



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:43 P.M., 08 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

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

Owen Thompson:

[\[42006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) borrowers asking their lenders to restructure or refinance their CBILS debt on those borrowers' credit ratings.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) operates as a delegated scheme and lenders are expected to follow their commercial process when assessing restructure/refinance requests. It is also up to the lender to determine how this would impact a customer's credit rating in line with their own standard policies.

Following a Government announcement last year, CBILS lenders are able to extend the repayment period for CBILS facilities where this is needed, to a maximum of 10 years. CBILS term extensions are offered at the discretion of lenders, and for forbearance purposes only.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Owen Thompson:

[\[42004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what ongoing data his Department is collecting on repayment rates for the (a) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and (b) Bounce Back Loan Scheme debt.

Paul Scully:

Bounce Back Loan Scheme lenders are required to notify the British Business Bank of any prepayment or repayment of a Scheme Facility via the Bank's dedicated online portal. This reporting includes data such as the number of borrowers who have repaid their loan in full, and the number of borrowers who have taken up 'Pay as you Grow' measures.

Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme lenders may, but are not required to, notify the British Business Bank of repayment of loans through this same portal.

Owen Thompson:

[\[42005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 29853 on Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, what the timeframe is for the Government's evaluation of the covid-19 loan guarantee schemes.

Paul Scully:

The Government continues to progress its evaluation of the Covid-19 loan guarantee schemes, which will include an assessment of delivery processes, impacts and value for money.

The full results of the evaluation will be finalised after 3 years when we will have enough data and experience to measure the impact of the loan schemes on business outcomes. Within that there will be annual reports to share emerging findings, although the exact timings of these dependent on how the evaluation progresses operationally. We intend to have published results no later than Q1 of each year up until 2024.

■ Post Offices: ICT**Peter Grant:**[\[41965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications have been received for the Post Office's Historical Shortfall Scheme after that scheme closed on 14 August 2020.

Paul Scully:

By 14th August 2020, 1481 applications had been received into the Historical Shortfall Scheme (HSS), which increased to 1962 by 21st August 2020 once applications received by the initial cut-off date has been processed. The application period was extended to 27 November 2020 to allow for late notifications and expanded eligibility criteria. The number of applications being considered by the HSS as of 3rd September 2021 is 2516.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Coronavirus: Public Inquiries****Jack Dromey:**[\[41793\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister is responsible for the covid-19 public inquiry.

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.

DEFENCE

■ **Afghanistan: Armed Conflict****Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[41602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has made an estimate of the strength of military forces resisting the Taliban in the Panjshir Valley.

James Heapey:

The strength of military forces resisting the Taliban in the Panjshir is difficult to estimate. The strength of the National Resistance Front in late August was likely to range between 2,000 and 8,000 fighters.

Mr Mark Francois:[\[41712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of the 166 round trip evacuation flights recently conducted to and from Kabul by the Royal Air Force as part of Operation Pitting were conducted by (a) C-17, (b) Voyager, (c) A400M, (d) C-130 J and (e) other aircraft types.

James Heapey:

The Defence Secretary and Prime Minister have referred to 100 round trips or 200 aircraft movements. We do not recognise the 166 figure in the Rt Hon. Gentlemen's question.

The following table provides a breakdown of roundtrip flights (to and from) Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) over the course of Operation PITTING (14 - 28 August 2021).

AIRCRAFT	NUMBER OF ROUNDTRIP FLIGHTS IN AND OUT OF HKIA
A400M	31
C17	46
C130J	24
Voyager	0
Other aircraft types	0

These flights operated between locations within the broader Middle East and Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. Passengers arriving from Kabul were transferred onto a combination of military and charter aircraft, including RAF Voyager, for onward flights to the UK.

■ Afghanistan: Armed Forces

John Healey:

[\[41645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the intelligence used by his Department to assess the strength and capacity of the Afghan Armed Forces was (a) collected by the UK Government's national security team and military commanders or (b) based upon an assessment made by the US intelligence agencies.

James Heapey:

We do not disclose publicly the sources of our intelligence.

■ Afghanistan: British Council

Stephen Morgan:

[\[42082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether all British Council staff were among those successfully evacuated from Afghanistan as part of Operation Pitting.

James Heapey:

Regrettably we have not been able to evacuate all those we want to. Our message to those people to whom we have made a commitment is clear: that commitment to you is enduring.

