vaccination programme to teachers in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Teachers and other key workers, aside from frontline health and care staff, who are not in an at-risk group are not eligible for a free flu vaccination in England. However, they may have access to the flu vaccine under their employers' occupational health scheme.

■ Integrated Care Boards: Councils for Voluntary Service

Rachael Maskell:

[41016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to have discussions with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the level of resources available to the councils for voluntary services sector to shadow Integrated Care System boards.

Edward Argar:

During the development of the Health and Care Bill, the Department regularly engaged with Cabinet colleagues regarding departmental business.

By creating integrated care boards and requiring the creation of integrated care partnerships, partnerships are being strengthened between the National Health Service and local authorities and with other local partners, including groups representing the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[41017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to have discussions with local community and voluntary services and their umbrella organisations on the level of resources available to the councils for voluntary services sector to shadow Integrated Care System boards.

Edward Argar:

During the development of the Health and Care Bill, we have closely engaged with more than 100 organisations representing all parts of the health and care system. This includes engagement with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) organisations, whose contributions have been invaluable to the development of the Bill.

We recognise the vital role which VCSE providers play in our health and care system. By creating integrated care boards and requiring the creation of integrated care partnerships, we are strengthening partnerships between the National Health Service and local authorities and with other local partners, including groups representing the VCSE.

■ Integrated Care Systems

Stuart Anderson:

[\[37599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients and communities are involved with the work and governance of Integrated Care Systems.

Edward Argar:

The proposed Health and Care Bill places a duty on integrated care boards to promote the involvement of patients and their carers and representatives in decisions related to their care. The integrated care partnership will also be required to involve residents and local Healthwatch organisations when preparing integrated care strategies. The Department will issue guidance in relation to the partnerships to reinforce the importance of representation and engagement.

■ Integrated Care Systems: Mental Health Services

Theresa Villiers:

[\[40734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Integrated Care Systems to be established under the Health and Social Care Bill give parity of esteem to mental health services.

Edward Argar:

Under the Health and Care Bill, each integrated care board (ICB) and their partner local authorities will be required to establish integrated care partnerships (ICP), bringing together health, social care, public health, and other perspectives to develop a strategy to address the needs of the area. We fully expect both organizations to give parity of esteem to mental health services. We are giving local areas flexibility to design their ICPs and ICBs, including how best to involve mental health services.

The Government remains committed to investing at least a further £2.3 billion a year to mental health services by 2023-24, which will see spending for mental health services growing faster than the overall National Health Service budget.

Theresa Villiers:

[40735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to impose a legal duty on the Integrated Care Systems to be established under the Health and Social Care Bill to give parity of esteem to mental health services.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill establishes new National Health Service bodies known as integrated care boards (ICBs) and requires the creation of integrated care partnerships. The ICB will take on the commissioning functions of clinical commissioning groups as well as some of NHS England's commissioning functions.

In exercising their commissioning functions under section 3 and 3A of the National Health Service Act 2006, ICBs must act consistently with the Secretary of State's duty to promote a comprehensive health service in England, to improve mental as well as physical health.

■ Long Covid: Medical Treatments

John Howell:

[40816]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recommendations his Department is making as to the use of Hyperbaric Oxygen therapy treatment in dealing with Long covid.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is not currently making any recommendations regarding hyperbaric oxygen therapy treatment (HBOT) for long COVID due to a lack of scientific evidence to support its use.

There have been two long COVID research calls launched by the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation, resulting in 19 funded projects. The calls specifically asked for projects investigating possible therapies for long COVID and a number of studies of this type have been funded. HBOT has not formed part of any application to either of these calls. Other ongoing calls are open and available for long COVID research applications and if a project on HBOT for long COVID was received, it would be considered.

The Department is aware of clinical trials currently taking place internationally, which are researching the use of HBOT for long COVID.

■ Medical Equipment: Databases

Emma Hardy:

[41176]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department plans to record on patient outcomes as part of the pilot Surgical Devices and Implants Data

Collection; and what plans his Department has to hold that data in the final Surgical Device and Implant Registry.

Edward Argar:

The Surgical Devices and Implants Data Collection, which includes the Pelvic Floor Registry, is to support the development of a single Surgical Device and Implant Registry. This will enable the national reporting of the use of any surgical device or implant. The data collected, for inclusion in the relevant Surgical Devices and Implant Registry, will include post-surgical complications submitted by clinicians and outcome and complications recorded by patients via a patient questionnaire.

■ **Medical Records: Data Protection**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[24964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that people are able to retain control of their own patient GP data when interacting with NHS Digital and the General Practice Data for Planning and Research programme.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 5 July 2021]: Patients have the ability to opt-out of the new General Practice Data for Planning and Research (GPDPR) programme and the dataset will always reflect their current preference.

We have committed to starting the collection of data only once a number of tests have been met. A patient's data will be deleted should they choose to opt-out of sharing their data with NHS Digital, even if this is after their data has been uploaded. This work is ongoing and further plans for the GPDPR programme will be announced in due course.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Robert Largan:

[\[37619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for High Peak of 11 May 2021, with reference RL22386.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 22 July 2021.

John Penrose:

[\[40809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 22 March and 28 May 2021 on NHS pensions on behalf of constituent Ms Stacey.

Edward Argar:

I replied to the hon. Member on 23 August 2021.

■ Mental Health Services: Recruitment

Dan Jarvis: [\[36643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional financial support he is making available to NHS mental health services to recruit more staff.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The mental health implementation plan's indicative planned funding includes increasing the mental health workforce by over 27,000 by 2023/24. However, specific funding for the recruitment of additional staff is not separately identifiable, as individual National Health Service organisations identify and fund their recruitment needs.

■ Mental Health Services: Waiting Lists

Sarah Olney: [\[36721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) the average waiting time is for mental health services and what plans he has in place to reduce those times.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The data is not held in the format requested as a national access and waiting times standard for National Health Service mental health services has not yet been defined.

The NHS Long Term Plan committed to invest at least an additional £2.3 billion a year into mental health services by 2023/24. This increased investment will ensure that an additional 345,000 children and young people and 380,000 more adults will have timely access to NHS-funded mental health services. We published our COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan in March to address waiting times for mental health services, and invest in the NHS workforce.

■ Mental Illness: Children

Seema Malhotra: [\[37476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of children with mental health conditions on the waiting list for hospital admission.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such estimate has been made. The Mental Health Services Data Set includes data on people who have been referred for mental health services, but it does not specify whether the admission to services is as an inpatient or an outpatient.

■ Miscarriage

Fleur Anderson: [\[38443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will amend the current rule of only investigating three consecutive miscarriages to investigate all cases of miscarriage.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is reviewing its guidelines regarding recurrent miscarriages and expects to publish its updated guidance later this year.

■ Mortuaries**Dawn Butler:**[\[37394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with relevant stakeholders to prevent mortuaries from releasing bodies without any documentation being completed or signed for.

Dawn Butler:[\[37395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is lawful for bodies to be released from a mortuary without their identity being checked by either party.

Helen Whately:

The Department has not had specific discussions. The Human Tissue Authority (HTA) is responsible, under the Human Tissue Act 2004, for licensing mortuaries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which undertake post-mortem examinations. The Human Tissue Act requires the HTA to prepare Codes of Practice on the standards expected by mortuaries in relation to carrying out activities in the making of post-mortems. In preparing their Codes of Practice the HTA consulted with the Department and appropriate stakeholders on the required standards.

The HTA's licensing standards require licensed mortuaries to record all body release details in a mortuary register, including the date and name of the person who released the body and to whom it was released. It also expects that the identity of a body is specifically checked upon release from a licensed mortuary using three identifiers which are attached directly to the deceased, usually on a wristband and also securely attached to the outside of the body bag.

The HTA's inspectors test that establishments meet these standards through regular traceability audits. Each licensed establishment must have a Designated Individual who has a legal duty to ensure that suitable practices are carried out by suitably trained people. This ensures that practices for identifying and documenting the deceased upon their release are robust.

Dawn Butler:[\[37396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is lawful for mortuary staff to show bodies to external visitors without the (a) knowledge or (b) consent of their family.

Dawn Butler:[\[37397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is lawful for police officers to use bodies in a mortuary for training purposes without the consent of their family.

Helen Whately:

The Human Tissue Authority (HTA) is responsible for licensing mortuaries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which undertake post-mortem examinations. The Human Tissue Act 2004 and the HTA's Codes of Practice require that consent must be in place to store and use bodies of the deceased.

Access to a mortuary by external visitors is covered by the HTA's licensing standards. These require establishments to have in place documented policies for viewing of bodies by family members and others, such as the police. Establishments are required to have controlled access to body storage areas; arrangements to protect against unauthorised access; and to ensure oversight of visitors and contractors. Most post-mortem examinations are conducted under the authority of a coroner. The access to and use of bodies under the authority of HM Coroner by the police, are at the coroner's discretion.

■ National Child Measurement Programme**Kim Leadbeater:**[\[41399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to protect the mental health of young people who participate in the National Child Measurement Programme.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Measurements are conducted in a sensitive way, in private and away from other children. Weight and height information is shared with parents in a feedback letter. No individual information is shared with the children themselves, the teachers or the school. It is a parent's choice if they share the information with their child.

If a parent is concerned about their child's growth, weight, body image or eating patterns the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) feedback letters provide national and local information to support parents and advise to seek further support from a school nurse or General Practitioner. Guidance is available to help NCMP delivery staff have supportive conversations with parents about their child's health and growth.

■ NHS Test and Trace: Telephone Services**Rachael Maskell:**[\[41021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of how long on average in June 2021 people calling the NHS Test and Trace 119 telephone line had to wait to speak to a call handler after requesting to speak to someone in the tracing team via a telephone keypad.

Jo Churchill:

In June 2021 people calling the NHS Test and Trace 119 telephone line had to wait on average 532 seconds to speak to a call handler in the tracing team.

■ NHS: Pay

Rachael Maskell: [\[37507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to respond to the NHS Pay Review Body recommendation on NHS pay.

Helen Whately:

The Government responded to the NHS Pay Review Body on 21 July and accepted the Review Body's recommendations in full. Once implemented, all National Health Service staff within the NHS Pay Review Body's remit will receive a 3% pay uplift, backdated to April 2021.

Rachael Maskell: [\[37508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether staff providing NHS services who have been outsourced will receive an NHS pay award in line with NHS staff.

Helen Whately:

Funding arrangements for trusts, including how this might impact on sub-contracted staff, will be confirmed in due course.

■ Oral Tobacco

Mr David Jones: [\[37398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to legalise the use of snus, tobacco-based products.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made and oral tobacco products are banned under The Tobacco and Related Product Regulations 2016 (TRPR). The Department is currently undertaking a post implementation review of TRPR which will consider if the regulations 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.

■ Pancreatic Cancer: Health Services

Grahame Morris: [\[40849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help improve outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients after diagnosis.

Grahame Morris: [\[40850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that pancreatic cancer patients receive treatment within 20 days of diagnosis.

Grahame Morris: [\[40851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make additional funding available to help improve early diagnosis and detection of pancreatic cancer.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to the Long Term Plan ambition of diagnosing three quarters of cancers at Stage one or two by 2028. NHS England and NHS Improvement are taking a multi-pronged approach which includes accelerating access to diagnosis and treatment, through their rollout of Rapid Diagnostic Centres and the new Faster Diagnosis Standard and the investment in new equipment such as the £325 million capital funding for National Health Service (NHS) diagnostics, which is enough to replace over two thirds of imaging equipment over 10 years old. The investment in this Long Term Plan commitment will help improve early diagnosis and detection of pancreatic cancer.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have recently announced that they will commission an audit in pancreatic cancer to help to reduce variations in treatment and improve patient outcomes. Scoping for this audit has begun, and the first data is expected in 2023.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) clinical guideline on the diagnosis and management of pancreatic cancer describes best practice in the care and treatment of patients with pancreatic cancer, including supporting their nutritional needs. Whilst NHS organisations and clinicians should take guidelines and quality standards into account, it is the responsibility of clinicians to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of each patient.

The “Help Us to Help You” campaign encourages people with symptoms to come forward. Cancer referrals in April and May 2021 were at an all-time high. An additional £1bn funding has been made available to the NHS in 2021/22 to support the start of this recovery of elective activity, including the recovery of cancer services.

■ Perinatal Mortality: Coroners**Lilian Greenwood:**[\[37450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the consultation on coronial investigations of stillbirths.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Work on analysing the responses to the consultation on coronial investigations of stillbirths has been delayed during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we plan to publish the response to the consultation as soon as possible.

■ Pharmacy: Coronavirus**Steve McCabe:**[\[36523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Prime Minister's comments of 10 February 2021 on reimbursing community pharmacies for additional costs incurred during the covid-19 outbreak, whether 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. The related issues including higher drug prices, higher prescription volumes and delays in payments have now been resolved. The Department has agreed with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee that pharmacies can claim for specified additional COVID-19 costs incurred between 1 March 2020 and 31 March 2021 and that the £370 million extra advance payments will be recovered from community pharmacies from October 2021 to March 2022.

Prisoners: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[38214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether all adult prisoners in England and Wales had been offered a first covid-19 vaccination as at 19 July 2021.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[38215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many adult prisoners in England and Wales had received a (a) first and (b) second covid vaccination as at 19 July 2021.

Nadhim Zahawi:

As of 19 July 2021, 90% of prisons in England offered a first dose to their adult population. 99% of prisons had also offered both doses to those in Phase One priority cohorts 1-9.

Unvaccinated prisoners awaiting a first dose offer by this date were those newly admitted to sites, however many of them would have already been offered the vaccine in the community or in a previous prison.

NHS England and NHS Improvement collate weekly data showing the number of vaccinated adult prisoners there are in the prisons in England. As per the data from Friday 23 July (which included those who received their first or second dose on Monday 19 July), 43,276 had received a first dose and 23,819 had received a second dose.

As of 28 July 2021, all eligible adult prisoners in England were offered a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

As health is a devolved matter, any data specific to Wales would be a matter for their respective devolved administration.

Public Health

Helen Hayes: [\[41060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the testing and healthcare infrastructure developed during the covid-19 outbreak is retained and targeted at (a) other infectious diseases and (b) improving public health.

Jo Churchill:

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will be fully established on the 1st October 2021. Longer term plans are currently being considered to ensure best use of the assets and capabilities developed to respond to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the UK is prepared for other potential health threats in the future. As the pandemic is still ongoing, the infrastructure and technology will be balanced between its current need and future requirements.

■ **Skin Cancer****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[38468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many diagnoses of skin cancer there have been in the UK in each year since 1990.

Jo Churchill:

The number of registered skin cancer diagnoses are held from 1995 to 2018, the most recent year for which data is available. The following table shows annual registrations of malignant melanoma of skin and non-melanoma skin cancer in the United Kingdom.

DIAGNOSIS YEAR	REGISTRATIONS OF MALIGNANT MELANOMA OF SKIN	REGISTRATIONS OF NON-MELANOMA SKIN CANCER
1995	4,777	36,093
1996	4,772	36,678
1997	5,050	41,457
1998	5,170	46,818
1999	5,359	48,008
2000	6,039	50,637
2001	6,464	52,750
2002	6,718	54,074
2003	6,994	56,530
2004	7,726	60,643
2005	8,261	63,230
2006	8,972	67,647
2007	9,113	76,009
2008	10,091	90,827

DIAGNOSIS YEAR	REGISTRATIONS OF MALIGNANT MELANOMA OF SKIN	REGISTRATIONS OF NON-MELANOMA SKIN CANCER
2009	10,242	88,954
2010	10,908	96,587
2011	11,211	101,465
2012	11,518	107,619
2013	12,448	114,502
2014	13,122	121,380
2015	13,431	126,118
2016	13,808	131,252
2017	13,784	129,364
2018	14,824	129,002

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cancer-registration-statistics-england-2018-final-release>

■ Smoking

Mark Pawsey: [37460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the findings of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Vaping's inquiry into the UK Tobacco Harm Reduction Opportunities Post-Brexit: Achieving a Smoke-Free 2030.

Jo Churchill:

This publication will be considered alongside a wide range of evidence to inform the Government's policy on the role of e-cigarettes in helping smokers quit smoking.

Mark Pawsey: [37461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Vaping's inquiry into the UK Tobacco Harm Reduction Opportunities Post-Brexit: Achieving a Smoke-Free 2030, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of in-packet targeted communications to smokers on (a) availability of reduced-risk alternative products and (b) the potential effects of other products on health.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made. Inserts in cigarette packets are banned under the Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Products Regulations 2015. The Government is

currently conducting a post implementation review of the Regulations which will be published later this year.

■ Social Services

Rachael Maskell:

[\[36675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has taken steps to investigate reports of social care companies managed by people who have had multiple business failures.

Helen Whately:

Service providers must register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and as part of its registration process, the CQC must be satisfied about their fitness and compliance with the requirements of the relevant regulations and enactments. There is no scope within the Regulations for the CQC to assess whether an applicant has had multiple business failures prior to applying, unless they have been registered previously under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 or predecessor legislation. In such cases their regulatory history is taken into account when assessing a new application for registration.

Providers have a duty to have a 'fit and proper' person in director level roles and the CQC assesses a provider's compliance with this as part of its regulatory role. The CQC does not assess directors directly but considers how the provider has appointed them and the checks they have made. Once registered, the CQC can further explore issues relating to character and conduct but has no scope to take regulatory action unless there has been a breach of the Regulations and there are concerns around the safety of residents and service users. In cases where concerns are identified, the CQC will use its enforcement powers on a proportionate basis, in line with its enforcement policy.

Helen Hayes:

[\[36700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the preparedness of the social care sector for surges in covid-19 and other respiratory diseases in winter 2021; and what contingency planning his Department is undertaking to support that sector.

Helen Whately:

We are working closely with the adult social care sector to prepare for winter, building on the lessons learned throughout the pandemic and in line with clinical advice from Public Health England and the Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[37606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to adult social care.

Helen Whately:

Local authorities are responsible for assessing an individual's eligibility for care and support as set out in the Care Act 2014 and where the individual is eligible for

financial support, for meeting those needs. Where individuals are not eligible for financial support, local authorities will support them, should they require assistance, to make their own arrangements for care services.

The forthcoming Health and Care Bill will introduce the Department's plans to develop an enhanced assurance framework to improve adult social care oversight across England. This includes a new duty for the Care Quality Commission to review and make an assessment of local authorities' delivery of their adult social care duties to help drive quality and outcomes for care users.

■ Sodium Valproate

Holly Lynch:

[41029]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Written Statement of 11 January 2021, HCWS692, Update on the Government's response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, whether he plans to support a redress scheme for the families affected by sodium valproate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government published its response to the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review on 21st July 2021. In this response the Government did not accept the recommendation to establish separate redress schemes for the three interventions discussed in the report, including sodium valproate. Our primary focus is on improving future medicines and medical devices safety and it is therefore crucial that we focus Government funds on initiatives that directly improve future safety (including specialist mesh centres and support for families affected by medicines in pregnancy). For this reason, redress schemes will not be established in response to the recommendation in the report.

■ Sunscreens

Mr Richard Holden:

[38469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of deaths of UK nationals that could be prevented annually by greater use of sunscreen.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) has made no such estimate.

PHE has contributed to research which demonstrated that sunscreen use allows protection from sunburn whilst still allowing vitamin D to be generated.

PHE also recommends using other means of protection, such as shade, appropriate clothing and sunglasses.

■ Surgery: West Yorkshire

Andrea Jenkyns:

[38345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting time for elective surgeries for people in (a) the Morley and Outwood constituency and (b) West Yorkshire.

Edward Argar:

The Department is taking steps to reduce waiting times for elective surgeries across England, including in West Yorkshire, and £1 billion has been made available this year to the National Health Service (NHS) to increase activity and tackle waiting lists.

Morley and Outwood constituency is covered by the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Integrated Care System (ICS), which brings together NHS providers and commissioners, local councils and other partners to make improvements to health and care. The number of outpatient appointments provided has already returned to 2019 levels.

Partners in the ICS are taking a range of actions to further support elective recovery, including:

- Ensuring good communication with people who are on the waiting list;
- Implementing shared referral management and offering advice and guidance to help reduce the number of people waiting for treatment;
- Ensuring that hospitals are supporting each other to reduce pressures, providing mutual aid where necessary and delivering the least complex procedures as quickly as possible;
- Making use of independent sector capacity;
- Continuing to transform and modernise services;
- Focusing on achieving best practice flow of patients through hospitals to maximise the number of beds available.

The ICS is also working closely with partners across the whole of the North East and Yorkshire NHS region to support these recovery actions.

■ Tobacco

Mr David Jones:

[36586]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Public Health England will provide this Department with (a) an Authoritative Assessment and (b) the eighth evidence review on relative harms of nicotine delivery products in 2022.

Mr David Jones:

[36587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's next review of e-cigarettes and other novel nicotine delivery systems will be conducted by the Office for Health Promotion; when that review will be published; and whether that review will include a chapter on heated tobacco.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not recognise the term 'Authoritative Assessment'. The next iteration of Vaping in England was commissioned by Public Health England in 2020 and is being conducted by an international panel of tobacco control experts led by King's College London. This will be the eighth evidence review and it will cover the relative harms of nicotine delivery products.

The report will include a summary of the Cochrane Collaboration's systematic review of the health effects of heated tobacco products and analysis of data on patterns of use. It is expected that this will be published in March 2022 by the Office for Health Promotion, following its launch on 1 October 2021.

Travel: Coronavirus**Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [36624]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people there were who tested positive for covid-19 on Day 2 tests after returning to England from Portugal for each day in the period that country was on the Green list.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not held in the format requested.

Dan Jarvis:**[36644]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people who have received the Astra-Zeneca vaccine not approved by the European Medicine Agency to travel to Malta.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Following discussions with officials, the Maltese Government confirmed on 15 July that travellers who have received AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency would be permitted to enter the country. All United Kingdom travel advice was updated.

Dr Rupa Huq:**[37542]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure individuals who were vaccinated in other countries are not excluded from (a) international travel and (b) attending events in the UK that require proof of vaccination.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are working urgently with international partners to ensure that British citizens vaccinated abroad with a United Kingdom (UK) recognised vaccine are able to demonstrate their vaccine status through the NHS COVID Pass. Work is ongoing to determine which non-United Kingdom vaccines, and certification solutions, could be recognised in this country for both international travel and for attending events and venues in the UK where individuals may be asked for proof of their COVID-19 status.

Layla Moran: [\[37569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of arrivals to the UK from (a) France and (b) Spain who have tested positive for covid-19 in each month of 2021 to date; and what proportion of those tests were sequenced for variants.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not available in the format requested. NHS Test and Trace publish this data on three weekly cycles aligned with risk assessments and decisions within the international travel traffic light system.

Helen Hayes: [\[41065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the security of people's data collected by private companies administering covid-19 testing for travel purposes.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made. Businesses, including private providers, need to ensure that they are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which requires them to take appropriate security measures to protect the records that they keep. The Information Commissioner's Office may issue penalties against businesses in breach of GDPR.

Helen Hayes: [\[41067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance and regulations on people's data have been issued to private companies providing covid-19 testing for travel purposes.

Jo Churchill:

The Government does not endorse, recommend, or approve any private test providers and the Department has not issued private companies with specific guidance or regulations on people's data. Businesses, including private providers, must ensure that they are compliant with the United Kingdom's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which requires providers to take appropriate security measures to protect the records that they keep. The Information Commissioner's Office may issue penalties against businesses in breach of GDPR.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[41225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of making covid-19 testing kits for international travel free of charge for fully vaccinated people returning from countries subject to covid-19 green list travel rules.

Jo Churchill:

Free National Health Service tests cannot be used for travel in order to preserve existing testing capacity to protect public health, and the Department has no plans to provide free tests for fully vaccinated people from countries on the green list for

travel. We are committed to working with the travel industry and private providers to reduce the cost of travel testing. We have invited the Competition and Markets Authority to conduct a review into pricing and standards in the market for international travel tests. We have also announced that the cost of NHS Test and Trace tests for international arrivals has been reduced from £88 to £68 for green or fully vaccinated amber arrivals.

■ Travel: India and Pakistan

Hilary Benn:

[40604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of travellers entering the UK from (a) India and (b) Pakistan, who were tested by the NHS in July 2021, were found to have a positive result for covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Data is not held in the format requested.

Data on arrivals is produced on three weekly cycles aligned with risk assessments and decisions within the international travel traffic light system. In the reporting periods covering 01 July to 11 August 13,888 people arriving from India were tested for COVID-19 with 143 people testing positive. 17,312 people arriving from Pakistan were tested with 324 people testing positive. Data on arrivals tested and testing positive can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

■ Travel: Quarantine

Dr Rupa Huq:

[36710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that pregnant women who are staying in covid-19 quarantine hotels are able to leave hotel premises to attend appointments, including ultrasound scans.

Jo Churchill:

The Managed Quarantine Service has provisions in place to allow guests temporary exemption from managed quarantine to attend hospital appointments, including appointments and ultrasound scans for pregnant guests. Security or hotel personnel can obtain permission from the Department for a temporary exemption from quarantine to allow such appointments to take place.

Hilary Benn:

[40607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the hotel quarantine charges increased from 12 August 2021 in relation to the covid-19 travel rules.

Jo Churchill:

The cost for staying in a managed quarantine facility when arriving from a red list country has increased to £2,285 for a single adult and £1,430 for a second adult to better reflect the total costs involved with providing their quarantine, including

transport to the hotel, security, provision of welfare services and the two PCR tests which must be taken on day two and day eight of the stay. The price remains unchanged at £325 for children aged 5-12 and free for children under five.

■ UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement: Medicine

Emily Thornberry:

[\[38179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to build on the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement in promoting future collaborations between UK-based and EU-based medical researchers, including for research into brain tumours and childhood cancers.

Edward Argar:

As part of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the United Kingdom (UK) has agreed to associate with Horizon Europe, furthering the UK's ambition to become a global science superpower. Our participation will support continued partnerships between UK and European Union's (EU) science and research experts and provide a platform through which our scientists and innovators can tackle significant and shared challenges. This includes medical research into cancers given that research and innovation on cancer, including childhood cancers, remains a high priority for the EU. The UK has an excellent track record in EU Framework Programmes and we are actively encouraging UK researchers and innovators to form consortia with their UK and EU partners and are encouraging UK researchers and companies to take advantage of this opportunity.

■ Verteporfin

Rosie Duffield:

[\[41132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the stock of Verteporfin held by NHS trusts.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department is aware of an ongoing supply issue affecting Visudyne[®] (verteporfin) injection due to manufacturing issues. We are working closely with the supplier and the National Health Service (NHS) to ensure that patients with the greatest clinical need can access the medicine. Comprehensive clinical guidance has been issued to the NHS which provides information on management of potentially affected patients during this time.

■ Visual Impairment: Health Services

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[37447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to increase the number of Eye Clinic Liaison Officers working within the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

The Government appreciates the impact that sight loss can have on a person's life and the important role that Eye Clinic Liaison Officers can play in supporting patients newly diagnosed with sight loss, including signposting patients to appropriate support and rehabilitation services.

Eye clinics and their staff, including Eye Clinic Liaison Officers, are commissioned, and funded by individual Clinical Commissioning Groups on the basis of local assessments of need, details of which are not routinely collected centrally.

■ Wound Dressings**Rosie Cooper:**[\[37406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to improve Government procurement mechanisms on the supply of wound care products to help retain an economically viable Wound Care Industry in the UK.

Rosie Cooper:[\[37407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that the appropriate wound care products continue to remain available to the NHS that (a) maximise healing rates, (b) minimise nursing time, (c) reduce readmissions to hospital and (d) support the NHS drive to maximise covid-19 recovery and the backlog.

Rosie Cooper:[\[37408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the NHS continues to have access to a choice of quality wound care products that maximise healing.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service has well established procurement mechanisms for ensuring the supply of high quality wound care products to patients.

We expect NHS Supply Chain to optimise the range of products available on the market, balancing the needs of maintaining choice and securing supply with the commercial and consistency benefits that standardisation can deliver.

Expert clinicians in the National Wound Care Strategy Programme have contributed to the development of appropriate high quality specifications for products. The Programme is currently developing a classification system to support clinical decisions on the selection of wound care products and practical decisions around supply and distribution. This will provide greater clarity to clinicians of which products are comparable. The requirements of product selection processes remain driven by clinicians' assessment of patient needs.

HOME OFFICE■ **Animal Experiments**

Fleur Anderson: [38428]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, following the UK's exit of the EU, whether she plans to review the regulatory requirements that necessitated the 24 per cent of regulatory testing on animals that was reported to have caused moderate or severe suffering in 2020.

Victoria Atkins:

The requirements for regulatory testing are set by regulatory bodies across Government. The Home Department regulates the use of animals in science through administration and enforcement of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) which describes that the evaluation of a programme of work is favourable if it is required by law.

All UK regulations and regulators abide by the principles of the 3Rs (the replacement, reduction and refinement of animal use) and therefore only require animal testing where there are no alternatives and where pain, suffering, distress and lasting harm are minimised to the degree needed to meet the scientific requirements of the regulations.

■ **Asylum: Afghanistan**

Kirsten Oswald: [40955]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that UK resettlement programmes will offer protection to women and children still in Afghanistan.

Kirsten Oswald: [40956]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her policy to resettle 5,000 vulnerable people from Afghanistan in the next 12 months is in addition to her pre-existing plan to resettle about 5,000 refugees in the first year of operation of the UK Resettlement Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the launch of a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. This scheme delivers on the Government's commitment in the New Plan for Immigration to create safe and legal routes for those in fear of persecution and oppression in their home country. The Government is working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

Dan Carden:

[41186]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to establish humanitarian visas and a means for people to apply for those visas from Afghanistan to reduce dangerous journeys for people seeking asylum.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the launch of a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. This scheme delivers on the Government's commitment in the New Plan for Immigration to create safe and legal routes for those in fear of persecution and oppression in their home country. The Government is working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

Fleur Anderson:

[41335]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing humanitarian visas for people seeking asylum from Afghanistan to avoid people making dangerous journeys to pursue asylum.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the launch of a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. This scheme delivers on the Government's commitment in the New Plan for Immigration to create safe and legal routes for those in fear of persecution and oppression in their home country. The Government is working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

■ Asylum: Clothing

Helen Hayes:

[36701]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that destitute asylum seekers arriving in the UK are provided with (a) underwear, (b) shoes and (c) clothing.

Kevin Foster:

The United Kingdom has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and other support whilst their application for asylum is being considered.

The level of financial assistance provided to supported asylum seekers is reviewed by the Home Office annually. Following the completion of last year's review in October 2020 it was decided people who have been found eligible to receive support under Section 95 or 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, and who are accommodated in full-board facilities, including the sites, should receive a payment of £8 per week. This sum is intended to provide sufficient funds to cover the cost of buying items to meet clothing needs and pay for non-prescription medicines and any necessary travel.

For those in dispersed accommodation the standard package of support consists of accommodation and a cash allowance of £39.63 per week for each asylum seeker and any dependants in their household.

■ Asylum: Glasgow

Ian Murray: [\[36608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, who took the recent decision to stop cash payments for asylum seekers placed in hotels in Glasgow.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office have not taken the decision to stop support for any service users in Glasgow or anywhere else the UK, where they remain entitled to it.

■ Asylum: Zimbabwe

Patrick Grady: [\[37493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what impact the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's advice to avoid all but essential travel to Zimbabwe will have on her policies on the deportation of asylum seekers to that country.

Chris Philp:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's travel advice to British nationals is not the correct legal test for determining whether or not a person qualifies for international protection or whether to remove a foreign national from the UK who has no right to remain here.

■ Crimes of Violence: Females

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[41068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of funding a public awareness campaign on male violence against women and girls.

Victoria Atkins:

We have recently published the [Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#) to help ensure that women and girls are safe everywhere - at home, online and on the streets. The new strategy commits this government to using communications to create behaviour change that targets and challenge perpetrators, educates young people about healthy relationships and consent, and ensures victims can recognise abuse and non-contact sexual offending. The Strategy was informed by an unprecedented 180,000 responses from the general public and stakeholders as part of our Call for Evidence.

The campaign follows the swift action at the beginning of the pandemic last year where the Government launched the #YouAreNotAlone campaign. The campaign raised awareness of domestic abuse and the support available to those suffering from it, signposting those seeking support to the gov.uk domestic abuse support page [Domestic abuse: how to get help - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) where they can access support services, including Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline. The campaign reached millions of people through digital advertising, and specialist community engagement activity with campaign materials translated into 16 languages.

We also launched and promoted the 'Ask for ANI' codeword scheme which provides a simple and discreet way for domestic abuse victims to signal that they need immediate help using a codeword in participating pharmacies. Almost half of all pharmacies across the UK, including Boots, are now participating in the scheme, following the launch in January 2021.

■ Crimes of Violence: Greater London**Helen Hayes:**[\[36696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 902508, Official Report, column 6, what estimate she has made of the proportion of the £23 million for early intervention programmes which will be provided to programmes in (a) Lambeth, (b) Southwark and (c) London.

Kit Malthouse:

The Serious Violence Youth Intervention Programmes grant fund made funding available for Violence Reduction Units to bid for interventions for children and young people at risk of involvement in serious violence. These interventions include: high-intensity, therapeutic interventions such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT); 'teachable moment' interventions which use key moments in a young person's life to connect them to support; and trauma-informed training to support front-line professionals' understanding of the impact of trauma on the children and young people they work with.

As the competition is in the process of being concluded we are unable at this time to give details of the specific outcomes and expenditure at local authority or regional level. The outcomes of the competition will be announced in due course.

■ Deportation

Ruth Jones: [\[37575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the Government's policy on deportations.

Ruth Jones: [\[37576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of deporting Zimbabwean citizens to Zimbabwe in the context of the humanitarian situation in that country.

Chris Philp:

We expect those with no legal right to be in the UK to leave voluntarily but make no apologies for enforcing their removal if necessary.

The Home Office only seeks to remove people to Zimbabwe when they have no right to remain in the UK and there are no obstacles to their safe return.

Those who have asked for protection will have had their claims carefully considered on their merits, taking into account up-to-date and reliable country information including, where relevant, the impact of the humanitarian situation.

■ Fixed Penalties: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [\[40827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of a potential disparity in the rates of Fixed Penalty Notices issued to people from ethnic minority groups in respect of covid-19 face-covering requirements.

Kit Malthouse:

Throughout the pandemic the Government has conducted in-depth assessments as to the impacts of proposed policies, including on groups with protected characteristics. The Government will also continue to work closely with policing partners to ensure that restrictions set out in the regulations are reasonably and lawfully enforced.

■ Home Office: Directors

Cat Smith: [\[35724\]](#)

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

Victoria Atkins:

Seven Home Office Non-Executive Directors were recruited according to the guidance set out in the Corporate governance code for central government departments.

The Home Office announces the appointments (including reappointment dates) of Non-Executive Directors in the Annual Report and Accounts. Our current Non-

Executives are covered in the following Annual Report and Accounts - [HO annual report and accounts 2020-21 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

Further information about their experience can be found at [Home Office - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Housing: Insulation

Laura Trott:

[41313]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the new fire risk assessments will be subject to a single regulatory standard; and whether leaseholders in apartment blocks under 18 metres will be informed as a result of those assessments in the event that remediation works are necessary.

Kit Malthouse:

Article 9 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the FSO) states that the responsible person (usually the building owner or landlord) must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which relevant persons are exposed for the purpose of identifying the general fire precautions they need to take to comply with the requirements and prohibitions imposed on them by the FSO. This requirement is not new, having been in place since the FSO came into force in 2006, and applies to all buildings regulated by the FSO.

The Fire Safety Act 2021 clarifies that the external walls (including cladding and balconies) and individual flat entrance doors for buildings containing two or more sets of domestic premises must be included in that assessment.

The Fire Safety Act will apply to all buildings containing two or more sets of domestic premises (multi-occupied residential buildings) so will include buildings under 18 metres.

Article 19 of the FSO states that the Responsible Person must provide employees with comprehensible and relevant information about relevant fire safety matters.

We are currently seeking to amend the FSO, via the Building Safety Bill, to extend this requirement to residents in buildings containing two or more sets of domestic premises. 'Relevant fire safety matters' includes the risks to residents of the domestic premises identified by the risk assessment and the preventive and protective measures.

■ Immigration Controls: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[41108]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the covid-19 passenger locator form required for international travel is available in a physical form.

Kevin Foster:

All passengers must complete the Passenger Locator Form online, however, once completed they can print off their finished form to show carriers before departing to the UK.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan**John Healey:** [\[37358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what financial support is available to people relocated to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

John Healey: [\[37359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support for housing the Government is providing to those relocated to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) launched on 1 April 2021. Under the policy, any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life are offered priority relocation to the UK regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. Since 1 April, the Home Office has relocated former Afghan staff and their families in the UK, including those relocated as part of HMG's evacuation from Afghanistan. The overwhelming majority of those approved by the ARAP scheme have now been evacuated and the scheme remains open for anyone who is eligible.

We are working closely with local authorities to ensure that those relocated to the UK under ARAP are fully supported.

The ARAP programme provides a funding package to resource local authorities who come forward with offers of housing to resettle Afghan staff and their families, enabling delivery of integration support for families and further support on employment, welfare benefits, and access to health, education, and other local services. This is to the value of £10,500 for every Afghan welcomed for up to a year, and also includes their family members who make the journey with them. MHCLG have recently announced a new Afghan LES Housing Costs Fund of £5 million, to support.

Neil Coyle: [\[40918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals have been (a) refused Leave to Remain in the UK and (b) returned to Afghanistan in each of the last 10 years.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office published data on asylum, extensions of leave to remain, and returns in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly release](#)'.

Data on initial decisions (including refusals) made on asylum applications in each quarter can be found in table Asy_D02 of the '[Asylum & Resettlement detailed datasets](#)'. Data on refusals of leave to remain can be found in table Exe_D01 of the '[Extensions detailed datasets](#)'. The latest data relates to the end of March 2021. Data to the end of June 2021 will be published on 26 August 2021.

Data on the number of returns from the UK, by nationality and destination group (including returns to 'Home country') can be found in Ret_D01 of the '[returns detailed dataset](#)'s'. The latest data only relates to the end of December 2020. Data to the end of March 2021 will be published on 26 August 2021.

Dan Carden:

[41185]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to expand the Afghan Interpreters Scheme to include people engaged in UK-linked initiatives and human rights activists who are at risk of being targeted by the Taliban.

Victoria Atkins:

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) launched on 1 April 2021. The scheme enables any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served.

Our Afghan relocation policy is one of the most generous in the world and has already supported over 8,000 directly employed former Afghan staff and their families to start new lives in the UK.

The Home Office is committed to providing protection for vulnerable people fleeing Afghanistan. The Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK, who have been forced to flee the country, in its first year, with up to a total of 20,000 in the long-term.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Paul Blomfield:

[36621]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much the view and prove immigration status telephone line has charged callers inquiring about any aspect of their Settled Status or application for Settled Status (a) on average per day since that line opened, (b) in each of the last 30 days and (c) in total since that line opened.

Kevin Foster:

EU citizens seeking support via the Support Resolution Centre can do so for free. The SRC has helped millions of people with their applications and continues to do so every day.

We identified a technical error on 20 July which meant a very small percentage of customers calling the UKVI Resolution Centre may have been charged. This technical issue was resolved by 17:00 on 20 July.

We are currently working with the supplier to identify any customers who were charged incorrectly and arrange refunds for these customers.

■ Migrant Workers: Large Goods Vehicle Drivers**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[41072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a seasonal visa scheme for qualified lorry drivers to tackle the shortage of drivers in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

I refer the honourable member to the response provided to the honourable member for Arfon on 21 June UIN 14141.

■ Nationality and Borders Bill**Patrick Grady:** [\[37492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government has taken to engage people with lived experience of (a) being refugees and (b) seeking asylum in the UK in the development of the Nationality and Borders Bill.

Chris Philp:

The Government undertook a 6 week consultation, including on those areas set out in the Nationality and Borders Bill. That consultation included engagement with those with lived experiences of the asylum system.

■ Offences against Children: Females**Anna McMorris:** [\[37561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of girls aged (a) 11 to 14 and (b) 15 to 18 who have been referred to the police with sexual exploitation and/or sexual violence assessed as a factor in each of the last three years.

Victoria Atkins:

All forms of sexual violence against children are terrible crimes, which have devastating consequences on young lives. The Government is determined to protect and support those who are targeted, exploited and harmed by criminals. We are working to improve our understanding of the scale and nature of child sexual abuse, to enable us to better prevent and disrupt offending. We use data gathered through the Office of National Statistics England and Wales Crime Survey to understand the number of victims and their ages. We also draw on the research and insight produced by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, which we established in 2017, and the insight of other experts including the Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse.

The Home Office does not receive data on cases referred to the police, but instead collects data on offences recorded by police.

In 2021, the Office for National Statistics published data on the gender and age of victims of all sexual offences between March 2019 and March 2020, excluding image offences, in the records of 24 police forces. This data shows that 24.1% of female

victims of sexual offences were aged 10 to 14 and 21.0% of female victims of sexual offences were aged 15 to 19.

■ **Police: Biometrics**

Janet Daby:

[\[41251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2021 to Question 11166 on Police: Biometrics, whether the police (a) are required to (i) obtain consent from and (ii) inform the public where facial recognition technology is used in a public place and (b) have powers to fine people who deliberately avoid detection by facial recognition software.

Kit Malthouse:

When using technologies like live facial recognition (LFR) it is important that the police maintain public trust in line with the principle of policing by consent. Opinion polling shows strong public support for its use, particularly for serious and violent crimes.

The College of Policing has consulted on guidance, which covers the importance of providing the public with information about when LFR is used. This guidance, and local force policies, will also explain the basis on which police forces process personal data – typically in line with Section 35(5) of the Data Protection Act 2018.

In normal circumstances (other than when a section 60AA Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 order is in place) the police do not have a legal power to issue fines simply where a person chooses not to walk past a LFR system.

■ **Police: Cooperation**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[37448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how information is passed between police services on people who have been accused but not convicted of (a) sexual, (b) physical and (c) coercive behaviour.

Victoria Atkins:

If a suspect has been accused but not convicted (pending a court appearance), then this information will be placed on the Police National Computer (PNC).

If the victim is not willing to pursue a prosecution, or if there is insufficient evidence to prosecute at this time, then the information will be retained within an intelligence log or crime report. Both are uploaded onto the Police National Database (PND) daily and kept for as long as it is needed for a policing purpose.

■ **Police: Coronavirus**

Holly Lynch:

[\[38328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria she plans to use to assess covid-19 self-isolation exemptions for police officers.

Kit Malthouse:

Self-isolation remains an essential tool to reduce the spread of coronavirus. However, the Government recognises the impact self-isolation following a positive case contact is having on individuals, particularly those delivering critical functions. In such circumstances there are a limited number of exemptions to enable named workers to leave self-isolation under specific controls. The criteria for assessing exemptions are set out in the guidance published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

In addition to the exemption for critical services, daily contact testing is also now available to frontline emergency workers. This includes the Police to mitigate against any potential disruption to key services.

Refugees: Afghanistan**Neil Coyle:****[40917]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the news story entitled Bespoke resettlement route for Afghan refugees announced, published by her Department on 18 August 2021, whether the 20,000 Afghan nationals who will be resettled in the UK will include Afghan staff and volunteers who have worked for or with international NGOs to support efforts to extend democracy or education in the last twenty years.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the launch of a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. This scheme delivers on the Government's commitment in the New Plan for Immigration to create safe and legal routes for those in fear of persecution and oppression in their home country. The Government is working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

Fleur Anderson:**[41341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the proportion of the 20,000 refugees under the new resettlement scheme that will come from (a) within Afghanistan's borders and (b) neighbouring countries in which Afghan refugees are residing.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk, and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. This scheme delivers on the Government's commitment in the New Plan for Immigration to create safe and legal

routes for those in fear of persecution and oppression in their home country. The Government is working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

Claire Hanna:

[41366]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish her Department's assessment of the number of afghan refugees the UK is able to accommodate in the first year of the proposed Afghanistan resettlement scheme.

Chris Philp:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans who have been forced to flee Afghanistan. The scheme will focus on those most at risk, including women, girls and religious minorities given their particular vulnerability, and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. This scheme delivers on the Government's commitment in the New Plan for Immigration to create safe and legal routes for those in fear of persecution and oppression in their home country. The Government is working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

■ Serious Violence Taskforce

Helen Hayes:

[36697]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason her Department disbanded the Serious Violence Taskforce; and whether her Department plans to reconvene that Taskforce.

Kit Malthouse:

The Serious Violence Taskforce was established in 2018 to oversee the implementation of the Serious Violence Strategy. It last met on 26 June 2019 and the Government is very grateful for the work of the Taskforce which brought together Ministers and key partners.

The Prime Minister and Home Secretary are driving a united government response to ensure we use every lever at our disposal to fight crime. To effectively support this, we have redesigned our governance and decided to discontinue the Serious Violence Task Force.

In January 2020, the Prime Minister announced a new Cabinet Committee on crime and justice – the Crime and Justice Taskforce – with serious violence being a priority area of focus. The Crime and Justice Taskforce is chaired by the Prime Minister, with

core membership from the Home Secretary (deputy chair); Chancellor of the Exchequer; Secretary of State for Justice; Attorney General; and the Minister for Crime and Policing. Other government departments including Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care attend the Crime and Justice Taskforce, depending on the agenda of each meeting.

We have also established comprehensive governance arrangements to make sure the ambitions of the Prime Minister's Task Force are delivered on the ground – including the National Policing Board chaired by the Home Secretary.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Anne Marie Morris:

[40908]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to monitor the use of the £54 million given to the French authorities to tackle migrant Channel crossings.

Anne Marie Morris:

[40909]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to report on the effect of the £54 million given to the French authorities for the purposes of border control on the number of migrants reaching the UK via Channel crossings.

Chris Philp:

On 20 July 2021, the Home Secretary and her French counterpart, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, signed an agreement that further strengthens UK-France joint cooperation to tackle illegal immigration across the Channel.

The UK-France Joint Statement, which contains further information on that agreement, can be found on the GOV.UK website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-france-joint-statement-next-phase-of-tackling-illegal-migration>.

The impact on migration pressures of our investment under the Sandhurst Treaty is jointly assessed by France and the UK. The UK and France monitor the impact of funding through maintaining operational and policy level contact and regular strategic reviews. In line with previous arrangements, the impact of this year's funding package will be reviewed through jointly agreed results frameworks and via a joint UK-France Monitoring Committee.

We are not intending to publish reports on the results frameworks, as these relate to sensitive operational activity.

■ Violence Reduction Units: Finance

Helen Hayes:

[36699]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she is having with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a long term funding settlement for Violence Reduction Units ahead of the next Spending Review.

Victoria Atkins:

Over three years, the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has been allocated £21 million from the Home Office's Serious Violence Fund (SVF) to bring together key partners across health, education, policing, the criminal justice system, amongst others to identify the drivers of serious violence in London and deliver a tailored response to tackle them.

The VRU have utilised this funding to deliver a wide range of interventions which supported over 2750 young people in 2020/21. This includes innovative projects like the DIVERT programme, which engages with young people in custody immediately following a serious violence incident at a 'teachable moment' when they are expected to be most likely to change their behaviour.

This £21 million investment includes a £7 million allocation for London in the 2021/22 financial year. We have worked closely with the VRU on the development of their proposals for the year ahead, collaborating to ensure that effective interventions, structures, and partners are in place to respond to the root causes of violence across London's 32 boroughs. These proposals have since been agreed and activity is being delivered throughout the summer months.

Future funding decisions are subject to the ongoing Spending Review, and we will engage with HM Treasury on proposals in due course as part of the departmental settlement. Whilst we cannot pre-empt the potential outcome of that process, we do recognise the need for VRUs to function as long-term, sustainable organisations and are working hard to achieve this.

■ Visas: Afghanistan**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[40823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the visa status is of Afghan staff who have worked, or currently work, for British non-governmental organisations.

Victoria Atkins:

Our Afghan relocation policy is one of the most generous in the world and has already supported over 8,000 directly employed former Afghan staff and their families to start new lives in the UK through the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

The Home Office is committed to providing protection for vulnerable people fleeing Afghanistan. The Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK, who have been forced to flee the country, in its first year, with up to a total of 20,000 in the long-term.

Fleur Anderson:[\[41337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Government policy is on waiving visa requirements for the families of UK nationals currently fleeing Afghanistan; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

The Government has waived the visa requirements for the family members of UK nationals evacuating Afghanistan.

■ Waking Watch Relief Fund

Hilary Benn: [37361]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government's oral contribution of 21 July 2021 in response to the question from the hon. Member for Leeds Central, if she will publish the exceptional circumstances in which waking watches will still be needed in future.

Hilary Benn: [37362]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the date on which waking watches will no longer be required with the exception of those considered essential.

Hilary Benn: [37363]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many buildings have waking watches in the UK.

Kit Malthouse:

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the FSO), the Responsible Person for each particular building is required to ensure appropriate fire safety measures are in place within their building, as informed by a fire risk assessment.

The Government and the NFCC make available guidance to support those responsible in complying with the FSO and ensuring their premises remain safe for continued use. The NFCC has recently revised its Simultaneous Evacuation Guidance which reflects best practice and can be located at <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/Simultaneous-evacuation-guidance>.

This guidance encourages greater use of more cost-effective measures such as alarm systems to replace or reduce dependency on waking watch wherever possible.

Local fire and rescue authorities and other enforcers of the FSO can take action where the fire safety measures fall short of compliance.

Government does not collect data on the number of buildings where waking watch forms part of a building's fire safety strategy.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ House of Commons: Training**

Sarah Owen: [41302]

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the House of Commons Commission will publish a breakdown by gender

of the number of (a) House Service and (b) Members' staff who have completed the Valuing Everyone training to date.

Sir Charles Walker:

For existing staff of the House of Commons, the gender of those who have participated in the Valuing Everyone workshops is recorded as follows:

Male 1,211 (44%) Female 1,007 (36%) Not specified 513 (19%) Prefer not to say 35
Prefer to self-describe 5 No gender identity 1

Total 2,772

For existing staff employed directly by Members, the gender of those who have participated in the Valuing Everyone workshops is recorded as follows:

Female 352 (62%) Male 213 (38%)

Total 565

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Affordable Housing: Owner Occupation

Feryal Clark:

[\[41363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of revising the Government's housing targets to take into account social rent, intermediate and affordable homeownership housing-types.

Christopher Pincher:

Our standard method is only the starting point in the process of planning for new homes. It is not a target. For local authorities, planning to meet that need will require consideration of land availability, relevant constraints, such as the Green Belt, and whether the need is more appropriately met in neighbouring areas, when setting out targets in their local plan. In relation to the mix of specific housing types, our National Planning Policy Framework sets out that it is for local authorities to assess the housing needs of different groups, including those who require affordable housing, and to reflect this in their planning policies.

■ Antisemitism

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[41130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to tackle hate crime towards the Jewish community in the UK since the lifting of covid-19 restrictions.

Luke Hall:

Antisemitism has absolutely no place in our society, which is why we are taking a strong lead in tackling it in all its forms. We are clear that victims should be supported and the individuals who carry out these heinous attacks must be brought to justice.

We are providing £14 million this year for the Protective Security Grant to protect Jewish schools and community buildings and we have encouraged the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism across universities and local authorities.

■ **Antisocial Behaviour: Yorkshire and the Humber**

Alex Sobel:

[41195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help local authorities tackle noise complaints and antisocial behaviour in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Christopher Pincher:

The Social Housing White Paper sets out proposals to tackle anti-social behaviour by highlighting the responsibilities that police, local authorities and social landlords have in tackling anti-social behaviour. We have published guidance on Gov.uk clarifying the role local authorities and landlords have in tackling anti-social behaviour, including noise complaints and have disseminated this through bodies such as the Local Government Association.

We are preparing further work on anti-social behaviour to consider the evidence around the most common causes of anti-social behaviour affecting social housing residents, and to identify and raise awareness of the most effective interventions available to landlords - including their local authority partners - to address these issues.

■ **British National (Overseas): Hong Kong**

Steve Reed:

[36651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, where welcome hubs have been created for new arrivals from Hong Kong arriving with British National (Overseas) status.

Eddie Hughes:

MHCLG has established a network of 12 Welcome Hubs across the 9 regions of England, and Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to coordinate preparations to welcome BN(O) status holders to the UK and help to ensure they are able to quickly integrate and contribute to their newfound communities. Details of the Welcome Hubs can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regional-vcse-grant-scheme/regional-vcse-grant-scheme-prospectus>.

Steve Reed:

[36652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support new arrivals from Hong Kong arriving with British National (Overseas) status.

Eddie Hughes:

In April, MHCLG announced £43.1 million of government funding to welcome Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) [BN(O)] status holders to the UK and to support them to access housing, work and educational support.

MHCLG has published an online bilingual Welcome Pack on GOV.UK and is establishing a network of 12 welcome hubs across the UK, alongside funding to enable local authorities in England to provide English language provision and destitution support, where needed.

Additionally, MHCLG has invited Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to bid for a share of a £2.6 million fund to support programmes that will help BN(O) status holders make the best start to rebuilding their lives. The grant schemes will provide regional community support, support on a national level, educational resources for schools, and a hate crime reporting service. We expect successful VCSE organisation to begin delivery in the autumn.

■ Building Safety Fund**Caroline Lucas:****[38233]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the total value is of the applications made to the Building Safety Fund to date.

Christopher Pincher:

Data on the Building Safety Fund, including the amount of funding allocated to eligible applications so far, can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#building-safety-fund-registration-statistics.

Fleur Anderson:**[38435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of funding available for cladding remediation through the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The additional £3.5 billion of funding announced on 10 February, on top of £1.6 billion of funding Government is already providing, means that leaseholders and residents in eligible buildings can be reassured that unsafe cladding on their blocks will be replaced. Not all high-rise buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding are using Government funding to fund remediation works. Many works will be funded by those responsible for the original work, through warranties or by building owners/landlords who are able to pay for the remediation without passing on costs to leaseholders.

Hilary Benn:**[40601]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the total number of 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:

As of 25 August, there have been 60 registrations to the Building Safety Fund in the areas covered by the LS1, LS2, LS10, LS6, LS7 and LS9 postcodes. Of which, 29 have been notified as eligible for funding and have either proceeded with or are starting a full costs application. One registration could cover multiple buildings managed by the same agent or owned by the same building owner.

■ **Buildings: Inspections****Shabana Mahmood:**[\[37419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 July 2021, HCWS228 on Housing Update, whether the Government plans to repay leaseholders who have already paid for EWS1.

Christopher Pincher:

The EWS1 process is not a Government one. There are no plans to reimburse for costs incurred in commissioning an EWS1.

■ **Buildings: Insulation****Kevin Hollinrake:**[\[37526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with the HSE on plans to provide guidance on the proportionality of building safety works necessary for buildings to be deemed safe in the context of his Department's Building Safety Programme; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) the time scale and (b) funding for producing that guidance in the context of prioritising people's safety.

Christopher Pincher:

Ministers and officials from my department are in regular discussion with the Health and Safety Executive on matters relating to building safety, including the need for the market to behave in a more risk proportionate manner. The work outlined in the Written Ministerial Statement of 21 July is now underway and further details will be made available in due course.

■ **Care Homes: Permitted Development Rights****Steve Reed:**[\[38274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many residential homes created through permitted development rights obtain their natural light from light wells or roof lights but contain no windows.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[38286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of amending the existing light standards within permitted development rights to include a mandatory requirement for direct light from a window.

Christopher Pincher:

Under the permitted development rights the developer must apply to the local planning authority for prior approval as to the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of each new dwellinghouse. The legislation requires the local planning authority to refuse prior approval if adequate natural light is not provided. We do not hold information on how that light is provided as it is a local authority matter.

We introduced this change with effect from 1 August 2020 and will continue to keep all permitted development rights under review.

Combined Authorities and Mayors**Steve Reed:**[\[38273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Written Statement of 21 July 2021, HCWS234 on Local Government Update, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing combined authorities and mayors in (a) Somerset, (b) North Yorkshire and (c) Cumbria.

Luke Hall:

As the Prime Minister said on 15 July, we consider that strong local leadership is critical in delivering the government's levelling up agenda. We want more places, especially in city regions and major urban areas, to agree an ambitious mayoral devolution deal where there is local support, and want to widen devolution beyond the cities and provide strong local leadership for all of our places. We have been engaging with a number of councils across England over the summer who have expressed interest in a "county deal".

Culture: Planning**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[36654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to enshrine the Agent of Change planning principle in primary legislation to help protect and preserve cultural venues from new housing development proposals.

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 (NPPF) 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 effect of the change.

As this Agent of Change principle can be achieved through policy as demonstrated in the current NPPF, the Government does not believe it is necessary to include this in primary legislation. 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 will have the opportunity to review the principle and how it will be applied under the new planning system when we review the NPPF as part of the planning reforms.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[36655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has held 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:

I refer the Hon. Member to my answer to Question UIN 35676 on 22 July 2021.

■ Future High Streets Fund

Mark Menzies:

[\[37435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the long term economic impact of the Future High Streets Fund.

Luke Hall:

The Future High Street Fund has a robust monitoring and evaluation plan, published on 1 April, to ensure outputs are being delivered while maintaining value for public money; this strategy will ensure the fund delivers on its aims and spreads economic prosperity across the country.

As towns and high streets continue to open up this funding will provide a much-needed boost for towns as they safely welcome shoppers and visitors back to their high streets.

The Fund is being invested in transformational projects that will improve transport access, make use of vacant shops, buy and bring land forward to support new housing, workspaces and public realm, and help adapt high streets in response to changes in technology. This is part of our plan to protect and create thousands of jobs while delivering long term prosperity to communities across England.

■ Hate Crime: Travellers

Beth Winter:

[\[38464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the number of hate crimes committed against the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

Luke Hall:

All forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable, which is why this Government has funded projects to tackle racially motivated hatred, including that targeted at

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. This includes funding to GATE Herts for an assessment published in 2020 of hate crimes directed against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

■ Health Centres: Change of Use

Ruth Cadbury: [38290]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of medical centres in England which have undergone a change of use within Class E in each of the last five years.

Ruth Cadbury: [38291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the number of medical centres in (a) London and (b) England which have undergone a change of use through permitted development rights within Class E in each of the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

The new Commercial, Business and Service use class (E) came into effect from 1 September 2020 to provide greater flexibility for business and service uses. An application for change of use within the Use Class is not required. We do not have data on changes between uses within E class.

■ Homebase: Richmond Upon Thames

Sarah Olney: [38366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the developer's proposals for the Homebase, Manor Road application, GLA ref: 4795.

Christopher Pincher:

Government policy is to continue to be very selective about calling in planning applications and, in general, only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved.

This application was considered against the call in policy as set out in the [Written Ministerial Statement of 26 October 2012, special report, Column 72WS](#), and after carefully considering the issues raised, it was decided that intervention would not be justified.

■ Housing

Mr Virendra Sharma: [38224]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people living in unsuitable housing.

Eddie Hughes:

There is no single definition of unsuitable homes, which could encompass a range of housing-related issues. We do make regular assessments of the housing stock through the English Housing Survey.