Operation PITTING saw the evacuation of thousands of people eligible for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), including current and former locally employed staff and Afghan nationals who have been employed directly by Her Majesty's Government. The UK will continue to provide help to Afghans who have supported us and who we were not able to evacuate.

For those not eligible for relocation under the ARAP scheme, including British Council staff, the Home Office is working quickly to establish 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 .

■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad

Stephen Morgan:

[\[42084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether all British nationals wishing to leave Afghanistan were successfully evacuated as part of Operation Pitting.

James Heapey:

We have been advising all British nationals to leave the country since April, however for those who remain in Afghanistan and wish to leave we are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that they have options for safe passage. British Nationals who remain in Afghanistan are strongly encouraged to register their presence with the FCDO via the GOV.UK website.

The Government's commitment to British nationals is enduring and we are now looking at all possible avenues to facilitate relocation, from third countries if possible, for any British nationals who remain in Afghanistan. This number is changing all the time due to the fluid nature of the situation.

■ Afghanistan: Immigration

John Healey: [\[41647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any special housing arrangements will be made for the family of Afghans currently studying at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to ensure that family members are not separated when they are relocated to the UK.

James Heapey:

Work is underway across the whole of Government to ensure the Afghans who stood side by side with us in conflict, their families and those at highest risk who have been evacuated, are supported as they now rebuild their lives in the UK. This includes Afghans who are currently studying on professional military training courses in the UK. Defence is working with partners across Government to re-house those evacuated in the best way possible, which in some case includes a number of vacant homes which are normally used by Service families.

Stephen Morgan: [\[42083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the number of Afghan nationals eligible for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy that were not evacuated as part of Operation Pitting.

James Heapey:

Regrettably we have not been able to evacuate all those we want to, despite the huge efforts that have been made. We have identified 311 individuals and their families who are eligible for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and were called forward for evacuation under Operation Pitting, but have not yet arrived in the UK. We are working hard to contact all of those individuals to confirm their status. Some have already made their way to third countries.

We are continuing to work as hard as we can to relocate more people and are looking at all possible avenues to facilitate relocation, from third countries if possible, for those ARAP eligible people who have not arrived in the UK.

■ Afghanistan: Special Forces

John Healey: [\[41646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government has taken to provide safe passage to the UK for Afghan special forces.

James Heapey:

We owe a debt of gratitude to those who put their lives at risk working alongside UK forces in Afghanistan, and believe that nobody's life should be put at risk because

they supported the UK Government. For this reason, the ARAP scheme will remain open for those who worked with the UK in Afghanistan, including Afghan special forces, and we will facilitate relocation, from third countries if possible, for those eligible.

■ **Air Force: Work Experience**

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[41223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the Royal Air Force (RAF) offering a work experience opportunity for those declined for work at the RAF as a result of a driving ban.

Leo Docherty:

There has been no general assessment made of the potential merits of the Royal Air Force (RAF) offering Work Experience opportunities to those declined for work at the RAF due to a driving ban. The decision to offer Work Experience is made on a case by case basis at each RAF Station in accordance with the Department's policy.

■ **Ajax Vehicles**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when (a) his Department, (b) Defence Equipment and Support and (c) the Army were first made aware of quality assurance defects in respect of the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

Quality issues were first identified in 2017 whilst witnessing Factory Acceptance Tests of Capability Drop 0 vehicles. In respect of Capability Drop 1 vehicles, 26 have to date passed General Acceptance Testing with two vehicles rejected.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[40629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the air burst munition will be incorporated into the Ajax CT40 system.

Jeremy Quin:

The 40mm airburst munition is part of the planned CT40 system. It was due to be qualified as a shared nature via the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme (WCSP) in 2023-24 and read across to Ajax subsequently. However, following the cancellation of WCSP as announced in the defence Command Paper, further planning action will be required to confirm the requirement.

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[41730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which contractor produces the 40mm ammunition planned for use in the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The 40mm ammunition for the CT40 Cannon used on AJAX is currently provided by BAE Systems.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[40687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what type of steroids, including the product name were administered to armed forces personnel who experienced hearing problems after participating in the trials of the Ajax AFV.