According to the English Housing Survey, in 2019-20, 16.3% of owner occupied and 23.3% of Private Rented Sector homes were non-decent. The number of social homes classified as non-decent reduced from 20% in 2010 to 12% in 2019.

According to the same survey, in 2019-20, 8% of all households in England (1.9 million) had at least one person with a long-standing physical or mental health condition and said that they required adaptations to their home. 81% of households that required adaptations to their home due to their health condition felt their home was suitable for their needs. The 19% of households (374,000) that required adaptations and who considered their accommodation unsuitable accounted for 2% of all households in England.

This Government is clear that everyone deserves a safe, decent home, and is taking forward a range of measure to support this, including giving local authorities stronger enforcement powers, undertaking a comprehensive review of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, reviewing the Decent Homes Standard, and our recent consultation considered raising the accessibility requirements for new homes.

Colleen Fletcher:[\[40929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to take steps to reduce health inequalities through housing in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Christopher Pincher:

We recognise the increased importance of good quality, safe and decent homes. By law, all landlords must ensure properties are fit for people to live in. All registered providers of social housing (which includes homes owned by local authority landlords) must meet standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. This includes complying with the Government's Decent Homes Standard, which ensures homes are safe and decent. Social landlords are responsible for addressing any breaches of statutory requirements in the homes they provide.

The Housing Act 2004 and the Housing and Planning Act 2016 gave local authorities powers to regulate and enforce standards in the private rented sector. Where local authorities find seriously hazardous conditions, they have a legal duty to take enforcement action. Local authorities also have the power to serve legal notices requiring landlords to carry out remedial works. If landlords don't comply, or if local authorities believe the risk is high enough, local authorities can carry out remedial works themselves and recover the costs. These powers apply to Coventry North East constituency, Coventry, the West Midlands, and England more broadly. We have made a great deal of progress in recent years to help improve housing standards across the country:

- We have given local authorities strong powers to deal with dangerously damp conditions in the private rented sector.
- We have introduced the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2019 - empowering social and private tenants to take their landlords to court and are committed to improving the energy performance of all properties - because warm homes mean a reduction in damp.
- Working with DHSC, we have increased funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant to £573 million next year which will assist more home adaptations.
- We have provided £5.4 million to improve quality of support and accommodation in supported housing through year-long pilots in five local authorities. Birmingham City Council has received £1.84 million of funding through the pilots.

Alongside this, there are also areas where we intend to go further:

- We have announced a comprehensive review of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System to ensure it properly reflects the physical and psychological harm caused by poor standards.
- The Social Housing White Paper said that homes should be safe and decent and committed to reviewing the Decent Homes Standard which will consider whether the current Standard sets the right expectation on how warm and safe homes should be.
- We recently consulted on options to raise accessible housing standards, including options to review and potentially tighten the regulatory framework to deliver accessible new homes. We will set our plans by the end of the year.
- We recently consulted, through the Planning for the Future White Paper, on proposals to enable more and better green space in development, including introducing a fast-track for beauty and design codes created by local communities.

MHCLG has taken the lead on many aspects of this work. However, we also recognise that the responsibility for ensuring homes and buildings are safe and decent is a shared one - lying with product designers, developers, building owners and managers and local authorities as well as central Government and devolved administrations.

■ Housing: Construction

Fiona Bruce:

[\[38247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that new housing development plans do not overload with traffic existing roads that are unsuitable for heavy numbers of vehicle movements, such as Giantswood Lane in Congleton.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has set out clear policies in the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that when assessing sites for development in plans or for specific planning

applications, any implications of the development for the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion) or on highways safety can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. All developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a transport statement or transport assessment so that the likely effects of the proposal can be assessed. Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable effect on highway safety, or the residual cumulative effects on the road network would be severe. Ultimately, it is the local planning authority's responsibility to consider whether a scheme or allocation meets these policy tests or whether it does not.

Bim Afolami:

[41160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to improve water efficiency in new-build houses in order to protect the long-term viability of rare and important chalk stream habitats, such as the Ver, Lea and Hiz in Hitchin and Harpenden.

Christopher Pincher:

Currently, the Building Regulations require that new homes are built to a standard of 125 litres of water used per person per day, or 110 litres per person per day if required by the local authority

In 2019 DEFRA launched a consultation and call for evidence on further measures to reduce personal water use. The consultation sought views on labelling water-using products, building regulations for water efficiency, metering and behaviour change.

In July of this year, Government published its summary of responses to the consultation, and a Written Ministerial Statement, which set out a number of measures that Government is taking to support water efficiency in homes.

The summary of responses to the consultation can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/water-conservation-measures-to-reduce-personal-water-use>

The Written Ministerial Statement can be found here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-07-01/hcws140>

■ Housing: Empty Property

Bill Esterson:

[37464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent representations he has received from stakeholders on the upkeep and return to occupancy of vacant residential properties.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department received correspondence linked to the National Day of Action on Empty Homes in April.

Local authorities have powers and strong incentives to tackle empty homes. Through the New Homes Bonus, they receive the same amount for bringing an empty home

back into use as building a new one. Billing authorities in England also have the power to charge up to 100% extra council tax - on top of the standard bill - on properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for at least two years, up to 200% extra on properties that have been empty for at least five years, and up to 300% extra on properties that have been empty for at least 10 years.

In certain circumstances, local authorities can exercise powers to take over the management of long-term empty homes in order to bring them back into use in the private rented sector. Local authorities can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) when a property has been empty for more than two years, subject to the production of evidence that the property has been causing a nuisance to the community and evidence of community support for their proposal.

Grant funding is also available through the Affordable Homes Programme to bring empty homes back into use. Empty properties must not be existing social housing owned by the Registered Provider or by another Registered Provider.

It is for local housing authorities to decide when to use their powers to deal with empty properties, and they have the flexibility to focus on locally determined priorities and allocate their resources accordingly.

The number of long-term empty homes remains substantially lower than when records began in 2004. At May 2010, over 300,000 homes in England had been standing empty for longer than 6 months. As of October 2020, the number of long-term empty properties had fallen to 268,385.

■ Housing: Insulation

Tulip Siddiq:

[37550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to (a) prevent homeowners who purchased their homes through a Government shared ownership scheme from facing liability for all fire safety remediation costs and (b) extend funding to homeowners facing cladding remediation costs whose buildings do not meet the height threshold for existing support schemes.

Christopher Pincher:

(A) The Government has announced a globally unprecedented investment in building safety, under which, hundreds of thousands of residents, including shared owners, will be protected from the cost of remediating unsafe cladding on their homes. We are providing over £5 billion in grant funding for the removal of unsafe cladding on residential buildings over 18 metres, as well as establishing a generous finance scheme which will provide leaseholders in residential buildings of 11-18 metres with access to finance for cladding remediation costs. Under this scheme leaseholders in residential buildings between 11-18 metres will pay no more than £50 per month towards the cost of cladding remediation.

We have also introduced a new model for Shared Ownership which will include a 10 year period during which the landlord will support with the cost of repairs in new build homes. The changes will prevent new shared owners from being hit with unexpected

repairs and maintenance bills and will help to bridge the gap between renting and homeownership.

(B) Longstanding safety advice is clear that height is a central factor in assessing risk. Buildings below 18 metres will not carry the same risk as a building above 18 metres. It is right that we prioritise action on higher rise buildings where risk to multiple households is greater when fire spreads, which is why we have taken a risk based, proportionate approach.

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. 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.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[38161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress the Government has made on making loans available for leaseholders for the removal of unsafe cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

Our £5 billion investment in grant funding for cladding remediation on buildings of 18 metres and above will protect hundreds of thousands of leaseholders from the cost of remediating unsafe cladding on their homes. It is right that we have focused grant funding on the tallest buildings - this is in line with longstanding expert advice on which buildings are at the highest risk - and cladding remediation also represents the highest costs.

We are also stepping in to provide a generous finance scheme for the remediation of unsafe cladding on residential buildings of 11- 18 metres, where the risk is lower. We are working to develop the underpinning details of the finance scheme to ensure that it protects leaseholders, prioritising affordability and accelerating remediation, where required. Further details on the finance scheme will be made available as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Laura Trott:

[\[41312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether mortgage providers and buildings insurers have provided undertakings not to penalise leaseholders in apartment blocks under 18 metres with (a) higher mortgage costs, (b) higher fire insurance premiums or (c) refusals to provide fire cover.

Christopher Pincher:

Ministers and policy officials have met senior representatives from the largest insurance companies, major lenders and industry bodies, and have encouraged the insurance and lending industries to take a proportionate approach to risk. We are

continuing to work with insurers and lenders to restore confidence in building safety and return to proportionate premiums and products.

Laura Trott:

[\[41314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether lenders and insurers will be able to require leaseholders and building owners to seek cladding remediation in the event that a B1 or B2 rating has been given to a building under 18 metres.

Christopher Pincher:

On 21 July, the Government issued a recommendation that EWS1 forms should not be required for buildings under 18 metres.

The announcement followed the new advice from fire safety experts which found that there is no evidence of systemic risk of fire in all blocks of flats.

The expert advice also stated that where EWS1 forms and assessments have already been completed for buildings below 18 metres, it is strongly recommended that these assessments are reviewed by competent professionals to ensure that the proposed solution is cost effective and proportionate.

The Government is continuing to engage with insurers and lenders to encourage them to take a proportionate approach to risk.

■ Housing: Sales

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[41345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if will he make it his policy to give priority to buyers in the property market who intend to live in the property over investors and buy-to-let landlords.

Christopher Pincher:

We recognise the adverse effect that large numbers of second homes can have on some areas, and that is why we have introduced a series of measures to help mitigate those effects, including introducing higher rates of stamp duty for purchases of additional properties, such as second homes.

We are committed to supporting first time buyers, and ensuring that enough homes are built in the places where people and communities need them. Our new First Homes scheme will provide new homes at a discount of at least 30 percent, prioritised for local first-time buyers. Over 734,000 households have been helped to purchase a home since Spring 2010 through Government-backed schemes such as Help to Buy: Equity Loan and Right to Buy. New initiatives including First Homes, the new model of Shared Ownership and the £11.5 billion affordable homes programme will bring more affordable housing to those who need it.

■ Innovation: Economic Growth

Seema Malhotra:

[37477]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the contribution of innovation districts to local economic growth.

Luke Hall:

Innovation Districts support innovation and commercialisation by facilitating knowledge sharing, collaboration, commercialisation of R&D outcomes, innovation promotion and business support.

Knowledge Quarter Liverpool brings together the City's key partners to collaborate in a creative environment. The Paddington Village site will attract a further £1 billion to the city, and house 1.8m sq. ft of science, technology, education and health space.

UK Government is supporting new Innovation Districts to form across the Union. For example, Innovation City Belfast will seek to maximise the impact of the planned £1 billion Belfast Region City Deal which will invest £230 million in university research centres and £120 million in digital innovation.

Therefore, while current contributions have been important, the next 10-15 years are where the true contribution will be seen, and we welcome the future impact of innovation districts.

■ Landlords: Registration

John Spellar:

[40590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to penalise and expose rogue landlords; and what progress has been made on the register of such landlords since the Housing and Planning Act 2016 came into force.

Eddie Hughes:

Local authorities have a range of enforcement powers to protect tenants from landlords that do not fulfil their legal obligations. The Housing Act 2004 gives powers to local authorities to regulate and enforce standards in the private rented sector. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 further introduced civil penalties of up to £30,000 and banning orders for use against the worst and most persistent offenders. Legislation also extended rent repayment orders which require a landlord to repay rent when they have not complied with the law.

In April 2018, using powers under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, we also introduced a national database of rogue landlords and property agents. Where a landlord has received a banning order the local authority must place them on the database. Where the landlord has received a conviction for a banning order offence or two or more civil penalties for housing related offences then the local authority has discretion to make an entry.

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the Government has committed to bringing in a Better Deal for Renters to deliver a fairer and more effective rental market that works for both tenants and landlords. This includes bringing forward reforms to drive improvements in standards in rented accommodation, ensuring well targeted, effective enforcement that drives out criminal landlords.

■ Leasehold

Stephen McPartland:

[\[40904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his timescale is for amendments to section 121 of the Law of Property Act 1925.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government has previously committed to ensure that where a freeholder pays a rentcharge, the rentcharge owner is not able to take possession or grant a lease on the property where the rentcharge remains unpaid for a short period of time. This will be pursued when Parliamentary time allows.

■ Leasehold and Freehold: Service Charges

Gareth Davies:

[\[41390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his timeframe is for bringing forward legislative proposals to grant freeholders equivalent rights to leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of service charges for communal areas.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. Where owners of freehold properties pay estate rentcharges it is not appropriate that these homeowners have limited rights to challenge these costs.

That is why the Government will give freeholders on private and mixed tenure estates equivalent rights to leaseholders to challenge the reasonableness of estate rentcharges. We will also consider the option of introducing a Right to Manage for residential freeholders once we have considered the Law Commission's report and recommendations on changes to the Right to Manage for leaseholders.

In addition, when parliamentary time allows, we will remove the statutory right for owners of rentcharges to take possession or grant a lease of the property in the event of non-payment by the homeowner.

We have introduced legislation to set ground rents on newly created leases to zero in the current session. This will be the first part of major two-part legislation to implement leasehold and Commonhold reforms in this Parliament.

■ Leasehold: Unfair Practices

Colleen Fletcher:

[40930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help protect leaseholders from unfair practices in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service. We are taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market.

The Government asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms in the leasehold sector. On 19 March 2021, the CMA announced that it is requiring the removal of ground rent terms which it thinks are unfair from all existing Countryside and Taylor Wimpey contracts to make sure they are no longer in breach of the law. The companies must also agree not to use the terms again in any future leasehold contracts. On 23 June the CMA announced commitments secured from Aviva and Persimmon to amend their practices regarding doubling ground rents and houses sold as leasehold. This is a hugely important step and demonstrates our determination to support affected leaseholders.

In January we announced we will abolish marriage value, cap the treatment of ground rents at 0.1% of the freehold value, and prescribe rates for the calculations at market value. We will also introduce an online calculator, further simplifying the process for leaseholders and ensuring standardisation and fairness for all those looking to enfranchise. Through our reforms, the length of a statutory lease extension will increase to 990 years, from 90 years (for flats) and 50 years (for houses). Leaseholders will be able to extend their lease with zero ground rent on payment of a premium. Leaseholders will also be able to voluntarily agree to a restriction on future development of their property to avoid paying 'development value'.

Having closely reviewed the Law Commission's report on Commonhold we have established a new Commonhold Council as a partnership of industry, leaseholders and Government that will prepare homeowners and the market for the widespread take-up of commonhold. This will take time and close working with consumers and industry, and the Commonhold Council will be the critical first step of this.

The Government will respond to the Law Commission's remaining recommendations on enfranchisement, commonhold and right to manage in due course.

We have brought forward legislation in the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill to set ground rents on newly created leases to a genuine 'peppercorn' rate of only one peppercorn per year or effectively zero financial value. This will be the first part of seminal two-part legislation to implement reforms in this Parliament.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Mark Menzies:

[\[37432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans are in place for a second round of applications under the Levelling Up Fund; and whether the criteria and funding goals will remain the same as in the first round.

Luke Hall:

For future rounds of the Levelling Up Fund, the parameters set out in the prospectus will be kept under review, and any updates will reflect any operational feedback and wider changes in government policy.

Announcements about the future of the Fund will be made later this year.

Mark Menzies:

[\[37433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether Levelling Up Fund bids from category two towns will be assessed in the same way as those in category one; and whether capacity funding will be available to support prospective bidders from category two.

Luke Hall:

All bids to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) are being assessed against the published criteria. A place's category will be taken into account in the appraisal as part of the 'characteristics of place' criterion, as set out in the LUF prospectus and technical guidance. To support those areas measured as having the 'highest need', capacity funding will be allocated to those local authorities to assist them to develop high-quality bids for the Fund, as well as all local authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mark Menzies:

[\[37434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the proportion of category two index towns expected to secure funding from the Levelling Up Fund.

Luke Hall:

Bids are currently being assessed in line with the published assessment process. We are not able to estimate of the proportion of category two index towns expected to secure funding during this period of competition. Outcomes from the first round of bids for the Levelling Up Fund will be announced later in the year and bidding authorities will be informed in due course.

Beth Winter:

[\[38451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many bids have been submitted for the Levelling Up Fund as at 22 July 2021.

Luke Hall:

The first round of the Levelling Up Fund received significant interest from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland bidding authorities across the three investment priorities of the Fund. Bids are currently being assessed in line with the published

assessment process. Outcomes from the first round of bids for the Levelling Up Fund will be announced later in the year and bidding authorities will be informed in due course.

Alan Brown: [40993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 27216 on Levelling Up Fund, how many applications were received from (a) Scotland, (b) Wales, (c) England and (d) Northern Ireland.

Alan Brown: [40994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 27216 on Levelling Up Fund, what the value is of the initial applications received from (a) Scotland, (b) Wales, (c) England and (d) Northern Ireland.

Luke Hall:

The first round of the Levelling Up Fund received significant interest from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland bidding authorities across the three investment priorities of the Fund. Bids are currently being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes from the first round of bids for the Levelling Up Fund will be announced later in the year and bidding authorities will be informed in due course.

■ Local Government

Steve Reed: [38269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 July 2021, HCWS234 on Local Government Update, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing a detailed summary of the three consultations referenced in that Statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The summary document that I published on 22 July 2021, available [here](#), contains extensive detail on the responses to the consultation from Somerset residents and stakeholders.

Steve Reed: [38272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Written Statement of 21 July 2021, HCWS234 on Local Government Update, how his Department defines strong local support referred to.

Luke Hall:

Proposals are assessed as to whether they command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round across the whole area of the proposal, having regard to the views of the area's residents, businesses, public service providers, including councils and town and parish councils, and the voluntary sector, as well as other stakeholders such as Local Enterprise Partnerships.

■ Local Government: Flags

John Spellar:

[37354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if will make an assessment of the potential merits of adding the Black Country Flag to those displayed on County Flags Day.

Luke Hall:

The Government attaches great importance to the history and traditions of this country and we recognise that the tapestry of our historic counties is one of the bonds that draws the nation together. The flying of the registered flags in Parliament Square to mark Historic County Flags Day is the centrepiece of this national celebration of the role of the historic counties. We have no plans to celebrate or raise in Parliament Square regional flags like those of the Black Country, though we recognise the historical significance of such areas and would welcome local partners celebrating them if they choose to do so.

■ Local Government: Reorganisation

Steve Reed:

[38271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department takes geographic size into account when assessing proposals for local government reorganisation.

Luke Hall:

The proposals were assessed against the criteria set out in the invitation which the Secretary of State issued on 22 February 2021 to councils to submit unitary proposals; these criteria included a criterion about the geography of any unitary council.

■ Local Government: Somerset

Steve Reed:

[38270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Written Statement of 21 July 2021, HCWS234 on Local Government Update, what proportion of responses in Somerset supported the proposal for the creation of two unitary authorities.

Luke Hall:

This information is available in the published summary of consultation responses available [here](#).

■ Local Housing Allowance

Stephen Morgan:

[38402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the rate of local housing allowance on levels of rent arrears in England.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government lifted Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local rents in April 2020, and in 2021/22 maintained them at their increased level in cash terms. The increased Local Housing Allowance rates alongside the wider package of economic support measures introduced by the Government during the pandemic have effectively prevented a widespread build up of rent arrears, by supporting private renters to continue paying their rent. This is evidenced by the latest published data from the English Housing Survey Household Resilience Study from November – December 2020, which suggests that the vast majority (91%) of private renters are up to date with their rent. Of the 9% (353,000 households) in arrears, two thirds are in arrears of less than 2 months.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Protective Clothing**Philip Davies:**[\[38210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in his (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department makes the wearing of face coverings in its offices optional other than when using the security access pods in 2 Marsham Street where one must be worn. We encourage people to wear face coverings in particular situations such as being in crowded or enclosed spaces or if asked to by a competent authority. Individual Arm's Length Bodies determine their own policy with regard to wearing face coverings. The QEII Conference Centre requires staff to wear face coverings in public areas of the building whilst all other bodies make wearing face coverings optional. The Department's staff and those of our ALBs also follow the requirements of Landlords with regard to wearing face coverings in those buildings where they are a minor tenant.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Sick Leave**Steve Reed:**[\[36650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of working days lost to his Department as a result of staff sickness with covid-19 in each of the last 18 months.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department has made no estimate of the number of working days lost as a result of staff sickness related to positive cases of Covid-19.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Staff**

Steve Reed:

[\[36649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of officials working in his Department who have tested positive for covid-19 and needed to self-isolate in each of the last 12 months.

Eddie Hughes:

We do not routinely disclose the Covid-19 test results of officials employed by the Department.

■ **Move On Fund**

Jo Gideon:

[\[41354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Move On fund; and what plans his Department has for the future of that fund.

Eddie Hughes:

The 2016 Budget announced £100 million of grant for a new Move-On Fund, which will provide homes for former rough sleepers moving on from hostels and victims of domestic abuse moving on from refuge. The Fund is split equally between the Greater London Authority (GLA) in London and Homes England who are administering the fund outside of London.

The Move-On Fund is an ambitious attempt to build or adapt accommodation for former rough sleepers and households fleeing domestic abuse. This in turn will free-up emergency hostel space. The scheme structure is a new one and reliant on potential developers and providers bringing bids forward within a competitive property market. Together with our delivery partners at the GLA and Homes England we refined our approach and the delivery model utilising valuable learning from market tests in the first year. As a result, the scheme was slower to mobilise than anticipated, but since the model has been refined, we are seeing strong bids emerge to a combined value of £61.5 million.

We are in now in the final year of this funding, which is due to end by March 2022. Both organisations are continuing to invite bids for the remaining funding from prospective providers.

■ **Owner Occupation**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[36792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has plans to bring forward further legislative proposals to (a) ensure that freeholders identify onerous ground rent clauses to leaseholders and (b) hold freeholders accountable under the terms of the Public pledge for leaseholders published by his Department in 2019.

Eddie Hughes:

We understand the difficulties and frustrations for existing leaseholders who are unhappy with the ground rent they are required to pay and feel their leases should be changed.

The *Public Pledge for Leaseholders* is a voluntary code signed by over 60 freeholders, developers, investors and property agents. The signatories to the pledge who are freeholders committed to contacting existing leaseholders with ground rents that doubled more frequently than every 20 years, to offer to amend to increases based on RPI.

The Government asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms in the leasehold sector. We are pleased that the CMA is taking enforcement action in relation to two key issues. First, to tackle certain instances of mis-selling of leasehold property. Second, to address the problems faced by homeowners from high and increasing ground rents. On 23 June the CMA announced commitments secured from Aviva and Persimmon to amend their practices regarding doubling ground rents and houses sold as leasehold.

Aviva have committed to remove ground rent terms that the CMA considers unfair and repay homeowners who saw ground rents doubled. It will also remove terms that were originally doubling clauses that have been converted to RPI-based ground rent terms.

The CMA also recommended improvements to the quality of information available to consumers early in the buying process. Specifically, Persimmon has agreed to extend the timeframe that prospective buyers are given to exchange contracts after reserving a property, and to provide people with more upfront information about the annual costs of buying a home. This addresses concerns that the reservation period – i.e. the period of time during which a potential buyer must take a number of steps to progress the purchase – is too short and can pressure the buyer into making a decision.

These commitments are a hugely important step and demonstrate our determination to support affected leaseholders. We urge other developers to follow suit.

■ Oxford-cambridge Arc**Layla Moran:**[\[38403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the Government's target is for the number of housing units to be built in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc; and whether Housing England operates from the same target.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework expects local planning authorities in England to follow the standard method set out in published guidance for assessing local housing need. The standard method is only the starting point in the process of planning for new homes - it is not a target. Local councils will still need to consider local circumstances to assess how many homes should be delivered in their area

For the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, we are developing a long-term Spatial Framework that will support better spatial planning and investment decisions, support more sustainable development and positive environmental outcomes, and allow communities to shape the long-term future of their areas. The development of the Spatial Framework is at a very early stage. Therefore, it does not currently include any policies or targets. In preparing the Spatial Framework, the Government has committed to a robust evidence-based process to understand the most sustainable approach to supporting future growth options in the Arc. On 20 July, we launched a 12-week public consultation, seeking views to help us create a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework. Using the vision as a foundation, we will develop options for delivering its objectives. It is likely that these options will consider strategic growth locations and distribution of growth. We hope to publish this, including a Sustainable Appraisal 'Issues and Options' Report, for public consultation in spring 2022 to give everyone a chance to have their say.

■ **Parking: Urban Areas**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[38323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 June 2021 to Question 17790 on Parking: Urban Areas, if his Department will take steps to encourage local authorities to (a) reduce car parking in urban areas and (b) prioritise the introduction of active travel schemes and more sustainable means of transport.

Luke Hall:

The responsibility for traffic management on local roads and the provision or restriction of off-street or on-street parking rests with the relevant local authority as they are best placed to consider how to balance the needs of residents, emergency services, local business and those who work in and visit the area.

In Summer 2020 the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost walking and cycling in England, with a vision for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030. This commitment is backed with £2 billion of investment over five years and was followed by the publication of Gear Change: One Year On, on 30 July 2021 which increased funding for cycling and walking to £338 million this financial year and highlighted what has been achieved in the past twelve months. More broadly, the National Planning Policy Framework outlines to local authorities the expectation that opportunities to promote walking and cycling should be considered at the earliest stages of plan making and development proposals.

■ **Permitted Development Rights**

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[38288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to allow local planning authorities to mandate minimum standards on green or outside space when considering retail or office conversions into residential buildings through permitted development rights.

Christopher Pincher:

The new Class MA permitted development right for the change of use from commercial, business and service uses, including retail and office premises, came into effect from 1 August 2021. The right will bring vacant commercial buildings into productive use. There are no current plans to introduce a requirement for outside space.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[38292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has carried an impact assessment of requiring change of use conversions through permitted development rights to be liable for payments through Section 106 agreements.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[38293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an estimate of the additional revenue that would be raised by including conversions through permitted development rights within the scope of the proposed infrastructure levy.

Christopher Pincher:

We have consulted on introducing a new infrastructure levy to replace section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy. We are currently analysing the 44,000 responses to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation and will publish our response in due course.

■ Planning**Feryal Clark:**[\[41362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to (a) address the planning skills shortage and (b) ensure that councils have adequate resources for effective implementation of planning policy.

Christopher Pincher:

The Planning White Paper commits to developing a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector to support the implementation of our reforms - so that, as we implement our reforms, local planning authorities are equipped to create great communities through effective civic engagement and proactive plan-making.

Through our proposed reforms, local planning authorities will be able to focus on what they do best; plan for the long term development of their area, improve the quality of new development, and focus more on those large and special sites that need the most consideration. We want to reduce the amount of resource-consuming bureaucracy and streamline or abolish assessments and other requirements that are burdensome and slow-down planning departments. Part of achieving this will be through modernising the planning process, so that routine tasks are automated and

decision-making is improved by better access to data and digital services. This will allow local authorities to focus attention on plan making and place shaping.

We will continue to work with local planning authorities as we develop our proposals.

■ Planning Permission

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[38287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of giving local planning authorities the right to reject conversions from (a) retail and (b) office buildings to residential buildings on the basis of the location of those buildings.

Christopher Pincher:

The permitted development right for the change of use from the Commercial, Business and Service use class allows local planning authorities to consider the effect on future residents of residential use in an area of heavy industry, storage and distribution, waste management or a mix of such uses. In addition it allows for consideration of the implications of noise from commercial premises for the intended occupiers, and in conservation areas allows for consideration of the effect of the change of use of the ground floor to residential on the character or sustainability of that area. The authority may refuse prior approval if these are unacceptable.

Feryal Clark:

[\[41364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to use existing powers to support local authorities to strengthen their planning enforcement powers.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is clear that effective enforcement is important to tackle breaches of planning control. We committed to a strengthening of enforcement powers in the planning white paper, Planning for the Future. Further details of our proposals will be announced in due course.

■ Planning Permission: Fees and Charges

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[38289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to introduce the proposed £5,000 planning fee for conversions under class MA of permitted development.

Christopher Pincher:

We have introduced a fee of £100 per dwellinghouse in respect of this right. We have not included a £5,000 cap on fees as originally proposed.

■ Poverty

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[38225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of people living poverty related to housing costs.

Eddie Hughes:

Individuals who are unable to afford their housing costs may be eligible for a range of support through the welfare system. We lifted Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local rents in April 2020, and in 2021/22 maintained them at their increased level in cash terms.

For those who require additional support Discretionary Housing Payments are available. We have made £140 million in Discretionary Housing Payments funding available for local authorities this financial year, to distribute for supporting renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sectors. This builds on the £180 million in payments made available last financial year.

Moreover, we have banned lettings fees paid by tenants and capped tenancy deposits through the Tenant Fees Act, which came into force on 1 June 2019 and reduced the upfront costs associated with moving in the private rented sector.

During the Coronavirus pandemic the Government has put in place an unprecedented financial package, which is supporting renters to sustain tenancies and to afford their housing costs. We have provided support for business to pay staff salaries through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which is in place until the end of September 2021. We also extended the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit until September 2021 and provided a one-off payment of £500 to eligible Working Tax Credit claimants.

In the longer term we need to build more homes to tackle affordability. We have made strong progress towards our aim of building 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s – delivering around 244,000 last year, the highest in over 30 years. This is backed by £20 billion in investment, which includes over £12.2 billion for the Affordable Homes Programme – to deliver up to 180,000 affordable homes – the biggest funding commitment to affordable housing in over a decade. We have also made initial funding of £7.1 billion available for the National Home Building Fund to unlock up to 860,000 homes over the lifetime of the projects through the provision of infrastructure, regenerating brownfield sites, and diversifying the market.

Furthermore, our £9 billion Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme, running to 2023, will deliver approximately 250,000 new affordable homes. We are also pushing forward with our planning reforms to establish a simpler, faster and more predictable system and ensure that the right homes are built in the right places where they are needed.

■ Rented Housing: Pets

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[37393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of adding pet deposits to the list of permitted payments in the Tenant Fees Act 2019 for pet ownership in rented accommodation.

Eddie Hughes:

The Tenant Fees Act 2019 introduced a cap of five weeks' rent for properties with an annual rent below £50,000, and banned most letting fees charged to tenants.

The five week cap should be considered the maximum, rather than the default amount charged. This approach should therefore accommodate private renters who wish to keep pets, without the need for a separate pet deposit. The Government has no plans at this time to amend the Tenant Fees Act 2019.

■ Retirement: Housing

Alexander Stafford:

[\[38477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing a ministerial taskforce to support the creation of forms of retirement housing.

Christopher Pincher:

Both the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health and Social Care are committed to further improving the diversity of housing options available to older people. We are engaging closely with both the sector and a range of other stakeholders on this issue. This includes considering the merits of different engagement and delivery models including proposals from the sector for a cross-government taskforce.

■ Riding Sunbeams

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[\[41276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what due diligence was carried out by his Department ahead of the award of £2.5 million to Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd in November 2020 to ensure that those funds will not be used directly or indirectly to support campaign groups (a) Stop Funding Hate, (b) Momentum and (c) ToppleTheRacists.

Luke Hall:

Due diligence was delegated to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and focused on the track record of the company in delivering public contracts and its acknowledged expertise in its field. The contract between East Sussex County Council and Riding Sunbeams does explicitly prohibit funding being used for any purpose not part of the agreed project budget.

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[\[41277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd met in being awarded £2.5 million in funding under the Getting Building Fund in November 2020.

Luke Hall:

In assessing the business case for the project the Local Enterprise Partnership's technical evaluators, Steer Davies Gleave Ltd, said: *A compelling strategic case has been developed demonstrating that the scheme is well aligned with the strategic objectives of the Getting Building Fund. The scheme is expected to generate a total of 40 jobs, and it supports the Green Recovery by enabling trains to be powered by renewable energy. Moreover, this investment is in line with the UK government's aim to stimulate post Covid-19 economic recovery through investment in infrastructure.*

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[\[41278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the (a) readiness, (b) level of risk and (c) potential effect on employment of the Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd project granted £2.5 million in funding under the Getting Building Fund in November 2020.

Luke Hall:

These were assessed by the Local Enterprise Partnership's independent technical evaluator, who judged that (a) there were good grounds for believing the project could start on time and be completed by March 2022, (b) there was a degree of risk attaching to the Network Rail's commitment to purchase power from the project for an initial 2-4 year period only, with no guarantees beyond this test period, meaning that full long term benefits may not accrue if the contract to purchase power were not expended and (c) the projected figure of 40 jobs was robust and moreover 'the investment is in line with the UK government's aim to stimulate post Covid-19 economic recovery through investment in infrastructure.'

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[\[41279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the grant of £2.5 million by his Department to Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd in November 2020 for a local infrastructure project, what safeguards his Department put in place to ensure that that project (a) was completed by March 2022, (b) provided a return on investment and (c) met the objectives of the Getting Building Fund.

Luke Hall:

All Getting Building Fund projects have been funded on the understanding that they will complete by March 2022 and this is stipulated in the contract. The independent technical evaluator's report on the project's business case confirmed their view that the project was high value for money and fully met the objectives of the Getting Building Fund.

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[41280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the award of a £2.5 million grant by his Department to Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd, whether officials in his Department had (a) meetings and (b) correspondence with representatives of (i) the Friends Provident Foundation and their investment director and (ii) Thrive Renewables.

Luke Hall:

No such meetings have taken place and there has been no correspondence

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[41281]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the commercial basis for his Department's decision to award a £2.5 million grant to Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd.

Luke Hall:

The business case prepared for this project and all associated papers are freely available on the South East Local Enterprise Partnership website:

<https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2019/09/Riding-Sunbeams.pdf>.

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[41282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what measures were in place to mitigate against potential conflicts of interest during the funding process to award a £2.5 million grant to Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd in November 2020.

Luke Hall:

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership's conflict of interest policy is freely available on their website:

<https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/04/Conflict-of-Interest-Policy-2020-1.pdf>.

Brendan Clarke-Smith:

[41283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much of the £2.5 million granted to Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd under the Getting Building Fund in November 2020 has been used to pay staff at (a) Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd, (b) the charity Possible, (c) Friends Provident Foundation, (d) Thrive Renewables Ltd and (e) Snowball Impact Management Ltd.

Luke Hall:

This level of detail is not held by MHCLG. The contract for the project is between East Sussex County Council and Riding Sunbeams Apollo Ltd. The bulk of the £2.527 million costs are allocated to capital expenditure, with £300k allocated to management costs.

■ Social Rented Housing: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[38311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he will take to ensure that City of York Council builds sufficient social housing to meet local need.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing, and has taken a number of steps to support councils to deliver new homes. In March this year we announced that councils will be given more freedom on how they can spend the money they receive from Right to Buy sales on replacement homes. In May, Homes England launched its Local Government Capacity Centre of Excellence to provide councils with practical support to build their skills and capacity. This is on top of removal of the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap in 2018, enabling local authorities greater flexibility to borrow for building.

To support councils to identify local need, we have simplified the process of planning for the number of homes needed. We have introduced a standard method for assessing local housing need, through the National Planning Policy Framework. Local authorities are responsible for identifying the size, type and tenure of homes needed for different groups in the community, including those who require affordable housing.

To further support the delivery of new homes we are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme. Councils are eligible for funding through the Affordable Home Programme and we want to see local authorities playing a key role in the delivery of this Programme, using it and the range of tools available to deliver a new generation of council housing.

■ Supermarkets: Delivery Services

Daisy Cooper:

[\[37600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July to Question 30418 and with reference to his written statement of 15 July 2021 on Delivery of Food and Essential Goods, HCWS187, whether local authorities are able to take enforcement action against supermarkets that create a noise nuisance to residents by breaching their delivery conditions.

Christopher Pincher:

As set out in the statement, the Government recognises that it may be necessary for action to be taken in relation to the effects on neighbours of sustained disturbance due to deliveries outside of conditioned hours, particularly where this affects sleep. In this case a local planning authority should consider any efforts made by retailers to manage and mitigate such disturbance, taking into account the degree and longevity of amenity effects.

■ Travellers: Caravan Sites

Beth Winter: [\[38461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department made of the adequacy of the provision of authorised caravan sites for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

Beth Winter: [\[38462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the facilities available on authorised caravan sites for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

Beth Winter: [\[38463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many households are currently on waiting lists for authorised caravan sites.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has made no assessment on the adequacy of the provision of authorised sites. It is the responsibility of local planning authorities to make their own assessment of need for traveller sites and in producing their local plan, to identify sites to meet that need. Local authorities are best placed to make decisions about the number and location of such sites locally, having had due regard to national policy and local circumstances.

The Department does not hold data on how many households are currently on waiting lists for authorised sites. This information is held by each individual local authority

Local authorities are responsible for repairs and maintenance of permanent Gypsy and Traveller sites they own, under the Mobile Homes Act 1983. Local authorities set out these responsibilities in individual Mobile Homes pitch agreements. Privately run Gypsy and Traveller sites with appropriate planning permission are subject to the local authority site licencing regime under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. Local authorities have discretion to attach conditions to a licence and can issue a compliance notice for a breach of a condition.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Department for International Trade: Staff

Tulip Siddiq: [\[41098\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to (a) change staffing levels and (b) make redundancies in each of her Department's regional teams of international trade advisers in the next 12 months.

Graham Stuart:

The International Trade Adviser service is one part of the department's export support ecosystem that up-skills businesses to take advantage of export opportunities.

The Department for International Trade (DIT) contracts with Delivery Partners to provide an International Trade Adviser service across England. International Trade Advisers are employees of Delivery Partners. Staffing levels are determined by Delivery Partners, in response to commercially agreed outcomes.

DIT provides the maximum possible support to UK business to take full advantage of trade opportunities, including those arising from delivering Free Trade Agreements, and facilitating UK exports.

■ North Wales Economic Ambition Board**Mr David Jones:****[40737]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what consultations (a) she has held and (b) plans to hold with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board on the terms of free trade agreements she has concluded, or is seeking to conclude.

Graham Stuart:

Ministerial colleagues at the Office of Secretary of State for Wales regularly engage with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board on a wide range of policy areas.

The Department for International Trade has established an extensive stakeholder engagement framework consisting of various mechanisms to allow business and civil society stakeholders the opportunity to feed into its trade policy, ensuring the UK position is well-informed and reflects the interests of the whole of the UK.

We want every relevant organisation, in every part of the UK, to feel engaged with our trade policy and we will continue to engage with a range of businesses, industry, civil society and all willing stakeholders in different ways as we continue to seek out the opportunities free trade provides us.

■ Tradeshaw Access Programme**Bill Esterson:****[36623]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the total value was of the 42,000 grants provided by the Government to UK businesses through the Tradeshaw Access Programme between April 2009 and March 2021.

Graham Stuart:

The total value of more than 42,000 grants provided by HM Government to UK businesses through the Tradeshaw Access Programme between April 2009 and March 2021 was in excess of £93.4 million.

Hilary Benn:

[\[40610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has plans to replace the Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP).

Graham Stuart:

I refer the hon. Member for Leeds Central to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend for East Devon on 26 July 2021, UIN: 36810.

JUSTICE

■ Berwyn Prison: Visits

Greg Smith:

[\[36790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoner visitors there were at HMP Berwyn in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, (c) 2019 and (d) 2020.

Alex Chalk:

The number of individuals listed to attend HMP Berwyn for social visits in each of the years requested is provided below. Please note that these numbers will include visitors who attended on multiple occasions and those who cancelled or did not attend on the day.

YEAR	NUMBER OF LISTED VISITORS
2017	6,494
2018	12,564
2019	15,512
2020	7,406

■ Custodial Treatment: Contracts

Grahame Morris:

[\[38250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which custodial establishments have brought (a) catering and (b) other services back in-house; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

The following establishments have brought recently catering back in-house: HMPs Buckley Hall, Hewell, Holme House, Lancaster Farms, and Woodhill. Other services such as Education are privately outsourced, or in the case of Facilities Management partly outsourced and partly delivered by Gov Facility Services Limited (an MoJ-owned Non-Departmental Public Body established following the collapse of Carillion in 2018). Establishments who have brought other services, such as refreshment facilities for staff and visitors, in-house are: HMPs Coldingley, Garth, Preston, Woodhill and Wormwood Scrubs, The Mount and Frankland.

We regard well-run prisons as fundamental to the proper functioning of our justice system, and a vital part of our reform plans. The Government remains fully committed to a mixed market for public services, drawing on the best of public, private and voluntary providers to improve quality and secure value for money for the taxpayer.

■ **Dangerous Driving: Sentencing**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[36709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his timetable is for bringing forward legislative proposals to introduce tougher penalties for causing death by dangerous driving.

Alex Chalk:

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently before Parliament, includes provisions that will increase the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving from 14 years' imprisonment to life. The PCSC Bill has passed third reading in the House of Commons and has been introduced to the House of Lords for further scrutiny.

■ **Judiciary: Gender**

Stella Creasy:

[40903]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) single-sex members clubs and (b) other barriers to achieving a gender-balanced judiciary.

Alex Chalk:

No known assessment has been undertaken by the department on the potential effect of single sex membership clubs. It is not a requirement to record club membership for judicial officeholders. Judicial appointments are made solely on merit and information is not collected from candidates for judicial office about membership of clubs or networks.

The Lord Chancellor works closely with the Lord Chief Justice, Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) and other members of the Judicial Diversity Forum (JDF), including the three relevant legal professional bodies, to assess barriers to achieving greater gender diversity in the judiciary. In September 2020, JDF members published a summary of wide range of actions they are undertaking at different career stages, collectively or individually, to help increase diversity in the judiciary, including for women. The JDF will publish a one year update to the action plan this Autumn.

The proportion of female court judges has increased by 10 percentage points since 2014, to 34% as at 1 April 2021, and for tribunal judges it has increased by 7 percentage points to 50%, over the same period.

■ Marriage: Humanism

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[38359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps his Department has taken towards granting legal recognition to humanist marriages; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling Senedd Cymru to legalise humanist marriages in Wales.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for marriage law in England and Wales.

The Government has received a number of representations about making separate provision for humanist marriage in England and Wales. As we have made clear, a Law Commission report due later this year is expected to present options for wholesale reform to the law governing marriage ceremonies, which the Government will consider carefully. Options being explored by the Law Commission include offering couples greater flexibility to form their own ceremonies, allowing the ceremony to take place in a much broader range of locations and to provide a framework that could allow non-religious belief organisations (such as Humanists) and/or independent celebrants to conduct legally binding weddings.

The Government will decide on provision for non-religious belief marriage on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendations. The Government, therefore, has not made an assessment of the merits of enabling Senedd Cymru to legalise humanist marriages.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron:

[\[40622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 13 May, 14 June, 20 July and 26 July 2021 regarding a constituent with reference JB32417.

Alex Chalk:

I will be providing a response to my hon. Friend, the Member for Basildon and Billericay, Mr John Baron's, Ministerial Correspondence dated 19th August in due course. Unfortunately, MOJ has no record of receiving Mr Baron's earlier correspondence. I note that the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) is also in contact with Mr Baron's constituent to resolve the issues he raised.

■ Prison Officers: Labour Turnover

Grahame Morris:

[\[38249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prison officers have left service as a result of (a) taking early retirement and (b) occupational ill-health by age group in each of the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

The numbers and proportion of Band 3-5 prison officers who have left service as a result of (a) taking early retirement and (b) medical retirement by age group in each of the last five years is shown in the tables below:

Table 1: Band 3-5 prison officers ¹ who retired from April 2016 to March 2021, by early retirement ^{2,3,4,5}

	HEADCOUNT					
Retired Before Pension Age/ After Pension Age	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	Total
Retired Before Pension Age	37	118	91	74	58	378
Retired After Pension Age	194	179	124	175	155	827
Grand Total	231	297	215	249	213	1205

Table 2: Band 3-5 prison officers ¹ who left in the period from April 2016 to March 2021 due to medical retirement, by age

	HEADCOUNT					
Age	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	Total
~	~	~	0	0	~	3
30-39	14	6	3	~	~	25
40-49	35	30	31	16	7	119
50-59	90	72	75	70	36	343
60+	~	~	3	~	~	8
Grand Total	141	109	112	88	48	498

Table 3: Band 3-5 prison officers ¹ who retired early or left due to medical retirement from April 2016 to March 2021 as a proportion of average staff in post ⁶

	2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
	t		t		t		t		t	
Medically retired	141	0.7%	109	0.5%	112	0.5%	88	0.4%	48	0.2%
Retired early	231	1.2%	297	1.5%	215	0.9%	249	1.1%	213	0.9%
Average Staff in Post	18,899		20,215		22,762		23,006		22,660	

Notes to tables:

1. Includes Band 3-4 / Prison Officer (including specialists), Band 4 / Supervising Officer and Band 5 / Custodial Managers.
2. Early retirement is defined as retirement prior to the normal access age of the staff workplace pension scheme. The schemes covering this analysis are as follows: Pension Alpha Scheme, Pension Classic Scheme, Pension Classic Plus Scheme, Pension Nuvos Scheme, Pension Premium Scheme and Reserved Rights.
3. For staff with multiple civil service workplace pensions, the most recent scheme is used as the normal pension age.
4. A small number of staff do not have a recorded pension scheme. The most common pension at their joining date is used to determine their normal retirement age in these cases.
5. For those on the Pension Alpha Scheme, their State Pension Age (SPA) has been calculated to determine their normal retirement age.

~ Denotes suppressed values of 2 or fewer or other values which would allow values of 2 or fewer to be derived by subtraction. Low numbers are suppressed to prevent disclosure in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998.

To note that:

The term 'occupational ill-health' is not recorded as a reason for leaving HMPPS.

Medical Retirement is defined as staff that are “...required to retire... on medical grounds where the occupational health service provider advises that the breakdown in [their] health is such that it prevents [them] from carrying out [their] duties and that ill-health is likely to be permanent” (MoJ Retirement Policy).

■ Prisons: Planning

Greg Smith: [\[36781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish details of any prison site selection assessments that have been carried out and since discounted for alternative sites to the one at Grendon Underwood.

Greg Smith: [\[36782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish details of how Government-owned land that is not owned by his Department has been (a) identified and (b) subsequently discounted as an alternative prison site to the one at Grendon Underwood; and on what basis sites were discounted.

Alex Chalk:

The information requested for both questions is commercially sensitive and would therefore not be appropriate for us to share.

■ Prisons: Security

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[36537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Government's policy to allocate £100 million funding to improve prison security and restrict the supply of drugs into prisons, as announced in August 2019; and what criteria his Department has used to assess the value for money of that funding.

Alex Chalk:

Preventing contraband such as drugs into prisons via the gate, reception and post is a key priority of my department. Despite challenges to operational delivery during the pandemic, we are delivering on our commitment for safer and more secure prisons including through the £100 million investment in prison security through the Security Investment Programme (SIP).

The evaluation of the impact of SIP is still in its early stages and we will report indicative findings in Spring 2022 and final findings in Spring 2023. Although formal evaluation is in its early stages, we do know that within its first year, the SIP has had multiple successes, achieving the following:

- The installation of 69 X-ray body scanners, with over 9000 positive indications. This has included contraband being retrieved, for example in one case 10.5g of cocaine with an estimated prison value of £4000 was recovered.
- The roll out of Enhanced Gate Security (EGS), replicating the measures used in airport screening, resulting in hundreds of illicit items being prevented from entering prisons.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[36596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Onley, published on 20 July 2021, what

assessment he has made of the potential need for changes in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service policy following the discovery of a firearm in an HMP Onley workshop in December 2020.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[36597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Onley, published on 20 July 2021, what information his Department holds about the circumstances surrounding the discovery of a firearm in an HMP Onley workshop in December 2020.

Alex Chalk:

On 30 December 2020 at approximately 8:50am, the HMP Onley security team received intelligence that a weapon was hidden in their concrete workshop. As per protocol, the Command Suite was opened, and the National Tactical Response Team were called for assistance. At 11am during a search of the concrete workshop a firearm was found hidden in the cistern of the toilet in the prisoners' washroom.

We routinely review our security threats and risks and support operations through ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are in place, and that learning on current and emerging risks is shared across the estate.

My department is delivering on the government's £100 million investment to strengthen prison security, namely through:

- Enhanced Gate Security (EGS) has been installed at 29 sites, with rollout to a further 13 sites by the end of October, replicating the measures used in airport screening, which has seen newly recruited staff with metal detecting portals and scanners retrieving HUNDREDS of items.
- The installation of 73 X-ray body scanners, with 2 more to be installed by the end of September this year and a final 1 by the end of January 2022. We have had over 9000 positive indications on X-Ray body scanners, preventing items such as weapons, drugs and mobile phones from entering our prisons.

■ Probate: Applications

Alun Cairns:

[40900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how long it takes on average to process a probate application.

Chris Philp:

The most recently published information regarding combined waiting times for a grant of probate, on paper and digital cases, covers January 2021 to March 2021 and is published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly (Table 25):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

Average time to grant issue for grants of Probate, England and Wales, quarterly Q3 2019 – Q1 2021 ^{1,2,3,6}

PROBATE - ALL

Application submission to grant issue		Document receipt to grant issue ⁴				
Year	Quarter	Grants issued	Mean weeks	Median weeks	Mean weeks	Median weeks
2019	Q3	53,403	9.5	8.0	9.5	8.0
2019	Q4	54,388	7.8	5.6	7.6	5.4
2020	Q1	49,706	6.7	4.3	6.5	4.1
2020	Q2	45,493	6.6	4.6	6.3	4.4
2020	Q3	60,221	6.7	4.9	6.0	4.4
2020	Q4	54,469	7.2	5.3	6.2	4.9
2021	Q1	57,620	7.7	4.4	5.3	0.9

PROBATE - DIGITAL

Application submission to grant issue		Document receipt to grant issue ⁴				
Year	Quarter	Grants issued	Mean weeks	Median weeks	Mean weeks	Median weeks
2019	Q3	7,166	9.4	7.6	9.0	7.1
2019	Q4	11,060	10.2	9.0	9.2	8.3
2020	Q1	10,784	7.1	4.9	6.0	3.7
2020	Q2	10,955	6.1	3.7	4.7	2.1
2020	Q3	21,592	6.4	4.4	4.3	2.6
2020	Q4	21,879	6.6	3.1	4.2	0.3
2021	Q1	35,996	6.6	4.1	2.9	0.0

PROBATE - PAPER

Application submission to grant issue		Document receipt to grant issue ⁴				
Year	Quarter	Grants issued	Mean weeks	Median weeks	Mean weeks	Median weeks

PROBATE - PAPER

		issued	weeks	weeks	weeks
2019	Q3	46,237 9.6	8.1	9.6	8.1
2019	Q4	43,328 7.2	4.7	7.2	4.7
2020	Q1	38,922 6.6	4.1	6.6	4.1
2020	Q2	34,538 6.8	4.7	6.8	4.7
2020	Q3	38,629 6.9	5.1	6.9	5.1
2020	Q4	32,590 7.6	6.3	7.6	6.3
2021	Q1	21,624 9.4	7.7	9.4	7.7

Source: HMCTS Core Case Data**Notes:**

- 1) HMCTS Core Case Data came into effect at the end of March 2019, following a transition between data systems recording information regarding The Probate Service
- 2) The average timeliness figures are produced by calculating the time from application/document receipt (which may be from an earlier period) to the grant issued made in that period. Currently grants being issued on the same day as the application submission/document receipt are being calculated as 0 days. This is being reviewed as to whether it is an accurate reflection of workload and may be adjusted in future
- 3) Some averages presented here may be based on a small number of grants. Where this occurs, any conclusion drawn from these will be limited
- 4) Document receipt occurs after payment has been made and all accompanying paperwork has been received by HMCTS. As such, it does not reflect the entire case journey from when an application is submitted by the user to when a grant is received. Instead these figures reflect the timeliness from when HMCTS staff are able to start working on the case. The aspects not included in these timeliness measures include (but are not limited to); time taken to scan and upload documents to the management system (for paper items), and check that these items are of good enough quality to proceed. For the timeliness figures for stopped cases, the figures will further exclude time taken to resolve those issues mentioned in footnote 6 below
- 6) A probate application can be stopped for several reasons: a caveat can be entered when there's a dispute about either who can apply for probate or issues with a will or proposed will, or if an error is identified and a request for further information is made

Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by the probate service during the Covid 19 pandemic the average waiting for a grant of probate following receipt of the documents required has been maintained at between four to six weeks.

More recent management information published by HMCTS (which does not go through the same level of quality assurance and analysis as the Family Court Statistics Quarterly) provides waiting time information up to June 2021 for grants of probate as well as letters of administration with/without a Will annexed and reseals. This shows that the waiting time on digital grant of probate applications, which are not stopped due to errors or missing documentation, is between two and three weeks for June 2021 where paper cases, not stopped, took around five weeks in June 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/hmcts-management-information-june-2021>

■ Young Offender Institutions: Domestic Visits

Anna McMorris:

[41139]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on what date he last visited a (a) secure training centre, (b) young offender institution and (c) secure children's home.

Alex Chalk:

When Covid-19 related restrictions have allowed, the Secretary of State has visited a number of our prisons, courts, and probation premises, and continues to do so in addition to his departmental meetings, constituency work, and time in Parliament. He last visited a Young Offender Institution on Thursday 19 August 2021. The Secretary of State for Justice has not visited a Secure Training Centre or a Secure Children's Home but has been closely engaged in issues relating to them and regularly meets with the Chief Executive of HMPPS to discuss performance across the adult and youth estates.

■ Young Offenders: Sentencing

Anna McMorris:

[41137]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of custodial sentence was for children and young people in (a) Secure Training Centres, (b) Young Offender Institutions and (c) Secure Children's Homes in each of the last 10 years.

Anna McMorris:

[41138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what percentage of children exiting youth custody reoffended within (a) one month, (b) six months and (c) 12 months in each of the last 10 years.

Alex Chalk:

Data on the length of custodial episodes for children and young persons is contained in the Youth Justice Annual Statistics which can be found at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/youth-justice-statistics>

A custodial episode is defined as the total length of time the child or young person spent in custody, from the date they were admitted from the community to the date the custodial episode ended (either because they were released to the community, transitioned to the over 18 estate, transferred to a mental health unit or they turned 18). It should be noted that a custodial episode may contain nights spent on remand as well as those spent serving a sentence.

Supplementary table 7.30 contains a table by sector type.

If the child or young person has multiple custodial sentences of the same type, only the sentence with the most serious offence group will be included in the snapshot reports contained in the report. Analysis of all of the custodial sentences to which an individual has been sentenced would require examination of each offender's own records and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Juvenile proven reoffending data, by custody release for England and Wales, broken down into three-monthly periods can be found in the attached table. Reoffending data more generally is contained in the Proven Reoffending Statistics, which can be found at this link:

[Proven reoffending statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk \)](https://www.gov.uk/proven-reoffending-statistics)

Attachments:

1. Table [PQ41138 Table .xlsx]

TRANSPORT

■ Department for Transport: Directors

Fleur Anderson:

[\[37607\]](#)

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

Chris Heaton-Harris:

All DfT Non-Executive Board Members were recruited according to the guidance set out in the Corporate governance code for central government departments.

DfT announces the appointments (including reappointment dates) of Non-Executive Board Members, as well as their experience, in the Annual Report and Accounts. Our current Non-Executives are covered in the following Annual Report and Accounts:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dft-annual-report-and-accounts-2019-to-2020>

■ Department for Transport: Email

Fleur Anderson:

[\[36796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he or any of the Ministers in his Department use personal email addresses to conduct Government business.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Departmental business is conducted through the official DfT email systems. Any correspondence to external addresses will be directed to our official DfT channels.

All DfT staff and ministers have DfT email accounts and sign up to acceptable use and cyber security operating policies, which state that departmental business must be conducted via DfT email addresses, and not personal email or other web-based mail system.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Coronavirus**Beth Winter:**[\[38456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is taking to protect the safety of staff in the Swansea office from covid-19.

Rachel Maclean:

The safety and welfare of Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) staff is of paramount importance as it has been throughout the pandemic. Extensive measures are in place to support the safety and wellbeing of staff and information on the services available to staff is regularly communicated.

The DVLA has invested £5.7 million in making its offices as Covid secure as possible. The DVLA has carried out risk assessments on the estate, individual risk assessments for staff and regular lateral flow tests are offered to all staff working on site. Social distancing measures are in place, as are one-way systems, temperature checking, increased signage and communications for regular and thorough hand-washing. Personal protective equipment is also available to staff where appropriate.

■ Driving Licences**Munira Wilson:**[\[36777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to tackle delays at DVLA offices in issuing licences.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) online services are the quickest and easiest way to renew a driving licence. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their driving licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application for a driving licence. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person. Ongoing industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union is leading to delays for customers who make paper applications.

Currently, paper driving licence applications are likely to take six to ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example, if medical investigations are needed. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

The DVLA has reconfigured its accommodation to safely maximise the number of staff on site and is working hard to process applications as quickly as possible. The DVLA has accelerated the development of additional online services to reduce the number of paper applications and supported their take up through a publicity campaign. Further digital service enhancements are underway. The DVLA has also leased an additional building to accommodate more operational staff.

Judith Cummins:

[40940]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average length of time is between applying for a provisional driving licence and receiving that licence.

Rachel Maclean:

Information on the average time taken between applying for a provisional driving licence and receiving it is not recorded. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) online services are the quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their driving licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application for a driving licence. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person. Ongoing industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union is leading to delays for customers who make paper applications.

Currently, paper applications are likely to take between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example, if medical investigations are needed as part of a driving licence application. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

Wendy Chamberlain:

[41293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the current waiting period is for receipt of a renewed driving licence; and what steps his Department is taking to reduce that waiting period.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) online services are the quickest and easiest way to renew a driving licence. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their driving licence within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application for a driving licence. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person. Ongoing industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union is leading to delays for customers who make paper applications.

Currently, paper applications are likely to take between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example, if medical investigations are needed as part of a driving licence application.

The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

The DVLA has leased an additional building to accommodate more operational staff and has reconfigured its accommodation to safely maximise the number of staff on site and is working hard to process applications as quickly as possible. The DVLA has accelerated the development of additional online services to reduce the number of paper applications and supported their take up through a publicity campaign. Further digital service enhancements are underway.

■ Driving Tests

Owen Thompson: [\[37527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that technical issues with the DVSA theory test online booking system that prevent users from booking a test are (a) resolved quickly and (b) effectively mitigated going forward.

Owen Thompson: [\[37528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to reduce queue waiting times for users attempting to access the DVSA theory test online booking system.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) launched the new theory test booking service on 19 July 2021.

To allow the prompt deployment of critical fixes, the DVSA introduced a maintenance window of 8pm to 8am running until 29 July 2021 to resolve issues faced by customers and to improve system stability. Whilst the system performed below expectations on its first two days of operation it stabilised quickly and has performed in line with expectations since.

To ensure technical issues are resolved quickly and effectively mitigated, further overnight maintenance is being carried out during August and may continue during September. To minimise disruption to customers, the service will be unavailable overnight only when absolutely necessary with customers notified in advance.