Jeremy Quin:

Patients assessed to benefit from steroid treatment for acute noise induced hearing loss received the steroid Prednisolone as tablets and/or intratympanic (placed by injection into the middle ear) Solu-medrone steroid solution.

Mr Mark Francois:[\[40688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the profit margin for General Dynamics on the Ajax AFV production contract.

Jeremy Quin:

General Dynamics UK is contractually required to produce a set number of Ajax AFVs to a required specification. The profit margin General Dynamics UK expect to generate a is commercial matter for the company.

Mr Mark Francois:[\[43410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, by what date he expects to appoint a Senior Responsible Owner for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer my right hon. Friend to HCWS260 which was published in the House on 6 September 2021 and provided a comprehensive update on the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) programme.

Attachments:

1. HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) Programme Update [HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme.docx]

■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[41706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Chief Executive of the Defence Equipment and Support's oral evidence to the Committee of Public Accounts on 12 July 2021, whether the AJAX Armoured Fighting Vehicle trials were concluded at Millbrook in August 2020.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement: Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) Update dated 6 September 2021 (HCWS260), which details the current position.

Attachments:

1. HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) Update [HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme.docx]

Mr Mark Francois:[\[41729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the oral evidence of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to the Defence Committee on 20 July 2021, when he expects to receive the report on the vibration and related problems with the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the Written Ministerial Statement: Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) Update dated 6 September 2021 (HCWS260) , which details the current position.

Attachments:

1. HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme (Ajax) Update [HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme.docx]

■ Armed Forces: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has undertaken research in the last five years on the potential correlation between PTSD suffered by serving personnel and later-life dementia.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has not commissioned or undertaken any such research. However, our approach to and understanding of mental health issues, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is informed by the latest published peer-reviewed international literature and international studies.

A large-scale systematic review conducted by University College London of previously published international longitudinal studies in general populations and veterans reported in September 2020 that a diagnosis of PTSD may double the risk of dementia in later life. The review compared the risk of a dementia diagnosis in later life in those with PTSD and a control group from the same population, with no PTSD diagnosis. The risk of dementia for individuals with PTSD in general populations was higher than the risk in veterans with PTSD, being doubled in general populations with PTSD and one and a half times greater in veterans with PTSD, compared with the respective control groups. The researchers noted that a possible explanation of the lower risk in veterans is that they may be more likely to receive treatment for PTSD than the general population. This may mean that treating PTSD reduces subsequent dementia risk.

The available evidence indicates that the mental health of the Armed Forces is broadly comparable to that of the general population. The rate of Armed Forces clinically assessed with PTSD in 2020/21 remains low at 0.1%, which represents 1 in 1,000 personnel. However, the Government recognises that Service life can be stressful and is committed to improving the mental health of our Armed Forces and veterans. A holistic multi-faceted approach is best practice and Defence works closely with the Departments of Health and NHS and social services across the UK as well as family and friends and voluntary and civilian organisations. The aim is promotion of good mental health and well-being and prevention of illness.

All Regular Service personnel are supported by through-life mental health awareness and training. Where people become ill, dedicated medical services including mental health support are provided. The MOD also provides a 24-hour mental health helpline for Serving personnel and their families to provide support for any mental health problems anytime, anywhere. As a supplement to existing provision, in April 2020 the MOD launched HeadFIT, a mental fitness tool to support the Armed Forces community.

■ **Armed Forces: Radio**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to paragraph II.1.5 of the Invitation to Tender for Multi-Mode Radio, for what reason his Department has a requirement for National Security Agency accredited Handheld and Manpack software-defined combat net radios; and whether that requirement would prohibit UK companies from bidding for the Multi-Mode Radio contract.

Jeremy Quin:

The requirement for a National Security Agency approved radio is driven by the waveforms required, coupled with the requirement to be able to communicate up to SECRET. A number of UK companies have bid for the Multi-Mode Radio contract, responding to both the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire and Invitation to Negotiate.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[40660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the new BATCIS UK tactical radios are planned to be ITAR-regulated.

Jeremy Quin:

The Multi-Mode Radios currently being procured will be ITAR-regulated. The requirements for other new radios have not yet been identified, so no comment can be made on whether they will be ITAR-regulated.

■ **Armoured Fighting Vehicles**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[41702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many CVRT platforms his Department declared to be in its inventory under the requirements of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE).