The DVSA uses a queuing system to protect the new service from being overloaded. As at 23 July 2021, no customers using the booking system had to queue.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris: [\[36611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many driving tests the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency curtailed as a covid-19 safety measure since March 2020; and of those, how many tests were curtailed in the first 10 minutes under that measure.

Rachel Maclean:

To help stop the spread of coronavirus, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has minimised the amount of time examiners and candidates spend in the

vehicle during the driving test. Since May 2020, candidates who make a serious or dangerous fault on test, which means they have failed their test, are directed by the examiner back to the driving test centre where the test will end. The DVSA will keep this measure under review.

Between 1 May 2020 and 18 July 2021, 398,131 driving tests have been curtailed upon the candidate making a serious or dangerous fault. The DVSA does not record the number of minutes a driving test has been running when it is terminated.

Grahame Morris:

[\[36612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many complaints his Department has received from (a) candidates and (b) others on the lack of availability of driving tests as a result of covid-19 restrictions.

Rachel Maclean:

Since March 2020, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has received 1,124 of complaints about the lack of driving test availability as a result of covid-19 restrictions. The data held by the DVSA does not separate complaints received from 'candidates' and complaints received from 'others'.

Grahame Morris:

[\[37421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency, whether he plans to change the legal requirements for the length of on road time for inspectors of driving tests.

Grahame Morris:

[\[37422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the equalities impact of the curtailment of driving tests due to covid-19-safety measures.

Grahame Morris:

[\[37423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many candidates have received a (a) full and (b) partial refund where a complaint was raised concerning the curtailment of a driving test due to covid-19 safety measures.

Rachel Maclean:

The legal requirement for the on-road part of the practical car driving test is 30 minutes. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has no plans to change legislation with regards the minimum length of on-road practical driving tests. As a result of the pandemic, the DVSA has implemented a temporary policy whereby candidates are directed back to the test centre upon failure. This is to minimise the exposure and risk given the very close proximity of the vehicle occupants. The DVSA will keep this measure under review.

All candidates are encouraged to ensure that they properly prepared before applying for the driving test. The DVSA trains each examiner to treat all candidates equally and fairly, and to carry out practical driving tests consistently. Each candidate must

demonstrate they can drive to the required standard in order to pass their test and drive independently.

Since the start of the pandemic, the DVSA has received 8 complaints from candidates who have had their practical car driving test curtailed. No candidates have received a full or partial refund as their test was found to be assessed correctly.

■ Driving Tests: Kent

Rosie Duffield:

[\[41133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the backlog in practical driving test availability in (a) Canterbury and (b) Kent; and what steps he is taking to tackle that backlog.

Rachel Maclean:

To clear the backlog of car practical driving tests, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has put in place a number of measures to increase test slots. 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.

The forward booking dates for car practical driving tests in (a) Canterbury is 9 weeks, and in (b) Kent is 13 weeks.

Rosie Duffield:

[\[41134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the backlog in driving theory test availability in (a) Canterbury and (b) Kent; and what steps he is taking to clear that backlog.

Rachel Maclean:

Since April, to clear the backlog of driving theory tests, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has extended theory test centre opening hours, where conditions allow, creating 300,000 extra theory test appointments. From 6 September, the contract for running theory test centres is to be split into three regions and the number of theory test centres in Great Britain will increase from 180 to 202.

The forward booking dates for driving theory tests in (a) Canterbury is 8 weeks, and in (b) Kent is 6 weeks.

■ Driving Tests: Liverpool City Region

Dan Carden:

[\[41180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of theory driving test availability in the Liverpool City Region; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure additional test facilities.

Rachel Maclean:

The average waiting time for a driving theory test in the Liverpool City Region is 5 weeks.

The theory test centre estate and service for England, Scotland and Wales, which is currently delivered by a sole supplier, is changing. From 6 September 2021, the contract for running theory test centres is to be split into three regions and the number of theory test centres in Great Britain will increase from 180 to 202.

As part of its service recovery, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has extended theory test centre opening hours in England, where conditions allow, creating 300,000 extra theory test appointments. It has also opened 10 temporary theory test super centres in England, which will create a minimum of 120,000 extra appointments each month.

■ Driving Tests: Waiting Lists

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[41294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the backlog of driving theory tests (a) in Scotland and (b) the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

The theory test centre estate and service for England, Scotland and Wales, which is currently delivered by a sole supplier, is changing. From 6 September 2021, the contract for running theory test centres is to be split into three regions and the number of theory test centres in Great Britain will increase from 180 to 202.

As part of its service recovery, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has extended theory test centre opening hours in England and Wales, where conditions allow, creating 300,000 extra theory test appointments. It has also opened 10 temporary theory test super centres in England, which will create a minimum of 120,000 extra appointments each month.

In Scotland, the DVSA has increased opening hours and run tests on extra days, where possible. When theory tests resumed in Scotland on 26 April, the Scottish Government made the decision to keep the two-metre physical distancing restrictions in place. Due to this, the DVSA was unable to increase the number of desks for theory tests, which reduced capacity at most theory test sites in Scotland by 50%. The recent relaxing of physical distancing rules will provide additional testing capacity at theory test centres in Scotland.

■ Freight: Locomotives

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[38391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to encourage operators and freight companies to move to bi-mode or other technologies instead of having diesel-only rolling stock trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In the last three years, we have completed almost 700 track miles of electrification in England and Wales, allowing more electric, battery and bi-mode trains to operate. Since the start of 2019, we have also provided just over £4m of funding through Innovate UK-run First of a Kind competitions for new traction technologies in rail.

In Decarbonising Transport: a Better, Cleaner Britain, we have committed to working with the rail freight industry to incentivise the early take up of low carbon traction for rail freight to help freight operating companies have the confidence they need to invest in replacing current rolling stock.

■ Heathrow Airport: Licensing

Seema Malhotra:

[\[36647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to review Heathrow Airport's licence arrangements as granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Robert Courts:

Economic regulation of Heathrow Airport is carried out by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), independently of the Secretary of State for Transport, in accordance with the Civil Aviation Act 2012.

Heathrow Airport's licence arrangements are subject to periodic review by the CAA. The current licence was granted in 2015 and is due to expire at the end of 2021 (having been extended and amended since its initial five-year period). The CAA is presently developing the regulatory framework for a new licence to commence in 2022. It most recently sought views on development of that framework in its April 2022 'Way Forward' consultation, which closed for responses in June, and is now reviewing those consultation responses.

While the Department for Transport works with the CAA to understand its direction of travel in developing the licence arrangements, the CAA's work is independent of Government and the Secretary of State has no statutory role in reviewing those arrangements.

■ Heathrow Airport: Public Transport

Sarah Olney:

[\[38373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of Heathrow Airport Holdings on the provision of subsidised public transport for airport workers.

Robert Courts:

In recognition of the challenging times that the aviation sector continues to face due to Covid-19, Ministers have kept an open dialogue with UK airports, including Heathrow.

The issue of the provision of subsidised public transport for airport workers at Heathrow is a matter for the airport operator.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Construction**Michael Fabricant:**[\[37352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the viability of HS2 Phase 2b since the red unachievable rating given by the Infrastructure Projects Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 Phase 2b is at a much earlier stage of development than other phases of the HS2 project, with baseline cost and schedule information still being finalised. It is also being looked at as part of the Integrated Rail Plan, which will soon outline exactly how major rail projects, including HS2 phase 2b and other transformational projects such as Northern Powerhouse Rail, will work together to deliver the reliable train services that passengers across the North and Midlands need and deserve. This will provide further certainty on issues like phasing on HS2 Phase 2b, which, together with approvals on baseline cost and schedule information, will allow the project to proceed to its next stage and in turn improve delivery confidence.

Michael Fabricant:[\[37353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether an HS2 train service north bound from Birmingham Curzon Street station is contingent on completion of the HS2 line to Manchester.

Andrew Stephenson:

No decisions have yet been taken on the train services that will operate after HS2 services start running. These decisions will be taken nearer the time, drawing on advice from West Coast Partnership Development and Network Rail, and will be subject to public consultation.

■ Immigration Controls: Coronavirus**Hilary Benn:**[\[40606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will set out the criteria used in respect of the covid-19 travel rules in deciding that (a) Pakistan should remain on the red list and (b) India, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates should move from the red to the amber list, announced on 5 August 2021.

Robert Courts:

Decisions on Red, Amber or Green List assignment and associated border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) risk

assessments of countries and territories, alongside wider public health factors. Key factors in the JBC risk assessment of each country and territory include genomic surveillance capability, COVID-19 transmission risk and variant of concern transmission risk. A summary of the JBC methodology is published on gov.uk, alongside key data that supports Ministers' decisions.

These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under regular review.

■ **India and Pakistan: Coronavirus**

Hilary Benn:

[\[40605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his Department's estimate is of covid-19 vaccination rates in (a) India and (b) Pakistan as of 31 August 2021.

Robert Courts:

The World Health Organization publishes data on vaccination rates. As at 18 August 2021, India has approximately 125 million fully vaccinated individuals, which is over 9% of the population. Pakistan has approximately 12.5 million fully vaccinated individuals, which is over 5% of the population. The Department for Transport does not produce forecasts for global vaccination rates.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Recruitment and Training**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[36536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department is making on improving the (a) provision of training and (b) recruitment of large goods vehicle drivers to tackle the shortage of those drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

In respect of England, we are supporting apprenticeships, including to train lorry drivers. A revised standard will be available from 2 August 2021 attracting £7,000 in apprenticeship levy funding. There is also an incentive payment of £3,000 available for new apprentices of any age with an employment start date of 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.

The Department for Work and Pensions is developing a scheme to train jobseekers in HGV driving. The Flexible Support Fund is available to help the unemployed or those in receipt of Universal Credit renew their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

On 20 July 2021, the Government announced a package of measures to support road haulage industry. This includes more capacity for driving tests.

■ **Level Crossings: Doncaster**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[37567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 July 2021 to Question 22000 on Level Crossings: Doncaster, what the outcome is of the investigation

by the British Transport Police into the incident at Rossington level crossing on 13 June 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The crash at Rossington level crossing on 13 June 2021 was a consequence of road traffic offences committed in South Yorkshire Police's jurisdiction. They have led the investigation, supported by the British Transport Police. The driver of the Range Rover that stuck the train was charged with dangerous driving and perverting the course of justice and the case has been listed for sentencing at Sheffield Crown Court on Monday 13 September 2021.

■ **Local Government: Snow and Ice**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[38241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether new guidance has been issued to local councils on establishing priority for winter gritting since winter 2020-21.

Rachel Maclean:

Under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 local highway authorities, such as Cheshire East Council, have a duty to maintain the highways network in their area. This duty includes the requirement "to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice".

Whilst Government has no powers to intervene in these matters in relation to local authority roads and winter service planning and the treatment of roads for which they are responsible, the Department works with the UK Roads Liaison Group to provide guidance to local highway authorities on a range of issues. In June 2020, the UKRLG's National Winter Service Group published Planning for Winter Service.

This autumn, Ministers will be writing to the leaders of all local highway authorities in England, outside London, reminding them of their responsibilities with regard to winter planning and the measures they expect them to take to ensure they can provide a safe highway network during the 2021-22 winter season.

■ **Mobility Scooters: Urban Areas**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[38313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that cycling infrastructure in urban areas can accommodate the use of mobility scooters.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Mobility scooters can be used on footways, footpaths, bridleways or pedestrianised areas, provided that they are used in accordance with prescribed requirements. Larger mobility scooters, capable of going up to 8mph, are permitted to use the road. The Government's cycle infrastructure design guidance, published in July 2020, highlights the need for cycle lanes to be as accessible as possible to all cycles, including adapted cycles used as mobility aids.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Emma Hardy:

[41175]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he (a) has taken and (b) plans to take so that the Office of Low Emission Vehicles Grant is potentially accessible for the maximum number of applicants.

Rachel Maclean:

The Office for Zero Emissions Vehicles (OZEV) administers several grant funding schemes to assist with the up-front cost of purchasing zero emission vehicles, and the associated recharging infrastructure. The government keeps all of these schemes under review and aims to ensure they represent value for money for tax payers. Phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030 will put the UK on course to be the G7 country that will decarbonise cars and vans fastest. Doing this will help us meet our climate change obligations, improve air quality, support economic growth and put us at the forefront of the electric vehicle revolution with vehicles built right here in the UK. The Plug-in Car Grant focuses grant funding on more affordable zero emission vehicles priced under £35k where most consumers will be looking and where public money will make more of a difference. The Government has pledged £582 million in grants for those purchasing zero or ultra-low emission vehicles to make them cheaper to buy and incentivise more people to make the transition. The March 2020 Budget confirmed that users of zero emission cars will continue to benefit from favourable company car tax rates until 2025 (1% of list price in 2021/22 and 2% in 2022/23 though to 2024/25).

Additionally, all zero emission cars are exempt from vehicle excise duty (VED). Reforms to our home and workplace charging grants will focus support on those that need it most, including those living in flats, rental and leasehold accommodation, SMEs and charities.

■ Motorcycles: Driving Instruction

Anneliese Dodds:

[38409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many additional learner motorbike and scooter riders started on the road in each month since January 2019 to date.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) sells Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) certificates in books, containing 25 certificates per book, to Approved Training Bodies (ATB). CBT certificates are issued by ATBs to successful candidates and are valid for two years.

Between 1 January 2019 and 31 March 2021, which is the latest publication date, the DVSA has sold 363,600 certificates. There is no means of establishing the number of CBT courses that have been undertaken since January 2019 to date.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[38411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with those employing or contracting learner motorcyclists and scooter riders to make deliveries on the behaviour of their riders on the roads and in relation to pedestrians and cyclists.

Rachel Maclean:

Employers have a duty to manage the risks of their work activities, and employees have a responsibility to drive safely and with consideration towards other road users. Learner motorcyclists and motor scooter riders, like other road users, are required to comply with road traffic law and may be fined, given penalty points on their licence, or disqualified from driving if they disobey the legal requirements. If they do not adopt a responsible attitude, or if their use of the highway creates an unsafe environment or causes nuisance, they may be committing a number of offences.

■ **MV Empire Windrush: War Graves**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[37439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether HMT Empire Windrush has been designated as a war grave.

Robert Courts:

While the term 'war grave' is used in common parlance, there is no legal definition that applies at sea (or on land). Therefore, the wreck of the HMT Empire Windrush cannot be designated in this manner.

The wreck is not designated under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986, the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973, nor the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

This does not detract from the ship continuing to act as an extraordinary and enduring symbol of the contribution of the Windrush generation to the United Kingdom.

■ **P&O Ferries: Safety**

John Spellar:

[\[40593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department made of the effect of (a) crew numbers and (b) working hours at P&O ferries on crew and passenger safety.

Robert Courts:

The Department has not made an assessment of the effects of crew numbers and working hours on P&O Ferries operations. P&O have no UK-flagged vessels and operate on international routes. Their vessels are primarily subject to the laws of the country in which they are registered but are inspected by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency as UK Port State Authority to ensure compliance with relevant safety standards and regulations.

■ Railway Stations: Bicycles

Charlotte Nichols: [\[41348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to ensure that bicycle storage facilities are installed at every railway station in the UK.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are steadily increasing cycle storage at stations, including at city-centre termini, and also investing in safe cycle routes to stations. We plan to increase space on existing trains wherever practically possible and make it easier to reserve bike spaces online.

Since 2010, the Department has invested £40 million in the Cycle Rail programme, creating around 30,000 new and improved cycle parking spaces and other facilities to make it more convenient to cycle to railway stations.

■ Railway Stations: Middlewich

Fiona Bruce: [\[38245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what further funding the Government can provide to help secure progress towards the opening of a new railway station for Middlewich.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are assessing the bid made to round three of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund for the Middlewich Line and expect to announce the outcome later this year.

■ Railways: Carbon Emissions

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how he plans to remove all diesel-only trains on the rail network by 2040 as part of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to achieve the target of the rail network being net-zero by 2050 as part of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

To meet our net zero commitment, and our ambition to remove diesel trains by 2040, as set out in the Decarbonising Transport: a Better, Cleaner Britain, we will continue to electrify more of the network, building on the almost 700 track miles of electrification that we have delivered in England and Wales in the last three years, and deploy hydrogen and battery trains on some lines, where they make operational and economic sense.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[41061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the level of risk of catching covid-19 whilst travelling by train.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, my Department has closely monitored scientific evidence published in relation to SARS-CoV-2 transmission risks and available mitigation measures. Based on the analysis of a wide range of sources, including academic scientific publications, domestic and international policy documents, and technical briefs, our assessment is that there is no evidence that public transport is a major driver of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in the UK.

Throughout the pandemic, the Government has provided advice to passengers and transport operators to help people to travel with confidence, recognising the importance of passengers making informed decisions. This includes our Safer Travel guidance aimed at passengers, and our Safer Transport guidance aimed at transport operators. We will continue to support passengers as they return to travelling by rail.

Helen Hayes:

[\[41062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he is having with the Rail Safety and Standards Board on the publication of the results of their fortnightly modelling of the risks of catching covid-19 on trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

My officials have had several discussions with the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) about its SARS-CoV-2 transmission risk model, including about the release of its modelled data. As an independent organisation and as the owner of this information, it is ultimately for RSSB to make decisions on disclosure of the data it holds, as it has a fuller understanding of the data and is placed best to take a judgement on the approach to publication.

■ Railways: Electrification

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[37565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of electrifying the rail line between Church Fenton and Leeds City station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The £589m of funding released in July 2020 for the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU), and subsequent funding announced in May 2021, has enabled early construction work and further development of electrification design for the sections of track between Manchester and Stalybridge, Huddersfield and Leeds, as well as Church Fenton and York. We are actively reviewing the case for TRU to deliver full electrification on the route, with construction decisions to be taken once TRU's full business case is approved.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[38386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to accelerate a rolling programme of electrification, especially on the busiest rail routes as part of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In Decarbonising Transport: a Better, Cleaner Britain, we've committed to delivering an 'ambitious, sustainable, and cost-effective programme of electrification, guided by the Network Rail-led Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy', to help us deliver a net zero railway by 2050. To ensure this programme is deliverable, affordable, and achieves value for money, we will continue to develop new schemes individually and carefully through the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline process in the usual way.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[38392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of non-electrified trains on already electrified routes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We expect rail operators to deliver passenger services with rolling stock that makes the best use of the available infrastructure, while considering operational requirements and the need to reduce industry emissions.

As we decarbonise the railway, we will design the rollout of further electrification in such a way to allow the switchover from diesel to electric as soon as possible, although some services will not be able to switch immediately if they use multiple lines.

For rail freight, we have committed in Decarbonising Transport: a Better, Cleaner Britain to pursuing short infill electrification schemes to increase the number of fully electrified routes available.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[38393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to announce plans for infill rail electrification projects as part of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Rachel Maclean:

In Decarbonising Transport: a Better, Cleaner Britain, we've committed to pursuing infill rail electrification projects that could allow for a significant rise in the electric haulage of rail freight.

We will continue to develop and announce electrification schemes through the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline process in the usual way, to ensure that they are affordable, deliverable, and represent value for money.

■ Railways: Fuels

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[38394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the use of cleaner fuels on the rail network during the implementation of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Rachel Maclean:

Departmental ministers and officials regularly meet with train manufacturers and other stakeholders to discuss rail decarbonisation technologies, including cleaner fuels and biofuels.

We are committed to supporting the development of cleaner technologies in rail, like battery and hydrogen trains, and we recognise the potential value of sustainably sourced biofuels as a transitional technology, where their use is technically feasible and makes commercial and environmental sense.

■ Railways: Season Tickets

Rosie Duffield:

[\[41131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what consultation officials in his Department undertook with commuters prior to the introduction of flexible rail season ticketing.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department commissioned quantitative and qualitative research to assess potential interest in flexible season tickets amongst rail users and non-users.

■ Road Traffic Offences

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[36708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government's full review of all driving offences and penalties will be published.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government takes road safety seriously and keeps the law under regular review. However, we do not currently have any plans to conduct a full review of all driving offences and penalties.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Reviews

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[38297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 31379 on Road Traffic Offences, whether his Department plans to commission a review into road traffic offences within the next 12 months.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government takes road safety seriously and keeps the law under regular review. However, we do not currently have any plans to commission a review into road traffic offences within the next 12 months.

■ Roads: Yorkshire and the Humber**Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[41046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of fatalities on roads in Yorkshire.

Rachel Maclean:

Road safety is a priority for the Government and the Department for Transport is working with road safety stakeholders to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. We have some of the safest roads in the world, but the Government is not complacent and there is more work to be done.

As part of our in Safer Roads funding to help reduce the number of deaths and serious injury on England's 50 most dangerous roads, North Yorkshire County Council benefitted from a total of £11.5 million to improve four roads.

The Government is also currently progressing a review into roads policing and traffic enforcement. This review will not only highlight where police forces are doing good work, it will show what more can be done to improve road safety.

■ Rolling Stock: Procurement**Jim McMahon:** [\[36717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 31501, what authority was responsible for regulating train operating companies from 2010 to 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

From 2010 to 2021 The independent regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), formerly named the Office of Rail Regulation until April 2015, was responsible for ensuring that train operating companies complied with health and safety law, competition and consumer law, and the terms of their licences.

■ Ryanair: Coronavirus**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[40756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the treatment by Ryanair in respect of refunds of passengers who have had their flights cancelled as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[40757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Ryanair passengers are provided with refunds in the event of flight cancellations.

Robert Courts:

Government have published advice for claiming a cancelled flight refund in the Passenger COVID-19 Charter which sets out rights, responsibilities and reasonable expectations when booking and travelling during the pandemic.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) reviewed airlines' compliance on refunds last summer and worked collaboratively to improve their performance on consumer obligations. The majority of airlines now pay refunds within 7 days. The CAA regulates the compliance of airlines with aviation consumer law.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is currently investigating whether Ryanair has broken consumer law by failing to offer refunds to customers they could not legally take during lockdown in the UK. The government is not able to comment on this case as it is on-going.

Ryanair are also a member of Aviation ADR, an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) body, who can assist consumers to resolve disputes with the airline, including for cancelled flights.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[38387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on ensuring that the Transport Decarbonisation Plan is (a) fully funded and (b) delivered in full.

Rachel Maclean:

The Secretary of State for Transport engaged with The Chancellor of the Exchequer throughout the development of the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. Discussions on future funding will take place as part of the Spending Review process.

■ Transport: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis:

[\[36642\]](#)

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 immunocompromised or immunosuppressed from covid-19.

Rachel Maclean:

Whilst many of the legal restrictions that the Government has imposed during the pandemic have been lifted at Step 4 of the roadmap, cautious guidance remains. The guidance sets out that the Government expects and recommends that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport.

The Department continues to publish clear guidance to transport operators on how to provide safer workplaces, including measures that can be taken to assess and address the risks of COVID-19. This 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 disabilities and how these fit with other obligations to workers arising from employment rights and equality legislation.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**Helen Hayes:** [\[37538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support small travel businesses which have lost business due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The Government recognises the challenges businesses in the travel industry face as a result of Covid-19. Firms, across all sectors, that are experiencing difficulties have been able to draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor. This includes support through loan guarantees, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

The extension of Government-backed loans and furlough payments announced at the Budget build on the support package available and help ensure the travel industry, a vital part of the UK economy, is ready to bounce back in the wake of the pandemic.

■ Travel: New Zealand**Drew Hendry:** [\[40976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with its counterparts in New Zealand on bilateral recognition of covid-19 vaccination status for travellers.

Robert Courts:

Department for Transport Ministers and officials have met with New Zealand counterparts throughout this year to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and the safe, sustainable resumption of international travel.

We continue to work closely with international partners on reopening travel, including New Zealand, both bilaterally and through a range of international fora, to cautiously balance the reopening of international travel with the management of the public health risks.

■ Tyne and Wear Metro: Transforming Cities Fund**Kate Osborne:** [\[37627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether it remains the Government's policy to support Metro Flow and the wider North East Transforming Cities Fund allocation.

Rachel Maclean:

The Tyne and Wear Metro has been an essential part of the public transport network in the North East for over 40 years. That is why the Government is committed to investing nearly £340m to upgrade the fleet and secure its future for decades to come. We will start to see the first new trains arrive from 2022 and enter passenger service in 2023. I can confirm the government's continued support for Metro flow and the business case is proceeding as expected. An Early Award period was agreed which allowed Nexus to commence design and planning works whilst full funding approvals are being finalised.

My Department remain committed to the Transforming Cities Programme and the benefits it will bring to the North East.

■ Vehicle Number Plates

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[41289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 11 January 2021 to Question 129986 on Vehicle Number Plates, if he will compensate people who purchased new GB vehicle number plates after his announcement in January 2021 and communications with the UN in June 2021 to change the distinguishing sign for display on vehicles for international travel from GB to UK.

Rachel Maclean:

From 1 January 2021, regulations prohibited the display of the European Union symbol on new number plates fitted to vehicles from that date. Since then, the Government has decided that the appropriate distinguishing sign for vehicles registered in the United Kingdom should be the letters UK. This reflects the four nations of our union and is consistent with the sign used on other motoring documentation including driving licences of UK nationals.

From 28 September the UK distinguishing sign should be displayed on vehicles travelling internationally but there has been no change to legislation which permits a range of letters and flags to be incorporated in vehicle number plates. Any vehicle displaying these markings (or the European Union symbol if attached prior to 1 January 2021) may continue to do so but when driving abroad they must display the UK identifier which can be a sticker on the rear of the vehicle. Compensation is not available for those who choose to purchase new number plates.

TREASURY

■ Bank Cards: Fees and Charges

Sarah Olney:

[\[38368\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the continued use of payment card interchange fees in the UK.

John Glen:

The Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) was established in 2015 with statutory objectives to promote competition, innovation and the interests of service users in payment systems, including card payment systems, with powers of supervision and enforcement in support of these objectives.

With regards to interchange fees, the Government has legislated to ensure that these fees remain capped for UK domestic card transactions, where both the card issuer and acquirer are located in the UK, through the Interchange Fee (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. The

levels of UK interchange fee caps are at the same levels as before the end of the Transition Period.

■ Bank Services: Rural Areas

Beth Winter:

[\[38455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to prevent rural bank closures.

John Glen:

The decision to close a branch is a commercial issue for banks and building societies and the Government does not intervene in these decisions.

However, the Government firmly believes that the impact of branch closures should be understood, considered and mitigated where possible so that all customers and businesses continue to have access to banking services. That is why the Government continues to be supportive of the Access to Banking Standard which commits firms to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services.

Alternative options for access include the Post Office, which allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK. Regarding rural access, the Post Office is required by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to ensure that 95% of the total rural population across the UK is within 3 miles of their nearest Post Office outlet.

In September 2020, the Financial Conduct Authority also published guidance setting out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their personal and small business customers' everyday banking and cash access needs, and other relevant branch services and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This will ensure the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

■ Banks: Closures

Fleur Anderson:

[\[38437\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions has he had with representatives of the banking sector on local bank branch closures.

John Glen:

Treasury ministers and officials engage with stakeholders on a variety of issues.

However, the decision to close branches is a commercial issue for banks and building societies and the Government does not intervene in these decisions.

However, the Government firmly believes that the impact of branch closures should be understood, considered and mitigated where possible so that all customers and

businesses continue to have access to banking services. That is why the Government continues to be supportive of the Access to Banking Standard which commits firms to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services. Alternative options for access include the Post Office, which allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches across the UK.

In September 2020, the Financial Conduct Authority also published guidance setting out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their personal and small business customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements. This will ensure the implementation of closure decisions is undertaken in a way that treats customers fairly.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[40939\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the impact assessments produced by banks when announcing a bank branch closure include an assessment of privacy provision at local post offices for confidentiality purposes.

John Glen:

The major high street banks have been signed up to the Access to Banking Standard since May 2017, which commits them to ensure customers are well informed about branch closures, the bank's reasons for closure and options for continued access to banking services.

Under the Access to Banking Standard, banks are expected to publish an Impact Assessment which ensures impacted customers understand what the alternatives are when a branch is closing, how they can be accessed, and what the bank will do to help or assist with all or each of those.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has also published guidance setting out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce the number of their physical branches. The FCA expects firms to carefully consider the impact of a closure on a consumer's needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements.

Consumer needs could comprise physical access requirements, the need for privacy, or security for making transactions. This is particularly important for vulnerable customers, so they are not excluded from using everyday banking services.

■ Banks: Forgery

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[37571\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made representations to the National Crime Agency on forged bank signatures cases in the last 12 months.

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[38412\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many meetings his Department has had with the Bank Signature Forgery Campaign on bank signature forgeries in the last three years.

John Glen:

Treasury ministers and officials engage with a number of organisations and stakeholders on a variety of policy issues.

The Government expects all companies to obey the law and relevant regulations. Anyone with evidence of forgery taking place should report it to their bank in the first instance. If their concerns remain, or they do not have a direct relationship with the lender, they should report it to the relevant authorities.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) requires all authorised firms to have systems and controls in place to mitigate the risk that they be used to commit financial crime. Whilst the police have primary responsibility for investigating fraud the FCA also has powers to take a variety of enforcement action against firms that carry out fraudulent activity.

■ **Beer: Excise Duties**

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[40858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to reduce the Small Brewers Relief 50 per cent duty threshold from 5,000 to 2,100 hectolitres.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[40859\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the number of breweries that would be affected by reducing the Small Brewers Relief 50 per cent discount duty threshold from 5,000 to 2,100 hectolitres.

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[40860\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take to ensure that breweries that produce between 2,101 and 5,000 hectolitres can compete with breweries that produce between (a) 5,001 and 10,000 and (b) 10,001 and 20,000 hectolitres.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury committed to reforming Small Brewers Relief (SBR) and our review of SBR is ongoing. A technical consultation was launched in January this year to help inform the Government's review. The consultation document provides further information on the Government's assessment of changes and we are currently analysing the responses.

The Treasury believes that reducing the starting taper from 5,000 to 2,100 hectolitres (880,000 pints a year to 370,000 pints a year) strikes a balance between guaranteeing the full value of the relief for truly small breweries, while providing those between the 2,100 to 5,000 hectolitres threshold a smoother transition to the main

duty rate. Officials are continuing to work closely with HM Revenue and Customs to deliver a relief that is sustainable and supports brewers of all sizes in the long-term.

The Government has made it clear that changes to SBR will not come into effect until at least January 2022. We will consider the state of the industry as it recovers from Covid-19, and the need to provide sufficient time for brewers to adapt, before making any changes.

■ **Binance Markets**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[37104\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the capability of the FCA of enforcing the ban on Binance Markets Ltd operating in the UK.

John Glen:

On 26 June the FCA issued a consumer warning stating that due to the imposition of requirements, Binance Markets Limited is not currently permitted to undertake any regulated activities without the FCA's prior written consent. The FCA asked Binance.com to display the consumer warning on their website.

The FCA's announcement relates to the UK entity (Binance Markets Limited) and does not apply to the Binance group (Binance.com) based outside the UK, which can continue to interact with UK consumers.

On 25 August, the FCA published its supervisory notice on Binance Markets Limited, alongside a consumer statement, which confirmed that Binance Markets Limited complied with FCA requirements.

The FCA is an independent body and its action regarding Binance Markets Limited is based on powers granted to the FCA under statute, pursuant to the FCA's objectives which include protecting consumers, ensuring market integrity and promoting competition.

■ **Business: Banks**

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[36657\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of business banking regulation during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[36658\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent comparative assessment his Department has made of the (a) performance and (b) effectiveness of (i) UK business banking regulation and (ii) that of other OECD countries.

John Glen:

The government, along with regulators, are committed to ensuring that UK regulation promotes safe and sustainable financial services, while still allowing room for innovation and continually reviews its effectiveness.

It has long been the case in the UK that business lending is generally not subject to regulation – much like many other major economies such as; the US, Canada, and Australia. Ultimately, the government only looks to regulate where there is a clear case for doing so, in order to avoid putting additional costs on lenders that would ultimately lead to higher costs for business customers.

But of course, that does not mean – should things go wrong - that businesses do not have access to free, independent dispute resolution services. In fact, 99% of businesses have recourse to the Financial Ombudsman Service. And with the launch of the Business Banking Resolution Service in February this year, larger eligible SMEs also have somewhere independent to take their complaint.

■ Business: Loans

Kirsty Blackman: [\[36659\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) costs and (b) risks to UK businesses of Government covid-19 loans from banks and other authorised lenders.

John Glen:

The government guarantee loan schemes have provided a lifeline to thousands of businesses, supporting over £79 billion in funding. There are robust rules in place that set out how accredited lenders must behave, including treating borrowers fairly.

The government has always been clear that these are loans to be repaid, and that they may not be the right answer for all businesses. That's why our varied package of support also includes grant funding and tax deferrals.

■ Capital Gains Tax

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[37100\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the amount of capital gains tax (a) collected and (b) that remains outstanding owed from taxpayers under (i) Bitcoin trading and (ii) other financial activity in decentralised finance in each tax year between 2013 and 2020.

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[37101\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much capital gains tax was collected from decentralised finance in each year tax year from 2013 to 2020.

Jesse Norman:

Capital Gains Tax (CGT) is due on gains from cryptoassets held as investments which are taxed in line with CGT tax rates and exemptions rules as for other assets. The Self-Assessment form does not currently separate capital gains made on cryptoassets from other assets. As a result, a reliable estimate for Capital Gains Tax due from cryptoassets would only be available at a disproportionate cost.

Decentralised Finance (also known as DeFi) is a comparatively recent innovation with notable uptake during mid-2020. Amounts arising from decentralised finance are,

generally, liable to either Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax. However, as with cryptoassets, the Self-Assessment form does not separate capital gains and/or income arising from decentralised finance. As a result, a reliable estimate of Capital Gains Tax or Income Tax collected from decentralised finance would only be available at a disproportionate cost.

■ Carbon Emissions

Gill Furniss:

[\[41115\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to spend 1 per cent of GDP each year on meeting climate targets, as recommended by the Climate Change Committee in its report, Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming, published May 2019.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously. In June 2019 the UK became the first major economy to legislate to end our net contribution to climate change by 2050. According to analysis by PwC, the UK has decarbonised its economy faster than any G20 country since 2000.

Last year, the PM set out his via his Ten Point Plan a blueprint to transition to a net zero economy whilst levelling up the country. This announced £12 billion of government investment to create and support up to 250,000 highly skilled green jobs in the UK, and spur over three times as much private sector investment by 2030. Further announcements will be made in the Government's Net Zero Strategy, which will be published ahead of COP 26.

The CCC is an important advisor to the Government, advising on emissions targets and reports to Parliament on progress made. In December 2020, the CCC published an updated estimate of 0.5% of GDP in 2050 for the net cost of transitioning to net zero. The Government will fulfil its statutory requirement of formally responding to the CCC's advice alongside the Net Zero Strategy later in the year.

■ Cash Dispensing

Martyn Day:

[\[38331\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has conducted a cost/benefit analysis of the potential merits of providing access to cash through cashback without purchase.

John Glen:

The Government's view is that cashback without a purchase has the potential to be a valuable facility to cash users, and play an important role in the UK's cash infrastructure. That is why the Government made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses as part of the Financial Services Act 2021. The financial services industry is already seeking to take advantage of these changes to the benefit of cash users; working with retailers to get this service rolled out to local communities.

The Government does not intend to mandate the provision of cashback without a purchase, which could impose associated costs on business.

Colleen Fletcher:

[40927]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to secure long-term access to cash to protect (a) people on low incomes, (b) vulnerable people, (c) disadvantaged communities and (d) businesses who could not cope in a cashless society; and what plans he has to ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable for the long-term.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the importance of cash to the daily lives of millions of people and businesses across the UK, including those who may be on low incomes or vulnerable. That is why at the March 2020 Budget, the Government committed to legislating to protect access to cash and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the longer term.

On the 1 July 2021, the Government published the Access to Cash Consultation, which seeks views on proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash. The Government's proposals will support the continued use of cash in people's daily lives and help enable local businesses to continue accepting cash by protecting deposit facilities. The consultation will be open until 23 September and is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/access-to-cash-consultation>.

As part of the Financial Services Act 2021 the Government made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses. The Government's view is that cashback without a purchase has the potential to be a valuable facility to cash users, and to play an important role in the UK's cash infrastructure.

Martyn Day:

[41035]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of different models for providing people with access to cash.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the importance of cash to the daily lives of millions of people and businesses across the UK, including those who may be on low incomes or vulnerable. That is why at the March 2020 Budget, the Government committed to legislating to protect access to cash and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the longer term.

On 1 July 2021, the Government published the Access to Cash Consultation, seeking views on proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash. The consultation will be open until 23 September and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/access-to-cash-consultation>.

Under the Government's proposals, firms would be able to use a range of solutions – including existing facilities - to provide access for the purpose of meeting geographic requirements, provided that they are judged to be delivering reasonable access by the responsible regulator.

Ruth Jones:

[41256]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Financial Conduct Authority on free access to the UK cash network.

Ruth Jones:

[41257]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the Welsh Government on free access to the UK cash network.

John Glen:

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel>

The Government has been, and continues to be, closely engaged with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in developing its cash access proposals, including through the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group, which provides a forum for the public bodies to formally co-ordinate respective approaches to access to cash. The Group is chaired by HM Treasury and attended by the Bank of England, Payments Systems Regulator (PSR), and the FCA.

The Government has published a consultation on proposals for protecting access to cash for the long term. The Government proposes that the FCA becomes the lead regulator for oversight of the retail cash system with responsibility for monitoring and enforcing cash access requirements. Under the proposals, the FCA would be responsible for ensuring that facilities provide reasonable access in order to qualify for meeting geographic requirements. The FCA would be expected to take into account factors that reflect existing standards of cash access, including the appropriateness of facilities for vulnerable users, such as costs for end users, security, hours of availability and accessibility.

The consultation is open until 23 September 2021 and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/access-to-cash-consultation>

Wendy Chamberlain:

[41292]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to extend trials of Community Access to Cash pilots; and what the timeframe is to extend the rollout of those pilots to further locations.

John Glen:

The Community Access to Cash Pilots are an industry-led initiative taking place in eight locations across the UK. These pilots are trialling and testing sustainable solutions for ensuring that communities can conveniently withdraw and deposit cash, and identifying ways basic banking services can be better delivered. The pilots include Bank Hubs in Cambuslang and Rochford, which industry estimates have helped over 12,000 customers with access to cash and basic banking needs to date. On 18 August, an extension was announced to the Community Access to Cash Pilots, and the Bank Hub pilots will now continue until April 2023, meanwhile industry has announced that cashback without a purchase will be rolled out to thousands of shops over the coming months.

The Government welcomes industry efforts to develop solutions to support continued access to cash into the future. On the 1 July 2021, the Government published the Access to Cash Consultation, seeking views on proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash. It is important that long-term industry initiatives are compatible with the Government's legislative approach.

■ Central Bank Digital Currencies**Catherine West:**[\[41103\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the environmental impact of the proposal for a central bank digital currency.

John Glen:

The UK, like many countries globally, is actively exploring the potential role of central bank digital currencies, which would be an electronic form of central bank money that could be used by households and businesses to make payments. The Bank of England published a discussion paper in March 2020, which considered the possibility of a retail central bank digital currency.

At Fintech Week 2021, the Chancellor announced a new Taskforce led by HM Treasury and the Bank of England to lead the UK's exploration of a central bank digital currency, with separate forums to engage civil society and technology experts throughout. The Government and the Bank of England have not yet made a decision on whether to introduce a central bank digital currency in the UK and will engage widely with stakeholders on the benefits, risks and practicalities of doing so, including in relation to energy usage.

The UK, as part of its G7 presidency, has also underscored the need for any potential CBDC to be resilient and energy efficient, alongside other objectives.

■ Child Care Vouchers

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[41102\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of making unused tax-free childcare vouchers transferable to other families in need of childcare support.

Steve Barclay:

Childcare Vouchers are now closed to new entrants and the Government has no plans to reopen or reform them. They have been replaced with Tax-Free Childcare (TFC). TFC is fairer as it makes access to childcare support available to more working families, including the self-employed and those working for employers who don't offer vouchers. Lone parent households also receive the same support as those with more than one parent, unlike Childcare Vouchers where support is allocated per working parent.

TFC does not operate via vouchers, instead parents set up an online childcare account for their child. For every £8 parents pay into this account, the government pays in £2, up to £2000 per year. Parents can then use the money in their account to pay for approved childcare from a registered provider.

Parents with unspent Childcare Vouchers can seek to get a refund from their employer or voucher provider. Whether the refund is possible depends on the contract between the voucher provider, employee and employer.

■ Child Trust Fund: Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney

Gerald Jones:

[\[41048\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted within Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency providing the latest figures available.

Gerald Jones:

[\[41049\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted within the CF46 post code in the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency providing the latest figures available.

Gerald Jones:

[\[41050\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted within the CF47 post code in the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency providing the latest figures available.

Gerald Jones:

[\[41051\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted within

the CF48 post code in the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency providing the latest figures available.

Gerald Jones: [\[41052\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted within the NP22 post code in the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency providing the latest figures available.

Gerald Jones: [\[41053\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted within the NP24 post code in the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency providing the latest figures available.

Gerald Jones: [\[41054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted within the CF81 post code in the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency providing the latest figures available.

John Glen:

The number of protected Child Trust Funds in specific postcodes can only be made available at a disproportionate cost, and could be disclosive and therefore unfit for public release.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Kirsty Blackman: [\[36660\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the profits made by banks and authorised lenders from providing finance under government covid-19 loan schemes.

John Glen:

Under the rules of our guarantee schemes, accredited lenders are required to pass on to borrowers the benefit of the guarantee in their pricing, reflecting the reduced credit risk provided by the government guarantee.

To provide further protection, under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme the government fixed interest rates at 2.5% for all borrowers. Under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the government imposed a cap on interest rates at 14.99% - although the vast majority of loans saw interest rates well below this cap.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Helen Hayes: [\[37539\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of closing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on the travel industry; and

what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a sector-specific extension to that scheme for industries which will not have fully reopened by September.

Jesse Norman:

In order to aid businesses and employees, at Budget 2021 the Government extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) for a further five months from May until the end of September 2021, at which point the CJRS will close. Furloughed workers in the UK will continue to receive more generous support than those in many other countries, as the CJRS ensures employees receive 80 per cent of their current salary for hours not worked, up to £2,500 per month. As the economy reopened and demand returned, the Government asked employers to make a small additional contribution of 10 per cent towards the cost of paying for unworked hours, from July. As the economy reopens further, this employer contribution has increased to 20 per cent in August and September.

It is right to continue with the existing timetable to reintroduce employer contributions, in order to strike the right balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work as demand returns. At the end of June the number of jobs furloughed was at its lowest since the scheme began, at 1.9 million jobs furloughed. Almost three million jobs have moved off the furlough scheme since March as the economy began to bounce back and businesses reopened.

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the travel sector as a result of COVID-19 and firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital and flexibilities with tax bills. The aerospace sector and its aviation customers are being supported with over £11 billion made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and grants for research and development.

Helen Hayes:

[\[37540\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the potential number of job losses in the travel industry following the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was designed as a temporary, economy-wide measure to support businesses while widespread restrictions were in place. Closing the scheme at the end of September is designed to strike the right balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work as demand returns. This approach has worked; the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Report (MPR) forecasts that the unemployment rate will on average be around 4.7% across Q3 and Q4, a downwards revision from the May MPR which projected unemployment to peak at 5.4% in Q3 and below the OBR Spring forecast (6.5% in the final quarter of 2021).

The Government recognises the particular challenges the travel industry has faced as a result of COVID-19. In England travel agents have recently benefited from Restart Grants worth up to £6,000, and can continue to benefit from the £2 billion of discretionary grant funding that has been made available to local authorities in England through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), while the aviation and aerospace sectors are being supported with over £11 billion that has been made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF) and grants for research and development. In addition, airports continue to benefit from the renewed Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme announced at Budget.

The Global Travel Taskforce (GTT) report sets out a clear framework for the Government's objective of establishing a safe and sustainable return to international travel, which is key to enabling the sector's recovery. It has been created following extensive engagement with the international travel and tourism industries, and changes following the recent checkpoint review of the GTT are a vital step in enabling the recovery of travel operators and those whose jobs rely on the travel industry.

The Government has shown throughout the pandemic that it is prepared to adapt support if the path of the virus changes. It continues to engage closely with sectors across the economy, including the travel industry, to understand their recovery horizons as the vaccine is rolled out and restrictions ease.

■ **Coronavirus: screening**

Julian Sturdy:

[40880]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has taken of the potential economic effect of covid-19 daily contact testing, as an alternative to self-isolation, not being available outside of the critical sectors identified by Government.

John Glen:

The roll-out of the Workplace Daily Contact Testing scheme has been focusing initially on sectors that provide essential services. Workplaces must be approved to take part in this scheme to ensure that they are able to provide on-site testing services safely, effectively and meet reporting requirements. The government rightly prioritised sectors and workplaces where disruption to services as a result of self-isolation would cause serious risk to public welfare.

From 16 August, contacts who are fully vaccinated are no longer required to self-isolate. This means that for fully vaccinated contacts, daily contact testing is no longer necessary as an alternative to self-isolation – instead they are advised to take a PCR test. Given the success of the vaccine roll-out, we expect this to support in easing pressures facing businesses from absence due to self-isolation.

These changes seek to reduce the impact on businesses from self-isolation in a targeted way, while ensuring self-isolation remains an effective tool against the spread of Covid-19.

As set out in the Covid-19 Impact Assessment last November, we cannot forecast with confidence the precise impact of specific changes to restrictions as this will depend on a broad range of factors which are, in many cases, difficult to estimate.

■ Cryptocurrencies

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[37102\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a sterling- based stable coin in the UK.

John Glen:

The Government launched a consultation on its regulatory approach to cryptoassets and stablecoins on 7 January. This set out the view that stablecoins, which seek to stabilise their value, could be used as widespread means of payment and potentially deliver improvements in cross-border transactions. At the same time, depending on scale and nature of use, these developments could pose similar financial stability and consumer risks as traditional regulated payment systems.

The Government's proposed approach would make sure stablecoins meet the same high standards we expect of other payment methods. The Government is considering responses and will outline next steps in due course. Any steps taken in light of this consultation will aim to balance the potential risk to consumers with the ambition to foster competition and innovation in the sector.

Alongside this, the UK, like many countries globally, is actively exploring the potential role of central bank digital currencies: an electronic form of central bank money that could be used by households and businesses to make payments. The Bank of England published a discussion paper in March 2020, which considered the possibility of a retail central bank digital currency.

At Fintech Week 2021, the Chancellor announced a new Taskforce led by HM Treasury and the Bank of England to lead the UK's exploration of a central bank digital currency, with separate forums to engage civil society and technology experts. The Taskforce aims to ensure a strategic approach is adopted between the UK authorities as they explore a central bank digital currency, in line with their statutory objectives, and to promote close coordination between them. The Government and the Bank of England have not yet made a decision on whether to introduce a central bank digital currency in the UK, and will engage widely with stakeholders on the benefits, risks and practicalities of doing so.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[40791\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the potential value of Capital Gains Tax liability owed by UK residents in respect of Bitcoin trading and Decentralised Finance assets for each tax year from 2013-14 to date; what discussions he has had with representatives of the (a) Bank of England, (b) Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) and (c) Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on the potential merits of introducing a sterling-based cryptocurrency; what assessment he has taken of the potential effect of Bitcoin trading and Decentralised Finance on Money Supply

measurements (i) M1, (ii) M2 and (iii) M3 and how that effect is measured; what assessment he has made for the implications of his Department's policies on how the (A) PRA and (B) FCA will manage and control the Decentralised Finance transfer mechanisms in respect of the potential flow of assets and cash leaving the UK instantly; whether he plans to review the FCA's regulatory (I) mechanisms and (II) performance in enforcing the banning of sales of cryptoasset derivatives to retail consumers; whether the FCA has introduced an authorisation and registration scheme for cryptoasset derivatives; what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the time taken to register cryptoasset derivatives with the FCA; what steps he is taking to ensure tax deriving from Bitcoin trading and Decentralised Finance is collected effectively; whether his Department has conducted an assessment of the potential merits of the FCA restricting UK banks from participating in the Decentralised Finance; what comparative assessment he has made of US and European financial firms' participation in Decentralised Finance compared with that of UK firms; and for what reasons Euro clearing of financial instruments is moving out of the City of London.

John Glen:

No estimate has been made on the potential value of capital gains tax (CGT) that are due on gains from cryptoassets held as investments or any tax liabilities arising from decentralised finance (also known as DeFi). The self-assessment form does not currently separate capital gains made on cryptoassets from other assets. As a result, a reliable estimate for CGT due from cryptoassets would only be available at a disproportionate cost.

The recently released cryptoassets manual, one the most detailed publications from any tax administration, explains the tax consequences of different types of transactions involving cryptoassets for both business accepting them as well as individuals using them. HMRC has taken action, including using powers provided by Parliament to gather data, to identify and investigate those that have failed to declare their tax liabilities.

Regarding the possible merits of a sterling-based stablecoin, I refer the Honourable Gentleman to the answer given to PQ UIN 37102.

On the issue of money supply, Bitcoin trading or decentralised finance will need to become a significant source of lending to the real economy in the UK before they have a notable impact on money supply measurements.

Regarding the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority's (PRA) role with respect to decentralised finance, I refer the Honourable Gentleman to the answer given to PQ UIN 37103.

With regards to the FCA's cryptoasset derivatives ban for retail consumers, the FCA stated that it found these products to be ill-suited for retail consumers due to potential harms, including the high risk of suffering losses. The FCA has noted that it will keep this prohibition under review. The FCA is an independent body and its decision to take the ban forward after consultation is based on powers granted to the FCA under

statute, pursuant to the FCA's objectives which include protecting consumers, enhancing market integrity and promoting competition.

Regarding the possible merits of the FCA restricting UK banks' access to decentralised finance, the FCA is an independent regulator, and considers the risks of banks engaging in decentralised finance as one of the many risks it considers. Most decentralised finance activities are not regulated in the UK. Accordingly, the Government does not have accurate information on the number of entities operating in the UK in comparison to the EU and the US.

On the issue of clearing, the EU has granted a temporary equivalence decision to UK Central Counterparties (CCPs) which lasts until June 2022.

Therefore, without any further action by EU authorities, certain UK CCPs may need to begin offboarding EU clearing members by the end of March 2022 in order to be ready for equivalence expiring in June 2022.

However, letting equivalence expire in June next year would raise the cost of clearing for firms, particularly EU ones, and present significant financial stability risks. The Government therefore hopes that equivalence would not be allowed to expire in June 2022. As it stands, the Government has seen limited evidence of activity moving.

■ Disability: Children

Marsha De Cordova:

[41234]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of providing dedicated covid-19 recovery funding for families with disabled children.

Steve Barclay:

The Government's Covid-19 support package during the pandemic, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, sits alongside a substantial set of existing welfare support for families with disabled children. The Government will spend over £55 billion in 2021-22 on benefits to support disabled people and people with health conditions.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) remains our primary means of supporting families with disabled children to help with the extra cost of long-term ill-health or disability. DLA is tax-free, non-contributory and non-means tested. It is available to those under the age of 16 who, due to a disability or health condition, have mobility issues and/or have needs which are substantially in excess of a child the same age without the disability or health condition. DLA is a contribution towards the extra costs associated with being disabled.

DLA can passport families to a range of additional support such as: child disability premiums paid within income related benefits, Carer's Allowance, the Motability vehicle scheme, and the Blue Badge scheme. DLA also exempts the eligible household from the Benefit Cap.

The Government has acted swiftly to provide support during the pandemic, including for parents on lower incomes with disabled children through its package of welfare measures worth £7.4 billion in 2020-21 and £4.3 billion in 2021-22. These changes include relinking Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile in March 2020 at a cost of almost £1 billion – over 1.5 million households gained just over £600 per year on average in additional support, and this is being maintained at the same cash level this financial year to ensure that claimants continue to benefit from this increase.

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[41236\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of long-term funding for disabled children's health and care services.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury Ministers and officials regularly meet with other government departments and a range of stakeholders, which includes discussions around support for disabled children.

The government has to date provided the NHS with over £27bn to support its response to and recovery from Coronavirus, which includes the provision of healthcare services to disabled children. This is part of the overall £87bn support for health services since the start of the pandemic.

The government has also given over £6 billion in un-ringfenced funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including children's services. At last year's Spending Review, we provided councils with access to over £1bn of spending for social care through £300m of new social care grant and the ability to introduce a 3% adult social care precept. This funding was additional to the £1 billion social care grant announced in 2019 which was maintained in line with the government's manifesto.

We will continue to work with other government departments, including the Department for Health and Social Care and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, to ensure the upcoming Spending Review reflects the requirements of disabled children's health and care services in the longer term.

■ Finance

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[37103\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how the FCA and PRA plan to (a) manage and (b) control the new value transfer mechanisms from decentralised finance that will potentially see asset and cash ownership of UK PLC leave the UK.

John Glen:

This is a matter for the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), which are operationally independent from Government. The question has been passed on to the FCA and PRA. The FCA and PRA will reply

directly to the honourable Member by letter. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Financial Institutions

Daniel Zeichner:

[37485]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to help improve the ability of high street bank customers to (a) challenge and (b) scrutinise past decisions made by financial institutions which have caused hardship and distress, including the repossession of a property.

John Glen:

In most circumstances, the provision of a bank's services is a commercial decision for the bank and the Government does not intervene in these decisions. The terms and conditions of the contract between the two parties govern that contract, and although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services it does not have investigative or prosecuting powers of its own.

Disputes arising between a bank and its customers is usually best resolved by the parties involved. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require the banks to properly investigate all complaints and, through ongoing supervision, it continues to monitor the banks' complaint handling processes. If customers are unable to resolve the issue with their bank, they will be eligible for further review by the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). The FOS provides a free, independent dispute resolution service for bank customers.

The Government has also taken action aimed at helping people avoid repossession, including Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loans to homeowners on a low income and protection in the courts through the Pre-Action Protocol which makes it clear that repossession must always be the last resort for lenders. As lenders should only take steps to enforce a repossession order as a last resort, it is vital that homeowners who are having trouble paying their mortgage, or are worried about meeting payments in future, make early contact with their lender.

Homeowners who are worried about their mortgage payments may also want to get in touch with Money Helper which has been set up by Government to support consumers with comprehensive, consistent, guidance for every stage of their financial lives. It offers free and impartial information on money matters, available to all online at: www.moneyhelper.org.uk, or by calling the Money Helper helpline on 0800 138 7777.

■ Financial Services: EU Action

Gareth Thomas:

[38132]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, following the conclusion of technical negotiations for a UK and EU Memorandum of Understanding on financial services in March 2021, what timescale has been agreed for greater regulatory cooperation on financial services; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

Technical discussions on the text of the Memorandum of Understanding on financial services regulatory cooperation between the UK and EU have concluded.

The Memorandum of Understanding, once signed, will establish the Joint UK-EU Financial Regulatory Forum, which will serve as a platform to facilitate dialogue on financial services issues.

This is an important step toward normalising the future relationship on financial services between the UK and EU.

Formal steps need to be undertaken on the EU side before the MoU can be signed. For our part, we are ready to sign when the Commission is.

In the meantime, we are pressing onward with advancing our vision for our financial services sector.

At Mansion House, the Chancellor set out our vision for an open, green, and technologically advanced financial services sector that is globally competitive and acts in the interests of communities and citizens, creating jobs, supporting businesses, and powering growth across all of the UK.

The government is clear that the UK has a unique opportunity to assess whether it wants to do things differently, to ensure the financial services sector has the right rules and regulations for UK markets, and to build a system that continues to be one the rest of the world looks towards.

Our new chapter for financial services is already underway. The Chancellor set out that over the coming years, the government will implement a sweeping set of reforms to sharpen the UK's competitive advantage in financial services; making sure they continue to deliver for communities and citizens across the UK; and working internationally to set higher standards around the world.

■ Financial Services: Misconduct**Kirsty Blackman:**[\[36661\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to strengthen the system of accountability in the financial sector to ensure that banks are accountable for financial misconduct in (a) the UK and (b) overseas.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the interests of businesses and individuals who use financial services are protected.

In response to the banking crisis and significant conduct failings, Parliament passed legislation leading to the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority applying the Senior Managers and Certification Regime. This regime aims to reduce harm to consumers and govern market integrity by making individuals more accountable for their conduct and competence.

Additionally, the FCA has been given a strong mandate to stop inappropriate behaviour in financial services, and the Government is confident they have the appropriate tools to protect consumers, including powers to ban or restrict products; powers of disclosure; power to take formal action against misleading financial promotions; and a power to accept super-complaints from consumer bodies about competition and consumer problems.

The Chief Executive of the FCA has set out his plans to transform the FCA into a more assertive regulator; testing the limits of its powers and working with other agencies to ensure they bring their own powers to bear, to ensure consumer protection and market integrity.

■ **First Time Buyers: Greater London**

Marsha De Cordova:

[41218]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support first-time buyers in Central London who cannot receive help through the Help to Buy ISA scheme due to high average house prices regularly exceeding £450,000.

John Glen:

The Help to Buy: ISA scheme aims to help those that are struggling to save enough to get onto the housing ladder. The property price cap of £250,000 for those properties outside London or £450,000 within London, therefore allows the Government to target support at the people the scheme is intended to help. First-time buyers tend to buy smaller, therefore cheaper; first properties and the Government's aim is to provide the opportunity for first-time buyers to enter the market. Since the scheme launched in 2015, 410,075 property completions have been supported through the scheme with a mean property value of £175,010 compared to an average first-time buyer house price of £214,452.

The Government has introduced a number of measures to support homeownership, including the Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme, mortgage guarantee scheme, Shared Ownership schemes, and the First Home scheme.

Each scheme has its own eligibility criteria and more information on each scheme can be found on the Own Your Home (HM Government) website:

<https://www.ownyourhome.gov.uk/>

■ **Foreign Investment in UK: Serious Fraud Office**

Kevin Hollinrake:

[37524]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on (a) City of London's reputation and (b) inward investment of recent investigations undertaken by the Serious Fraud Office.

John Glen:

The Serious Fraud Office continues to deliver on its mission to fight serious financial crime, deliver justice for victims, and protect the UK's reputation as a safe place to do business.

Successes in 2021-22 so far include: securing a conviction in the GPT Special Project Management case; and entering into a £103m Deferred Prosecution Agreement with Amec Foster Wheeler Energy Limited.

The UK remains a leading destination for foreign investment; second in the world for inward Foreign Direct Investment stocks with \$2.2 trillion, behind the USA and the Netherlands in 2020.

■ Government Assistance: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[37541]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of sector-specific grants for (a) the travel industry and (b) and other industries which have not yet fully reopened during of the covid-19 pandemic.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the challenging circumstances facing the travel industry and other sectors across the economy as a result of Covid-19. Firms experiencing difficulties can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital and flexibilities with tax bills.

The aviation and aerospace sectors are being supported with over £11 billion made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility and grants for research and development. In addition, the renewed Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme will provide support for eligible businesses with their fixed costs up to the equivalent of their business rates liabilities for the first half of the 2021-22 financial year, subject to certain conditions and a cap per claimant of £4m.

The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is a discretionary fund that Local Authorities (LAs) will distribute based on local economic need. However, updated guidance on the ARG ensures it is clear that we encourage LAs to focus their support on those sectors that remain severely impacted by restrictions, including the travel industry. In addition, we extended the deadline for LAs to have spent their existing ARG allocation to 31st July, in order to be eligible for the top-up that was announced at Budget. This ensured more LAs had time to access their top-up, and reassess spending decisions for their remaining allocation, so that they are able to distribute it amongst businesses who remain severely impacted.

Businesses who have received a Restart Grant are also able to apply for grant support through the ARG. Any business who has received a grant through the ARG can also apply for another one. In distributing this support to businesses it is up to each individual LA to use their discretion based on local economic need.

The Government continues to engage closely with sectors across the economy, including the travel industry, to understand their recovery horizons, as the vaccine is rolled out. We will keep under review all the economic support schemes, including grant support, as the public health response evolves.

■ Insurance: Business

Gareth Thomas:

[\[40579\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to Answer of 7 July to Question 25717 on Insurance: Business and the response of 3 August from the Prudential Regulation Authority, which of the 225 listed transfers between 30 January 2008 and 1 January 2020 were transferred from a mutual into the ownership of a private company.

John Glen:

The Treasury does not hold the requested information and the question has been passed to the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), the independent financial services regulator. The PRA will reply directly to the Honourable Member by letter and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ International Military Services

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[41087\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether IMS Ltd met its reporting requirements as an arms length body to his Department in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2019-20.

Kemi Badenoch:

IMS Ltd is not an arm's-length body of HM Treasury, nor was it in the 2020-21 or 2019-20 Financial Years.

■ Multinational Companies: Taxation

Catherine West:

[\[38360\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the global tax deal agreed at the recent G20 will be equitable for the Global South.

Catherine West:

[\[38361\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the revenues that will be apportioned to each G20 country as a result of the global tax deal agreed on 10 July 2021 in Venice.

Catherine West:

[\[38362\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department will take in its negotiations to ensure that global revenues from both Pillar One and Pillar Two of the global tax deal agreed at the G20 will be apportioned to countries on the basis of the location of company employees, physical assets and sales to customers.

Jesse Norman:

It has been a longstanding UK priority to achieve a two-pillar solution to the challenges that digitisation creates for the international tax rules.

Pillar One will update profit allocation rules to ensure that the profits of large multinationals are taxed where their customers are located. Pillar Two will introduce a global minimum rate of corporation tax.

Securing and implementing a final agreement on this will help stabilise the international tax framework and ensure multinational businesses pay their fair share, with the right companies paying the right amount of tax in the right place.

The Government is delighted at the recent progress made on this important issue, with G7 agreement forming the basis for an historic agreement among over 130 members of the OECD Inclusive Framework.

The final details of an agreement are still subject to international negotiation and it would not be appropriate for the Government to provide detailed impact assessments.

However, by their nature, the proposals will benefit low income countries by expanding their taxing rights and reducing the incentive to shift profits away from such jurisdictions.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: Appeals**

Ed Davey:

[\[36514\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of business which applied made business rate appeals under material changes of circumstances due to the covid-19 outbreak in 2020-21.

Ed Davey:

[\[36515\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the potential value of unresolved business rate appeals that have been made on the grounds of material changes of circumstance due to the covid-19 outbreak for 2020-21.

Jesse Norman:

The Government announced on 25 March that it intended to legislate so that market-wide economic changes to property values should be considered at general rates revaluations, and therefore would rule out COVID-19 related material change of circumstance (MCC) claims that could lead to appeals.

At that point, around 170,000 business rates assessments had claims made for MCCs (in England). Some businesses made multiple claims on the same property and this figure excludes those. No claims have progressed to formal appeal as yet (the claims are at the initial Check or Challenge stage of the process).

No cases have yet been settled by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and the value of any rating assessment reductions would depend on the facts of each individual property, and the value of any business rates bill reduction on any reliefs to which the ratepayer may be entitled.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: Tax Allowances**

Ed Davey:

[\[36516\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the £1.5 billion business rate relief fund, announced on the 25th March 2021, will be distributed to businesses.

Ed Davey:

[\[37351\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance he plans to make to billing authorities on which businesses are eligible for support from the £1.5 billion business rate relief fund as announced on 25 March 2021.

Jesse Norman:

Funding for businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that have not otherwise been eligible for existing reliefs will be available once the legislation relating to material change in circumstance provisions has passed and Local Authorities (LAs) have established their own local relief schemes. The Government will support LAs to do this as quickly as possible, including through new burdens funding.

Formal guidance will follow in due course, setting out the specific considerations that Local Authorities (LAs) should have regard for when providing relief. Relief will be for LAs to award on a discretionary basis.

■ Off-payroll Working

Drew Hendry:

[\[40977\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the impact on contractors' ability to claim reasonable expenses of being classed as employees of umbrella personal service companies; and what the Government guidance is on the use of umbrella companies by public sector bodies.

Drew Hendry:

[\[40978\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of insolvency rules on contractors who use personal service companies and who remain eligible for costs, such as pension payments, but have no income in the event that contractors fee payers are classed as the contractors employer under IR35 rules.

Jesse Norman:

The Government introduced changes in April 2016 to bring people who work through employment intermediaries, including umbrella companies, into line with most workers who cannot claim tax relief for their ordinary commuting costs. Deemed employees can therefore claim tax relief on expenses, including overnight stays and business travel away from their usual place of work, in the same way as those employed directly.

Deemed employees can also claim tax relief on expenses, including equipment, tools and professional fees in the same way as those employed directly. This means that they may be able to claim tax relief where expenses are needed to allow them to do their job and it is used exclusively for work purposes.

HMRC have published advice on applying supply chain due diligence principles to assure labour supply chains including where an umbrella company is used by public sector bodies, which can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-labour-providers/advice-on-applying-supply-chain-due-diligence-principles-to-assure-your-labour-supply-chains>.

Under the off-payroll working rules, the fee-payer will become the deemed employer of the individual for tax and NICs purposes. However, the fee in relation to the engagement will still be paid to and received by the personal service company (PSC), albeit net of income tax and employee National Insurance contributions. Thus an individual's PSC should still be able to use this income to meet such costs as pension payments.

■ Offshore Industry: Taxation

Stephen Timms:

[40578]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to remove incentives for oil and gas extraction from the tax system; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

Our domestic oil and gas industry produces the equivalent of around half of the UK's primary energy needs and will continue to play an important role as we transition to a net zero economy. The industry has paid around £375bn in production taxes to date and supports around 147,000 jobs directly and in their supply chains, employing people in locations right across the country and supporting many more local jobs in sectors that rely on a vibrant oil and gas industry.

The Government places additional taxes on the extraction of oil and gas to ensure a fair return for the nation while also supporting the industry to address genuine costs through targeted tax reliefs, such as those to encourage the safe removal of infrastructure at the end of a field's life.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any changes are made in the round at fiscal events.

■ Rainforests: Brazil

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[40623]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of UK investor concerns on conditions for investing in or providing financial services to Brazil as a result of the increasing deforestation in the Amazon.

John Glen:

The Government acknowledges reports of continued high rates of deforestation in the Amazon and understands that this may create concerns for UK investors. Many UK financial services firms are increasingly cognizant of the environmental impact of their activities, and the demand for investment products that avoid environmentally damaging activities such as deforestation is growing. The Government is committed to ensuring that UK investors have the tools, frameworks, and information necessary to make informed decisions about the sustainability of their investments.

In his July 2021 Mansion House speech, the Chancellor announced plans to introduce 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. This builds on and streamlines existing sustainability reporting requirements such as our commitment to fully mandatory economy-wide TCFD reporting, where the UK is already a world-leader. It will also include disclosures made under the UK green taxonomy, which will provide firms and investors a common definition for environmentally sustainable economic activities.

Furthermore, the Government will also work with the Financial Conduct Authority to create a new sustainable investment label so that consumers can clearly compare the environmental impacts of their investments for the first time.

More broadly, the UK is working to promote increased sustainability through the global financial system ahead of COP26 and beyond. For instance, the Government is encouraging global financial firms, including in Brazil, to commit to net zero through membership of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ).

Lastly, the UK continues to encourage other governments to raise capital specifically to finance projects that tackle climate change and other environmental challenges. For instance, Mexico and Chile have issued several green and sustainable on the London Stock Exchange in recent years.

■ **Small Businesses: Bank Services**

Martyn Day:

[\[37529\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of UK banks on the adequacy of the process for new small businesses to open business bank accounts.

John Glen:

Decisions about what products are offered to individual businesses remain commercial decisions for banks and building societies. It would be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in the processes that accompany such commercial decisions. However, the Government has always been clear - throughout the pandemic - that lenders should remain open to new customers where it is operationally feasible for them to do so.

As you may be aware, the largest UK banks [NatWest, Lloyds, Santander, Barclays, HSBC and Metro bank] wrote to the Treasury Select Committee (TSC) on 24th May 2021 to publicly reaffirm their commitment to making bank account services available to small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Martyn Day:

[\[37530\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support small business owners, who have established their business during the covid-19 outbreak, to open business bank accounts.

Martyn Day: [37531]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of procedures for new small businesses attempting to open a business bank account including the requirement to submit documentation not readily available, such as formal business contracts.

Martyn Day: [37532]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of UK banks on the potential merits of enabling new small business owners to submit personal documentation in lieu of formal business contracts or proof of income.

John Glen:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been unprecedented demand for banking services, this accompanied with working restrictions due to social distancing has meant banks have faced significant capacity pressures which has limited their ability to meet demand for their services. Banks are doing all they can to meet this demand in these difficult circumstances, and the Government has always been clear that lenders should open to new customers where it is operationally possible for them to do so.

I sympathise with businesses opening their businesses during the pandemic, but decisions about which documentation is required from individual businesses remain commercial decisions for banks and building societies. It would be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in these decisions.

Standard of Living**Ruth Jones:** [41253]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of potential changes in living standards in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) the UK.

Steve Barclay:

The Government continues to monitor and publish trends in households' living standards across the UK. The Household Below Average Income (HBAI) publication looks at household incomes in the UK. The latest available figures cover up to the financial year 2019/20 and so do not cover the time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The latest HBAI figures can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>. The tables below summarise the trends in median household income for the UK and for Wales. Data is not available at the constituency or local authority level.

	WEEKLY MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD DEPOSABLE INCOME (BEFORE HOUSING COSTS)	
	Real value in latest year (2019/20)	Percentage change since previous year
UK	£547	+4.5%
Wales (3-year average)	£492	+1.7%

	WEEKLY MEDIAN HOUSE DISPOSABLE INCOME (AFTER HOUSING COSTS)	
	Real value in latest year (2019/20)	Percentage change since previous year
UK	£476	+4.5%
Wales (3-year average)	£440	+1.8%

In addition, since the onset of the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and living standards across the UK, including in the Newport West constituency and Wales. This includes unprecedented measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

For the latest HMRC statistics on the use of the CJRS, see the table below (from published HMRC figures found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-29-july-2021/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-29-july-2021>):

	CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF EMPLOYMENTS FURLOUGHED SINCE MARCH 2020 (UP TO 14 JULY 2021)
Newport West	13,300
Wales	472,800
UK	11,611,900

For the latest figures on the use of the SEISS, see the table below (from published HMRC figures found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-july-2021>)

	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE SEISS CLAIMS ACROSS ALL FOUR GRANTS (UP TO 6 JUNE 2021)
Newport West	2,700
Wales	121,000
UK	2,879,000

Lastly, to illustrate the challenges faced by households in the UK during COVID-19, and how government interventions have supported households of different income levels, HM Treasury published distributional analysis alongside the Budget 2021 showing estimates of the change in household net incomes between February and November 2020. This can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966207/DA_Document_Budget_2021.pdf

■ **Sunscreens: VAT**

Mr Richard Holden: [38465]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue has been raised via VAT on sunscreen in each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold information on the amount of VAT collected from sunscreen.

Businesses are not required to provide information at this level of detail in their tax returns as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

■ **Taxation: Import Duties**

Chi Onwurah: [38259]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the equity of his Department's policies on how a disbursement fee can be applied by couriers to recipients of packages in the context of international deliveries incurring taxes and import duties.

Jesse Norman:

How international parcel operators and couriers deal with any costs associated with arranging customs clearance is entirely a commercial decision. Any charge that operators and couriers make for their services is separate from any import duties payable to HMRC.

■ Universal Credit

Ruth Jones:

[\[41254\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the effect on the Exchequer of ending the £20 uplift to universal credit.

Ruth Jones:

[\[41255\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the effect on the people of Newport West constituency of ending the £20 uplift to universal credit.

Steve Barclay:

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of ministerial discussions are not normally disclosed.

The Government has always been clear that the £20 per week increase to Universal Credit was a temporary measure to support households whose incomes and earnings were affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Extending the uplift permanently would come at a very significant annual cost, equivalent in 2022-23 to adding 1p on the basic rate of income tax, in addition to a 3p increase in fuel duty.

The Government is committed to helping low-income families with the cost of living, including providing £670 million in 2021/22 for local authorities to support households struggling with their council tax bills, £140 million in 2021/22 for Discretionary Housing Payments, expanding the Holiday Activities and Food programme to all children in England, increasing Healthy Start vouchers, and establishing a 60-day breathing space period for those in problem debt.

Within the welfare system, the Government is maintaining the increase to Local Housing Allowance rates for private renters on Universal Credit and Housing Benefit in cash terms in 2021-22. This increase was worth over an extra £600 on average in 2020-21 for more than 1.5 million households.

The Government is also maintaining its focus on helping people back into work. As part of the comprehensive Plan for Jobs, the Government announced the new three year Restart programme, which will provide intensive and tailored support to over one million unemployed Universal Credit claimants across England and Wales, and the £2 billion Kickstart scheme, which will create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people at risk of long-term unemployment. To date, over 50,000 Kickstart jobs have been started by young people across a range of different sectors, including construction, health and social care, manufacturing, retail, and transport.

■ Welfare Tax Credits

Gerald Jones:

[\[41055\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people who were not receiving tax credits on 2 March 2021 but who have subsequently

had their claims backdated to include that date, for what reasons those payments were backdated; and how many of those backdated claimants qualified for the £500 tax credit payments.

Jesse Norman:

While the COVID-19 support scheme for working households receiving tax credits uses tax credits as a proxy for eligibility it is separate and legally distinct from tax credits. Eligibility for the one-off payment is determined solely by a claimant's tax credits award as it appeared on 2 March 2021.

The specific information requested is not currently available due to the nature of tax credits. Tax credits awards are provisional until the annual finalisation and renewals process takes place. The 2020-21 renewals process needs to be completed and the data from that exercise analysed before an estimate could be made. This is expected some time in the first half of 2022.

WALES

■ UN Convention On Biological Diversity

Ruth Jones:

[\[38417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) the Welsh Government on the Government's preparation for the COP 15 summit.

Simon Hart:

The UK is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at COP 15.

As part of this framework, the UK will be supporting ambitious global targets to bend the curve of biodiversity loss by 2030, including targets to ensure more ocean and land is protected, ecosystems are restored, species population sizes are recovering and, that by 2050 extinctions are halted. This ambitious set of targets must be supported by increased finance for nature and strengthened reporting and review mechanisms to facilitate the achievement of them.

There is close working between the UK Government and the devolved administrations on our ambitious objectives for COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure we deliver the transformational change required.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carers Allowance

Ed Davey:

[\[36512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people currently receive carers allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

As of November 2020, there were 937,000 people claiming Carer's Allowance.

Ed Davey:**[36513]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people currently eligible to claim carers allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

Information on the number of people that (a) have an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance and (b) receiving a payment for Carer's Allowance by Parliamentary constituency is published and available at:

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

Guidance for users is available at:

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

■ Carer's Allowance: Eligibility**Ian Mearns:****[40857]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to extend eligibility for carer's allowance to enable people who claim personal independence payments to appoint registered providers to provide care services using that allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

The principal purpose of Carer's Allowance is to provide a measure of financial support and recognition for people who give up the opportunity of full-time work in order to provide regular care for a severely disabled person. It is not now, nor was it ever intended to be, a carer's wage nor a payment for the services of caring.

Entitlement to Carer's Allowance depends on certain conditions relating to the circumstances of both the disabled person and the carer being satisfied. The carer must provide a minimum of 35 hours care a week for the disabled person who must be receiving a qualifying disability benefit, such as the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment. The carer must be aged 16 or over; should not be in full-time education; or receiving earnings above £128 a week, net after the deduction of certain allowances.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Correspondence**Beth Winter:****[38453]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the average response time to correspondence received by the Child Maintenance Service.

Guy Opperman:

The Department does not capture the information requested and to provide the information would incur disproportionate costs.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Domestic Abuse

Stephen Timms: [\[40577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the recommendations of the review undertaken in 2019 and the findings of the coroner's inquest in April 2021 into the murder in May 2017 of Emma Day by her ex-partner, what plans she has to review the management by the Child Maintenance Service of cases in which the parent with care is threatened by an ex-partner with violence; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The Child Maintenance Service takes the safety of all its customers extremely seriously. It has significantly strengthened its processes to ensure customers experiencing domestic abuse are supported and can set up a child maintenance arrangement safely.

The Department has commissioned an independent review of ways in which the Child Maintenance Service supports victims of domestic abuse and the details of this review will be outlined in due course.

■ Children: Maintenance

Beth Winter: [\[38452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Child Maintenance Service in considering the income of each parent when calculating the child maintenance payments.

Guy Opperman:

It is important that all parents, meet their responsibility for supporting their children.

The child maintenance calculation is reviewed annually to make sure it is in line with the paying parent's circumstances.

Beth Winter: [\[38454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support parents to secure adequate contact arrangements through the Child Maintenance Service.

Guy Opperman:

Issues regarding contact arrangements are handled by the family courts. The Child Maintenance Service responsibilities are limited to maintenance payments.

Where possible the Child Maintenance Service supports separated parents to work together in the interests of their children and set up their own family based child maintenance arrangements. Child Maintenance Options provides free and impartial information to help with these decisions

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Directors

Fleur Anderson: [37608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which of her Department's non executive directors were appointed through open competition.

Guy Opperman:

All Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Non-Executive Board Members were recruited according to the guidance set out in the Corporate governance code for central government departments.

DWP announces the appointments (including reappointment dates) of Non-Executive Board Members, as well as their experience, in the Annual Report and Accounts. Our current Non-Executives are covered in the following Annual Report and Accounts.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-to-2021//>

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Email

Fleur Anderson: [36795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she or any of the Ministers in her Department use personal email addresses to conduct Government business.

Guy Opperman:

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 managing the security risks inherent in electronic communications.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff

Ruth Jones: [37584]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Black and ethnic minority staff employed in his Department.

Ruth Jones: [37590]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Black and ethnic minority staff hold management positions in her Department.

Guy Opperman:

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) overall and managerial Ethnicity Data as at 30 June 2021:

ETHNICITY DECLARATION	DWP		MANAGERS	
Ethnic Minority	14,168	15.3%	1,015	7.1%
White	68,179	73.6%	12,170	84.7%
Prefer not to say	4,327	4.7%	567	3.9%
unknown	6,016	6.5%	616	4.3%
Total DWP staff	92,690		14,368	

To further support ethnic minority career progression, we continue to actively promote Civil Service development opportunities, which include:

- Early and Summer Diversity Programme
- Beyond Boundaries Development Programme
- Race to the Top Shadowing Programme
- Future and Senior Leaders Scheme
- Minority Ethnic Talent Association programme

We are also building our internal pipeline through internal development schemes such as the Aspire Programme, which specifically targets development of Black and Ethnic minority staff.

We have built a number of improvements into our recruitment and selection including:

- Developed and introduced a new strengths based approach to our recruitment
- Implemented permanent recruitment as external applications by default
- Implemented anonymised recruitment applications to minimise bias
- Improved marketing of DWP as a diverse and inclusive employer of choice
- Increasing our pool of ethnic minority recruitment panellists
- All senior recruitment panels include an ethnic minority panellist and we have piloted panels of all grades featuring an ethnic minority panellist

These actions are supporting DWP commitment to the Civil Service ambition of becoming the UK's most inclusive employer, by improving representation of ethnic minority colleagues across all levels.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Ventilation

Jonathan Reynolds:

[36627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 July 2021 to Question 29793 on Department for Work and Pensions: Coronavirus, what budget her Department has allocated to enforcement activities in respect of ventilation in

(a) Jobcentre Plus premises and (b) other buildings owned and managed by her Department in each of the last ten years; what steps her Department has taken to enforce activities in respect of ventilation in (i) Jobcentre Plus premises and (ii) other buildings owned and managed by her Department in each of the last ten years; and when she last held a meeting to discuss ventilation with (A) staff of her Department's central office, (B) representatives of managers of Jobcentre Plus premises and (C) recognised trade unions representing Jobcentre Plus staff.

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

YEAR	NUMBER OF ENFORCEMENT NOTICES CITING CONTRAVENTIONS OF REGULATION 6 OF THE WORKPLACE (HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE) REGULATIONS 1992 (AS AMENDED)
2017	0
2018	0
2019	3
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.

Within the Department, we have issued updated guidance on ventilation to our on-site Senior Responsible Officers and Health & Safety Business Partner team and estates field teams support local managers to ensure that measures identified in the site-level risk assessment are in place and will meet them as appropriate to ensure any issues identified can be resolved swiftly. No ventilation issues have been raised at the Department's head office. The Department holds fortnightly meetings with Trade Union representatives. These cover a range of Coronavirus related topics, including ventilation.

■ Employment Schemes: Young People

Fleur Anderson:

[38444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support young people with SEND into employment.

Justin Tomlinson:

All unemployed young people, including those with SEND, have access to work-focused coaching and referral to additional support tailored to address specific needs. There are a range of DWP initiatives that support disabled people to stay in and enter work. These include the Work and Health Programme, the Intensive Personalised Employment Support programme, Access to Work, Supported Internships, Disability Confident and support in partnership with the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services.

As part of the Government's Plan for Jobs, the Kickstart programme is aimed specifically at young people. Disabled people or people with long-term health conditions can access the Kickstart programme, supported through Access to Work if required.

We have also increased the number of Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) to 1000 nationally. DEAs work alongside Work Coaches, including Youth Employability Coaches, specialising in finding the right support to help all customers that have a disability or health condition.

■ **Employment: Older Workers**

John Spellar:

[40592]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to promote the employment of older workers.

Mims Davies:

The government is committed to supporting older workers to remain in and return to work, where they make an important contribution to the economy as well as achieving improved personal health, wellbeing and financial outcomes.

The Government's Business Champion for Older Workers spearheads the Government's work to support and encourage employers in England to retain, hire and re-train older workers by highlighting the benefits of multigenerational workforces and helping employers overcome any practical barriers or concerns.

We also work closely with employer organisations representing Small and Medium Enterprises including Local Enterprise Partnerships and Employers for Carers, to highlight the benefits of employing older workers.

To support those who become unemployed, our 50 Plus Champions (formally Older Claimant Champions) network provides dedicated support to Work Coaches across all 37 Jobcentre Plus districts to raise the profile of over 50s claimants and share best practice, encouraging the full use of suitable Plan for Jobs initiatives.

To help people plan for employment in later life, we launched a [Mid-life MOT](#) in 2019, encouraging those in their 40's, 50's and 60's to consider aspects of their wealth, work and wellbeing. This helps them to make informed decisions about future income provision and longer-term employment prospects, supporting individuals to stay in work for longer and to achieve the later life that they want.

■ **Employment: Parents**

Alexander Stafford:

[38479]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a Government emergency bridging loan for people who have to miss work in order to care for their child who is absent from school as a result of illness.

Alexander Stafford:

[38480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help ensure that working parents who are unable to work from home are financially supported to stay at home when their child is ill.

Will Quince:

Parents in this situation can be supported through Universal Credit (UC), which means the amount of benefit received by claimants fluctuates in line with their earnings. The value of this has been shown during the Covid-19 pandemic. Where people have seen variations in the hours worked and earnings, UC has provided extra support when their earnings have decreased.

NHS Test and Trace isolation payments are also available to financially incentivise individuals to self-isolate and not to return to work. Legislation within legacy benefits (and also Pension Credit) is already wide enough for these payments to be disregarded. The lump sum payment will not be treated as income or earnings for Universal Credit, and the Coronavirus Act 2020 enables it to be ignored as capital. On 22nd February 2021, the government announced additional funding, including a further £20 million per month, for discretionary payments would be made available from March 2021 and expanded the scheme to cover parents who are unable to work because they are caring for a child who is self-isolating.

■ Food Poverty

Rachael Maskell:

[37514]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the potential demand on (a) food banks and (b) voluntary organisations supporting communities to tackle food poverty over summer 2021.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level.

Since 1 December, the Covid Winter Grant Scheme and the Covid Local Support Grant have provided Local Authorities in England with additional funding to support families and individuals who are struggling with the cost of food and essential utility bills as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. On 21 June we extended this temporary scheme for a final time with an additional £160 million in funding through 30 September, taking total funding under the scheme to £429 million. This brings the end date for this scheme past the lifting of restrictions, supporting families who might need additional help to get back on their feet as the vaccine rollout continues and our economy recovers. As part of this extension, the City of York Council has been allocated £392,216, taking total funding since 1 December to £1,051,874.54.

This year, we are also investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme which has been expanded to every Local Authority across England. Participating children will benefit from a range of support, including a healthy and nutritious meal as well as fun and engaging activities during the Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. We also increased the value of Healthy Start Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 in April.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Batteries

Jerome Mayhew:

[\[37595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Health and Safety Executive have taken to assess the risk of fire and explosion associated with large scale lithium-ion battery storage.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has been closely studying battery safety for several years, using its bespoke battery testing facility to help customers and research partners understand how best to manage the fire and explosion risks during battery manufacture, storage, transport, and use. HSE's scientists and engineers are at the forefront of the Energy Storage Health and Safety Governance Group and have been involved with the Institution of Engineering and Technology's Code of Practice for Electrical Energy Storage Systems and the Energy Institute's Guidance Note on battery energy storage system fire planning and response.

The fundamental principle of health and safety law is that those who create risks are best placed to control them so far as is reasonably practicable. Designers, installers, and operators all have a duty to ensure this is the case. HSE regulate Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), within a robust regulatory framework, expecting the duty holder to assess the specific situation and implement necessary control measures.

■ Jobcentres: Protective Clothing

Philip Davies:

[\[38196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's policy is on the wearing of face coverings for (a) staff at and (b) people attending job centres during the covid-19 outbreak.

Philip Davies:

[\[38205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in her (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Guy Opperman:

Throughout the pandemic, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has followed, and continues to follow, the latest government guidance in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace, including any variations between the four nations of the UK.

All of our offices comply with the legal requirements of the UK government and where appropriate, of the devolved administrations. The wearing of face coverings remains a legal requirement in both Scotland and Wales

In England there is no such legal requirement but the latest BEIS guidance “encourage(s) the use of face coverings by workers or customers in enclosed and crowded spaces” <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19/offices-factories-and-labs#offices-7-2>

DWP therefore strongly encourages the wearing of face coverings by customers in our job centres and colleagues when in communal areas.

■ Members: Correspondence

John McNally: [37491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to respond to the urgent matter from the hon. Member for Falkirk of 21 July 2021, CMS ref 121026584364 on a constituent.

Guy Opperman:

A response was sent to the Hon Member on the 23 July 2021.

John Spellar: [38135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Warley of 24 May 2021 regarding Mr W Perkin.

Guy Opperman:

A response was issued by email on 15 June 2021. A confirmation, a letter was also issued to the hon Member on 26 July 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [38186]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 12 May 2021, on data security at her Department, reference ZA56478.

Guy Opperman:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member by the Director for Customer Experience, on behalf of the Secretary of State, on 26 July 2021.

Patricia Gibson: [40970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional steps she will take to improve response times to pensions inquiries from hon. Members.

Guy Opperman:

Retirement Services are currently experiencing a very high volume of enquiries, and it is taking us longer than usual to reply as we recover from the challenges of the pandemic.

DWP now triage enquiries giving priority to vulnerable claimants who may be at risk, and those with benefit payment issues.

We are reviewing the effectiveness of the approach we have taken throughout the pandemic and to improve our level of service we have introduced a bespoke Retirement Services mailbox for MP enquiries, improved our MP engagement at local level and are reviewing resourcing levels.

We are in the process of designing the future operating model for DWP complaints and correspondence. As part of this we will be looking for further opportunities to drive efficiency in the process whilst ensuring that vulnerable customers are prioritised.

■ Pension Credit: Morley and Outwood

Andrea Jenkyns:

[38349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to promote Pension Credit uptake among those who are eligible but do not claim that credit in Morley and Outwood constituency.

Guy Opperman:

On 17 May, DWP Ministers hosted a roundtable event attended by a range of stakeholders who have an interest in pensioners' financial wellbeing, to explore opportunities on getting information about Pension Credit to pensioners and their family members. A subsequent working group meeting between DWP officials and stakeholders was held on 22 June to explore taking this work forward.

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

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

Our Pension Credit pages on gov.uk have recently been updated, drawing attention to how Pension Credit can provide extra money as well as a range of other help for pensioners who get it. The online claim facility we introduced last year, further enables family, friends and organisations to help pensioners make a claim.

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

■ Personal Independence Payment

Stephen Timms: [40575]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average back payment was to personal independence payment claimants where the claimant has been awarded that benefit at a tribunal for the most recent period for which figures are available.

Justin Tomlinson:

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

■ Redundancy and Unemployment: Young People

Colleen Fletcher: [38281]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the levels of youth (a) redundancy and (b) unemployment in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England.

Mims Davies:

(a) Redundancy estimates are only published for 16-24 year olds at the UK level and are available at: [RED02: Redundancies by age, industry and region - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp)

(b) Estimates of youth unemployment in the year to Dec 2020 for the requested geographies based on the Annual Population Survey are published and available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>. Guidance for users can be found at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/newuser.asp>. The sample sizes for the smaller geographies may make drawing conclusion difficult. The administrative data for the Alternative Claimant Count is published and available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for users is available at: <https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Social Security Benefits

Wendy Chamberlain: [41291]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the case of K v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions CO/4263/2020, on whose authority staff in her Department were acting when contacting benefits claimants to make offers of payments lower than their statutory entitlement; and whether her Department has plans to compensate those benefits claimants in that case.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department's aim is to ensure that claimants are paid the correct amount of benefit at the earliest opportunity. Accordingly, if new evidence or information becomes available after an appeal has been lodged, it is right that decisions are reviewed and claimants put in the best position where they can choose either to

continue with their appeal, or have the decision revised. To this end decision makers, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State under section 8 of the Social Security Act 1998, were authorised to contact affected claimants about the changed outcome.

These claimants have, and have always had, a right of appeal against the revised decision, and to have their payments fully backdated if successful at appeal. Claimants are notified of this right of appeal in their revised decision letter.

■ Social Security Benefits: Data Protection

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[38351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what records are held by her Department of breaches of the General Data Protection Regulation which involved the personal information from claimants in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Guy Opperman:

The following table details the number of General Data Protection Regulation breaches involving customer information which were referred to the Data Protection Team.

2019	130
2020	419
2021 (up to and including 27 July)	232

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[38352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many breaches of the General Data Protection Regulation involving the personal information of claimants were registered by her Department with the Information Commissioner's Office in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Guy Opperman:

The Department has registered the following breaches of the General Data Protection Regulation involving the personal information of claimants to the Information Commissioner's Office.

01/01/2019 – 31/12/2019	15
01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020	28
01/01/2021 – 23/07/2021	04

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[38353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department records instances of a claimant's personal information being sent to the wrong address as a breach of the General Data Protection Regulation.

Guy Opperman:

All instances of claimant's personal information being sent to the wrong address are recorded as breaches of the General Data Protection Regulations.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability**Jessica Morden:**[\[40782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what representations her Department has received from (a) welfare and (b) disability groups on her Department's public sector equality duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 to those people claiming disability benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP take our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) seriously and are absolutely committed to ensuring our services are accessible to all.

We focus on being a learning organisation and are keen to capture the voice of the customer. A key part of this role is working with a number of representative groups from welfare and disability organisations through regular stakeholder forums.

They comprise of a range of organisations of and for disabled customers and through them we hear the voice of our customers. They let us know where we can improve the reasonable adjustments we offer and our processes for providing them, and they assist us by testing new products and procedures

One example is the Taskforce on Accessible Information which works at strategic level and meets three to four times a year.

Another is the Reasonable Adjustments Forum who work at an operational level and meet every two months.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[37615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her response to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report, Women's State Pension age: our findings on the Department for Work and Pensions' communication of changes, printed on 19 July 2021, HC 444.

Guy Opperman:

It would not be appropriate to comment on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report of 19 July 2021. The Ombudsman's investigation is ongoing and section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

Claire Hanna:[\[38470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of making bridge payments to 1950s-born women affected by changes to state pension age in response to the Parliamentary and Health

Service Ombudsman's report, Women's State Pension age: our findings on the Department for Work and Pensions' communication of changes, published on 19 July 2021, HC 444.

Guy Opperman:

It would not be appropriate to comment on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report of 19 July 2021. The Ombudsman's investigation is ongoing and section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

■ **Statutory Sick Pay**

Ruth Jones:

[\[37579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the current level of statutory sick pay.

Justin Tomlinson:

This government has a strong safety net that helps people who are facing hardship and are unable to support themselves financially and we have taken steps to strengthen that safety net as part of the government's response to the pandemic.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provides a minimum level of income for employees when they are sick or incapable of work. Employers are legally required to pay SSP to eligible employees who are off work sick or incapable of work, where employees meet the qualifying conditions. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay.

SSP is just one part of our welfare safety net and our wider government offer to support people in times of need. Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ **Unemployment: Ethnic Groups**

Ruth Jones:

[\[37578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the levels of unemployment in the Black and minority ethnic community.

Mims Davies:

The latest data from the Office for National Statistics from the Labour Force Survey estimates there were 116,000 individuals in unemployment from the Black African/Caribbean ethnic group in January-March 2021. This was an increase of 16,000 individuals from January-March 2020. In total, there were 397,000 ethnic minorities in unemployment in January-March 2021, an increase of 119,000 from January-March 2020.

The Government is committed to supporting people from all backgrounds, including those from ethnic minorities, to move into work. It provides a national offer of support

ensuring that no matter where they live, all customers receive the help they need, when they need it.

■ **Universal Credit**

Peter Grant:

[36665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2021 to Question 1111 on Universal Credit, what progress she is making on automating the identification of claimants impacted by the decision of the Court of Appeal in June 2020 in the case of Johnson, Woods, Barrett and Stewart v. the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Will Quince:

We have successfully delivered the automation which allows us to identify and take action when claimants are impacted by two earnings in the one assessment period.

■ **Work Capability Assessment**

Stephen Timms:

[40576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in 2019-20, how many claimants received between zero and six points in their Work Capability Assessment and then subsequently had that benefit awarded on (a) mandatory assessment or (b) appeal.

Justin Tomlinson:

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

The available information on Mandatory Reconsiderations (MRs) and appeals in relation to Employment Support Allowance Work Capability Assessments is published here:

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

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) Programme

Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin):

[\[HCWS260\]](#)

I wish to provide a further update to Parliament on the Ajax equipment project being delivered as part of the Armoured Cavalry Programme.

1. Health and Safety

Extensive work has been undertaken on the Health and Safety aspects of the Noise and Vibration concerns raised on Ajax. The Report is being undertaken independently of the Ajax Delivery Team by the MOD's Director of Health and Safety.

While the Report has not yet been concluded it is apparent that vibration concerns were raised before Ajax Trials commenced at the Armoured Trials and Development Unit in November 2019. In December 2018, an Army Safety Notice introduced restrictions on use in relation to vibration and identified that, in the longer term, a design upgrade was needed to reduce vibration.

I will publish the Health & Safety report once it is finalised, which will contain a full timeline in relation to Health and Safety issues. Key themes likely to emerge from the Report will include:

The importance of having a culture that gives safety equal status alongside cost and schedule.

The overlapping of Demonstration and Manufacturing phases added complexity, technical risk and safety risk into the programme.

The value of having strong risk governance for complex projects that promotes access to expert technical advice on safety issues.

Independent certification and assurance of land environment capability should be adopted and modelled on best practice elsewhere in Defence.

Following the Report's conclusion, we will consider what further investigations are required to see if poor decision making, failures in leadership or systemic organisational issues contributed to the current situation not simply in relation to Health and Safety but more broadly as necessary.

2. Update on Personnel

Initially 121 personnel were identified as requiring urgent hearing assessments as a result of recent noise exposure on Ajax. Subsequently, the MOD broadened the scope of those who should be tested to all those who had been exposed to noise on Ajax. To date, a further 189 individuals have been identified that should be offered an assessment, giving a total number of 310 personnel. Of these 304 have been contacted successfully; the

remaining 6 are UK service personnel who have recently left service and are in the process of being traced.

The health of our service personnel is our top priority. 248 personnel, including 113 from the original cohort of 121, have now been assessed. The Army continues to identify and monitor the hearing of all personnel exposed to noise on Ajax, with additional testing put in place where required. The Army is also in the process of identifying any health effects in those potentially exposed to vibration. Veterans who have been exposed to noise or vibration on this project will be supported throughout and will have access to the same assessments as those still serving. I will update the House on the number of personnel affected by noise and vibration in due course, including if any trends become apparent once the data has been analysed.

3. Technical Issues

At present all dynamic testing and training on MOD's Ajax vehicles remains paused. A Safety Assurance Panel for Ajax, comprising Duty Holders from MOD, General Dynamics, Millbrook and independent advisers, has been established to assure that independent testing can recommence safely at Millbrook Proving Ground. Subject to the Panel's final endorsement and General Dynamics own safety approvals, Millbrook trials are expected to resume imminently, initially deploying General Dynamics crew in MOD owned vehicles, with real time monitoring of vibration and in-ear noise.

The independent trials at Millbrook are essential to provide the evidence to support fundamental root cause analysis and to enable the safe resumption of wider trials and training activity. The focus for the MOD and General Dynamics remains on identifying the root causes of the noise and vibration issues to develop long-term solutions to ensure Ajax meets the Army's need.

I have made clear that no declaration of Initial Operating Capability will be made until solutions have been determined for the long-term resolution of the noise and vibration concerns. Work continues on both with General Dynamics heavily committed to delivering a safe resolution.

Over the summer, work has been conducted to examine design modifications to reduce the impact of vibration. A design modification to reduce the risk of noise through the communication system is in development and is currently being tested. These may represent part of the overall solution but considerable work needs to be undertaken before any such assurances can be given.

Until a suitable suite of design modifications has been identified, tested and demonstrated, it is not possible to determine a realistic timescale for the introduction of Ajax vehicles into operational service with the Army. We will not accept a vehicle that is not fit for purpose.

As is often the case with defence procurement process, there have been a number of Limitations of Use ("LOUs") placed on Ajax vehicles during the early phase of use. LOUs restricting speed and the maximum height for reversing over steps have now been removed and work continues on removing other LOUs.

Ajax is an important capability for the Army and we are committed to working with General Dynamics for its delivery. We have a robust, firm price contract with General Dynamics under which they are required to provide the vehicles as set out in the contract for the agreed price of £5.5bn.

To assist in the delivery of Ajax we have identified the need for a full time, dedicated Senior Responsible Owner who will preferably be able to see the project through to completion, or indeed advise if the project is incapable of being delivered. A short-list of candidates is currently under consideration. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority are also providing MOD with expert support to establish a recovery plan for the programme.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Correction to Written Parliamentary Questions 155392 and 170718

Minister of State (Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health)
(Ms Nadine Dorries): [\[HCWS258\]](#)

I would like to inform the House that I wish to correct the formal record in relation to written answers to the Hon. Member for Streatham on 2 March 2021 and the Hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle on 25 March 2021.

The reply suggested that NHS England and Improvement was developing a case definition and model of care for children with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH).

The correct response was that NHSEI had run an initial workshop on Long COVID to discuss how best to develop a case definition and model of care for children at which the RCPCH was present.

The response was phrased in a way that overstated the role of the RCPCH in producing clinical guidance. NICE is responsible for developing the clinical case definition of Long COVID.

I would like to thank the RCPCH and its members for their contributions more broadly in improving the understanding of Long COVID in children.

■ COVID-19 Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment)
(Nadhim Zahawi): [\[HCWS257\]](#)

Through the COVID-19 Vaccines programme, we have administered over 90 million vaccine doses in the UK, with recent PHE data suggesting that this has prevented over 24 million infections, 105,900 deaths and 82,100 hospitalisations in England alone. The vaccines are the most effective way of protecting the most vulnerable and minimising hospitalisations and deaths.

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) continues to consider emerging data. When parliament was in recess the Committee provided advice in favour of:

- offering initial vaccination to all remaining 16 and 17 year olds;
- offering a 3rd dose in the primary vaccine schedule to all those aged 12 and over defined as severely immunosuppressed;
- and expanding the groups of 12-15 year olds defined as at risk.

Her Majesty's Government (HMG) reviewed and accepted the advice. All four parts of the UK have accepted the JCVI's advice and align their deployment in each nation.

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable members to bring to their attention the contingent liabilities relating to the expansion of the COVID-19 vaccine programme taken during the summer recess.

Initial vaccination to all remaining 16 and 17 year olds :

JCVI published further advice on the vaccination of children and young people on 4 August

JCVI advised that all remaining 16 to 17-year-olds should be offered a first dose of Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine. This is in addition to the [existing offer of 2 doses of vaccine to 16 to 17-year-olds who are in 'at-risk' groups](#) or in roles which present a high risk of transmission to vulnerable people.

Third dose in the primary vaccine schedule to all those aged 12 and over defined as severely immunosuppressed:

JCVI published its advice on vaccination for individuals with severe immunosuppression on 1 September.

JCVI advised that a third primary vaccine dose be offered to individuals aged 12 and above with severe immunosuppression in proximity of their first or second COVID-19 vaccine doses in the primary schedule with a preference for mRNA vaccines for those aged 18 and over. Whether patients are eligible will be determined by their specialist clinician. For young people aged 12-17 years the Pfizer-BNT162b2 remains the preferred choice.

A third primary dose is recommended for individuals with severe immunosuppression in order to bring these individuals up nearer the same level of immunity healthy individuals achieve through 2 primary doses, and this group will become eligible for a booster dose as part of a routine booster programme from around six months after their third primary dose, pending further advice.

Expanding the groups of 12-15 year olds defined as at risk:

JCVI published further advice on expanding the vaccine offer to certain children and young people on 3 September.

JCVI advised that the offer of a course of vaccination should be expanded to include children aged 12 -15 years with the following conditions:

- Haematological malignancy
- Sickle cell disease

- Type 1 diabetes
- Congenital heart disease,
- Other health conditions as described in Public Health England's Green Book

This is in addition to the conditions specified in the existing advice on at risk 12- 15 year olds published on the 19 July. JCVI advised that this group is offered a two-dose course of vaccination with Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine as the preferred option.

With deployment of additional doses of vaccines to severely immunosuppressed individuals and new groups of young people over the parliamentary summer recess, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine supply via this statement and attached Departmental Minutes containing descriptions of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that this vaccine has satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

■ **Government consultation response on statutory storage limits for gametes and embryos**

Minister of State for Care (Helen Whately):

[\[HCWS256\]](#)

My Noble Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Innovation) (Lord Bethell of Romford) has today made the following written statement:

Family units and family formation in the UK are vastly different today than they were when the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (the HFE Act) was introduced and last reviewed. In a modern society, some individuals are choosing to start their families later in life and are increasingly choosing to use new and effective techniques to freeze their

eggs, sperm, or embryos to preserve fertility. The reasons for this are diverse but can include not being ready or able to start a family, medical conditions that might lead to premature infertility, or undergoing gender re-assignment.

The HFE Act currently sets the statutory storage limits for eggs, sperm, and embryos at ten years, with the possibility of extension up to 55 years for those who can demonstrate a clinical need. The Government recognises that these current arrangements are increasingly disadvantageous towards women and unnecessarily restrictive of individual freedom of choice about when to start a family.

In view of the significant scientific innovation and societal changes, the Government launched a public consultation on 11 February 2020, to seek views about changing the statutory storage limits. The consultation ran for 12 weeks and closed on 5 May 2020.

The Government is today announcing the publication of the Government Response to the consultation.

We received 1,222 responses to the consultation, including 17 from key sector organisations. The responses were analysed and carefully considered by the Department of Health and Social Care giving due regard to the importance of equality, facilitating reproductive choice, administrative burden, and public acceptability.

In the light of these factors and the public response, the Government is announcing a change to this policy; to increase the statutory storage limits for eggs, sperm, and embryos for everyone, regardless of medical need, to 10-year renewable storage periods, with a maximum limit of 55 years. The legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

The regulator, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) will provide oversight during the introduction of these changes to ensure they are rolled out effectively and safely.

The proposed policy change is intended to facilitate greater reproductive choice and will allow for less stressful decision-making in family formation. Importantly, it will provide equity for all, regardless of medical need, and will help reduce administrative burden for clinics and the regulator.

A copy of the Government's response to the consultation will be deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

A Regulatory Triage Assessment has also been published alongside the consultation. It can be accessed on gov.uk and will also be deposited in the libraries of both Houses.

Attachments:

1. Consultation response [Government Response 14-07-2021 in correct publishing format FINAL CLEARED.docx]
2. Regulatory Triage Assessment [RTA in DHSC publishing template 29062021.docx]

■ Terms of Reference for the Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry

Minister of State (Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health)
(Ms Nadine Dorries): **[HCWS255]**

On 21 January 2021, I announced the establishment of a non-statutory, independent inquiry into the circumstances of mental health in-patient deaths at the former North Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, the former South Essex Partnership University Trust and the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, which took over responsibility for mental health services in Essex from 2017.

I am pleased to inform you that I placed a copy of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference in the Libraries of both Houses on 24th August 2021.

This follows a consultation by the Inquiry on its Terms of Reference which commenced on 26 May and concluded on 3 August 2021. The Inquiry team reached out to and heard from affected families, patients, local community groups, charities, and other individuals and organisations with an interest in the issues laid out in my earlier statement.

The Terms of Reference have also been published on the Inquiry's website (<https://www.emhii.org.uk/>).

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Housing update

Minister of State for Housing (Christopher Pincher): **[HCWS254]**

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested our country's resilience like nothing else has during peacetime. The public has endured great sacrifices, but access to a home – whether owned or rented – should not be one of them. Therefore, despite the unprecedented challenge facing us, we must not lose sight of the need this country has for more homes.

The Housing Delivery Test exists to offer greater transparency on the level of housing delivery in an area. It is an annual percentage measurement calculated over a rolling three-year period, taking into account the homes delivered in an area against the homes required. The Housing Delivery Test will remain a key part of the reformed planning system under proposals set out in *Planning for the Future White Paper*.

The 2020 Housing Delivery Test measurement used data relating to financial years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20. To respond to the disruption to local authority services and the construction sector caused by the first national lockdown in March 2020, the Government made a one-month adjustment to the 2019-20 housing requirement. Since then, the Government has been engaging closely with local authorities and the housing industry across the country and stands ready to support recovery. Ministers have been listening to our stakeholders and will continue to do so.

The 2021 Housing Delivery Test measurement will be calculated using data relating to financial years 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. Over the course of the 2020-21 measurement year, there were considerable variations in levels of housing delivery as

local authorities and construction industry continued to face disruption on a national, regional and local level due to the pandemic. As a result, the Government aims to publish the 2021 Housing Delivery Test as intended later this year but will apply a four-month adjustment to the housing requirement figures for 2020-21 in order to account for these fluctuations. This means that there will be a deduction of 122 days to account for the most disrupted period that occurred between the months of April to the end of July. The thresholds for consequences for under-delivery will be maintained, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

A nuance of the Housing Delivery Test is how the calculation is carried out for local authorities that undergo reorganisation to create unitary authorities. Until now, recently reorganised authorities anticipated having their Housing Delivery Test calculated at their former authority boundaries in only the first year following reorganisation. However, from the 2021 measurement, in order to support new unitary authorities, they will be able to choose to use their former authority boundaries or their new unitary boundaries for the purpose of the measurement until the fifth anniversary of the new authority's existence. We will be updating planning guidance to reflect this. In such cases, unitary authorities will still be expected to deliver housing in line with their identified need.

This Government's ambition is to deliver 300,000 homes per year by the mid-2020s and one million homes over this Parliament. Therefore, it is vital that work continues to support and facilitate housing delivery. It will help us to build back better, support the economy to rebound strongly from the pandemic and ensure the homes needed across England are provided.

We have been making strong progress. Last year alone, around 244,000 homes were delivered – this is the highest number of new homes for over 30 years, and the seventh consecutive year that net supply has increased.

This Written Ministerial Statement only covers England.

JUSTICE

■ Extending Fixed Recoverable Costs in Civil Cases

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland):

[\[HCWS253\]](#)

The Ministry of Justice is today publishing its consultation response on extending fixed recoverable costs (FRC) in civil law cases in England and Wales. This follows the 2019 consultation paper, *Extending Fixed Recoverable Costs in Civil Cases: Implementing Sir Rupert Jackson's Proposals*, which was based on the recommendations in Sir Rupert Jackson's report on FRC, published on 31 July 2017. This consultation response has been delayed, principally because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we build back a better justice system, we continue with renewed vigour to modernise the courts and how users interact with them. One area in need of further reform is costs, and particularly those that a losing party must pay the winner. This is especially true in lower value civil claims which people and businesses are most likely to face, either as

claimants or defendants. Currently, the costs of these cases are too uncertain. Without being able to predict what the costs may be, it is difficult for either side to take an informed decision on the best way forward. We want cases to be resolved as early as possible, including those that proceed to litigation, with costs that are certain, proportionate, and fair to both sides.

FRC are a way of controlling the legal costs of civil litigation in advance by prescribing the amount of money that can be recovered by the winning party at set stages of litigation. They reduce overall costs, keep them proportionate, and enhance access to justice. FRC are already an important part of our justice system in lower value personal injury cases: their extension will be of particular benefit to those of more modest means, including individuals and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and those who may otherwise be unable to litigate.

The Ministry of Justice has carefully considered the way forward in the light of responses to the consultation and developments since, including the Government's desire to extend the use of FRC in other cases not covered in this response, such as clinical negligence claims and immigration and asylum judicial reviews. As is set out in our response, we propose to extend FRC to all cases in the fast track (i.e. generally those up to a value of £25,000), and to implement a new regime for 'intermediate' cases (simpler cases between £25,000 and £100,000). We will work with the Civil Procedure Rule Committee to ensure the smooth delivery of these reforms, to be implemented over the coming year.

The case for extending FRC remains strong: uncertainty of costs hinders access to justice, whereas certainty of costs set at a proportionate and fair level enhances it.

TRANSPORT

■ Independent advice to Government on civil aviation noise

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts):
[\[HCWS251\]](#)

The aviation sector is vital to our future as a global trading nation as well as playing a critical role in local economies and in the Government's commitment to level up the economy. However, aviation noise can affect the health and well-being of individuals and communities in the vicinity of airports and underneath flightpaths.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a reduction in aircraft movements in most areas, and with it a reduction in associated noise, but as the Government focuses on building back better and ensuring a successful UK aviation sector for the future, aviation noise will increase from current levels. It is therefore vital that Government has appropriate and credible advice on aviation noise related matters.

The Government established the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise (ICCAN) in November 2018 to help ensure that the needs of local communities are properly taken into account when considering the noise impacts of airport expansion, and to help ensure that noise impacts of airspace changes are properly considered.

Following an independent review of ICCAN conducted earlier this year, I have concluded that many of ICCAN's functions would be more efficiently performed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which already has a wider environmental remit. This will help ensure that noise is considered alongside other policy outcomes on the basis of high quality research and advice.

As a result, I can confirm that ICCAN will be wound down this month (September). This will be followed by a transitional phase during which my Department will work with the CAA, which will take on the majority of ICCAN's former functions from April 2022. The CAA also plans to establish a new Environment Panel to provide it with independent expert advice on a range of environmental issues including carbon, air-quality and noise. ICCAN's existing functions not transferred to the CAA, will remain within my Department.

■ Summary of Updates to International Travel

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS252\]](#)

This statement provides an update on developments on international travel and on changes to the traffic light system made over the Summer recess period.

Global Travel Taskforce July Checkpoint Review

As announced on Thursday 29 July, and as part of the second Global Travel Taskforce checkpoint review, the government extended the policy on fully vaccinated passengers arriving from amber list countries to include those who have been vaccinated in Europe (EU Member States, European Free Trade Association countries and the European microstate countries of Andorra, Monaco and Vatican City) and US residents vaccinated in the United States. These changes came into force at 04:00 on Monday 2 August and mean that amber list arrivals vaccinated in the US and in Europe no longer have to take a day 8 test or quarantine. However, they are still required to take a pre-departure test before arrival as well as a PCR test on or before day 2 after arrival.

Children (under 18s) who are ordinarily resident in the US or Europe are also exempt from quarantine and the day 8 test, the same as children ordinarily resident in the UK. Children aged 11 and over will still need to complete a pre-departure and day 2 test. Children between the ages of 5 and 10 will only need to complete a day 2 test, and children aged 4 and under do not need to take any tests.

Passengers vaccinated in Europe with a vaccine approved by the European Medicines Agency are required to provide proof via an EU Digital COVID Certificate, and those vaccinated in the US are required to provide proof via the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention vaccination card. The policy does not currently cover those who have proof of recovery from COVID-19.

Additional restrictions for France were applied on Monday 19 July due to the persistent presence of cases in France of the Beta variant. These temporary additional restrictions were removed at 04:00 on Sunday 8 August and the fully vaccinated policy now applies to France.

Unvaccinated passengers, or passengers whose vaccines were not provided in the UK, Europe or United States through MHRA, EMA and FDA-approved vaccines, respectively, arriving in the UK from an amber list country are required to quarantine at home, provide a valid notification of a negative test result prior to travel and take a test on day 2 and 8 after their arrival.

The government will explore how to expand this approach to other countries, where it is safe to do so.

Further to this, international cruises also fully restarted on 2 August. Passengers travelling on international cruises are subject to the same rules as other international passengers and should therefore follow the traffic light system. FCDO advice has been amended to encourage travellers to understand the risks associated with cruise travel and take personal responsibility for their own safety abroad.

Traffic Light System Review

During parliamentary recess there have been two reviews of the country allocations within the traffic light system, on Thursday 5 August and Thursday 26 August. The following countries and territories have been added to the Government's green list:

AT 04:00 BST ON SUNDAY 8 AUGUST:

Austria Germany Latvia Norway Romania Slovakia Slovenia

AT 04:00 BST ON MONDAY 30 AUGUST

Canada Denmark Finland Liechtenstein Lithuania Switzerland The Azores

Passengers arriving from green list destinations need to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test result prior to travel and take a further test on or before day 2 of their arrival in the UK.

The following countries have been added to the amber list at 04:00 BST on Sunday 8 August:

- Bahrain
- India
- Qatar
- United Arab Emirates

The following countries and territories have been added to the red list, reflecting the increased case rates in these countries as well as presenting a high public health risk to the UK from known variants of concern:

AT 04:00 BST ON SUNDAY 8 AUGUST

Georgia La Reunion Mayotte Mexico

AT 04:00 BST ON MONDAY 30 AUGUST

Montenegro Thailand

Passengers arriving from these destinations, irrespective of vaccination status, are required to self-isolate in a managed quarantine hotel, provide a valid notification of a negative test result prior to travel and take a test on day 2 and 8 after their arrival.

All arrivals into the UK must continue to complete a Passenger Locator Form

Managed Quarantine Service

From Thursday 12 August, the cost for staying in a Managed Quarantine Facility when arriving from a red list country increased to £2,285 for a single adult and £1,430 for a second adult to better reflect the total costs involved. The price remains unchanged for children.

Testing

Testing remains an important part of ensuring safe international travel. The government continues to work with the travel industry and private testing providers to further reduce testing costs, while ensuring travel is as safe as possible. The government has recently reduced NHS Test & Trace costs for travel testing for a second time to £68 and £136 for Day 2 and Days 2 and 8 testing packages respectively, to send a clear signal to industry and encourage a reduction in private sector pricing.

The Health Secretary has asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to conduct an urgent review of private testing providers to explore whether individual PCR providers may be breaching their obligations under consumer law; to report on any structural problems in the PCR market affecting price, reliability, or service quality; and whether there are any immediate actions that the Government could take in the meantime. The CMA has also sent and published an open letter to providers of PCR tests on how they should comply with consumer law.

On 23 August the government also announced that, following a rapid review of the pricing and service standards of day 2 and day 8 testing providers listed on GOV.UK, more than 80 companies have had their misleading prices corrected on the Government's website and given a final warning, and a further 57 firms have been removed. The action will help ensure consumers can trust the testing providers listed on GOV.UK and only the most reliable companies are available.

Whilst public health is a devolved matter, the government works closely with the devolved administrations on any changes to international travel and aims to ensure a whole UK approach.

TREASURY

■ **Financial Services update**

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[[HCWS259](#)]

I can today inform the House that on 22 July 2021 the government announced a trading plan to sell part of the government's shareholding in NatWest Group (NWG, formerly

Royal Bank of Scotland, RBS). This is a further step forward in the government's plan to return NWG to the private sector.

Rationale

It is government policy that where a government asset no longer serves a public policy purpose the government may choose to sell that asset, subject to being able to achieve value for money. This frees up public resource which can be deployed to achieve other public policy objectives.

The government is committed to returning NWG to full private ownership, now that the original policy objective for the intervention in NWG – to preserve financial and economic stability at a time of crisis – has long been achieved. The government only conducts sales of NWG shares when it represents value for money to do so and market conditions allow. The announcement of this trading plan represents a further step forward for government in exiting the assets acquired as a result of the 2007 to 2008 financial crisis.

Format and Timing

The government, supported by advice from UK Government Investments (UKGI), concluded that selling shares by way of an on-market trading plan will deliver value for money.

A trading plan involves selling shares in the market through an appointed broker in an orderly way at market value over the duration of the plan. Trading plans are an established method of returning government-owned shares to private ownership, while protecting value for the taxpayer. This method was used in the sell-down of the government's stake in Lloyds Banking Group (in that case, from a lower starting point in terms of the government's percentage ownership).

This is the first use of a trading plan for disposals of NWG shares by the government. This follows previous disposals of NWG shares via accelerated book builds in August 2015 and June 2018, a directed buy back selling shares to the company in March 2021, and a further accelerated book build in May 2021. UKGI and HMT will keep other disposal options open, including by way of further directed buybacks and/or accelerated bookbuilds. The decision to launch the trading plan does not preclude the government from using other disposal options to execute future transactions that achieve value for money for taxpayers, including during the term of the trading plan.

The trading plan commenced trading no earlier than 12 August and will run for 12 months, terminating no later than 11 August 2022. Shares will only be sold at a price that represents fair value and delivers value for money for the taxpayer. The final number of shares sold will depend on, amongst other factors, the share price and market conditions throughout the duration of the trading plan.

The government will provide Parliament with further details at the end of the term of the trading plan