Jeremy Quin:

Under the latest United Kingdom Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) Data Exchange for 2021. The Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance Tracked (CVRT) platforms that are reported at present for CFE were:

Spartan 167

Sultan 69

Stormer 15

Samson 25

Stormer HVM 49

■ BOWMAN Combat Radio System**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the baseline in-service date is for the Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6.

Jeremy Quin:

At Main Gate Business Case approval, Initial and Full Operating Capability dates were identified as November 2019 and October 2020 respectively, at 50% confidence with Full Operating Capability achieved on 3 December 2020.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[40634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent forecast he has made of the in-service date for Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6.

Jeremy Quin:

Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6 Full Operating Capability was achieved on 3 December 2020.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[40635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the (a) forecasted cost and (b) actual cost to date of the Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6.

Jeremy Quin:

At Main Gate Business Case approval, the Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6 upgrade was estimated to cost £164.6 million. Actual expenditure at the end of July 2021 was £163.1 million, with a future estimated spend of £91.2K. This gives a total of £163.2 million.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[40637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the out-of-service date is for the Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6.

Jeremy Quin:

The out of service date for Bowman ComBAT Infrastructure and Platform (BCIP) 5.6 is currently 2025-26.

■ **Cobham: Sales**

Mr Kevan Jones: [41705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the sale of over half of the value of Cobham by the US private equity firm, Advent, adheres to the agreement made by the Government and Advent.

Jeremy Quin:

The agreement made by HM Government on Advent and the undertakings contained therein is overseen by BEIS.

■ **Defence: Procurement**

Mr Mark Francois: [41713]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many of his Department's 36 procurement programmes recently audited by the Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) in its 2020-2021 Annual Report were rated green on the IPA traffic light system assessment scale; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The IPA 2020-21 Annual Report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-annual-report-2021>

■ **Ministry of Defence: Ethnic Groups**

Ruth Jones: [37582]

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

Leo Docherty:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 22 July 2021, to Question 35886.

Attachments:

1. 35886 - MOD; Ethnic Groups [35886 Ministry of Defence Ethnic Groups.docx]

■ **Ministry of Defence: Housing**

Alison Thewliss: [41934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many units of living accommodation for MOD staff and families are currently unoccupied.

Jeremy Quin:

As of 6 September 2021, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) currently has 9,700 vacant Service Family accommodation (SFA) properties in the UK.

This figure represents a snapshot in time as the occupancy rate varies on a daily basis. It includes SFA required to manage expected service personnel moves, properties awaiting modernisation and properties required for disposal.

■ Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Shipping

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[41708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of maintenance periods were completed later than originally scheduled for all (a) Royal Navy and (b) Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels that entered periods of planned maintenance between 2019 and 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government does not disclose operational information about Royal Navy submarines, as to do so would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

For Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary surface vessels, eleven planned upkeep projects were completed between 1 January 2019 and 6 September 2021. All of these projects were completed later than was originally scheduled.

While in some cases the scale of work required only became evident when the upkeep commenced the right hon. Member will also appreciate that programmes will have been impacted in this period by COVID 19. By way of comparison I have asked for the same information to be provided in respect of 2017-2018 on which I will write to him and please a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Staff

Dame Meg Hillier: [\[41753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many and what proportion of the staff of his Department are politically restricted.

Caroline Dinenage:

Data is provided in the table below for those Civil servants in “the politically restricted” category. As set out in the Civil Service Management code this is members of the Senior Civil Service and civil servants at levels immediately below the Senior Civil Service, plus members of the administrative and European Fast Stream Development Programmes.

DCMS GRADE	HEADCOUNT	PROPORTION OF TOTAL WORKFORCE
Permanent Secretary	1	0.06%
Director General	4	0.22%

DCMS GRADE	HEADCOUNT	PROPORTION OF TOTAL WORKFORCE
Director	28	1.57%
Deputy Director	89	5.01%
Grade 6	201	11.30%
Grade 7	602	33.86%
Fast-streamer (Grade B)	16	0.90%

*This data reflects officially published 2020/21 data submitted to the Cabinet Office Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES) report. Fast-stream numbers include all fast-streamers at DCMS not just those on administrative and European schemes.

■ **Gambling: Disclosure of Information**

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[41877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions the Gambling commission has had with the information commissioner's office on the legality of requesting personal financial statements by licensed bookmakers for affordability checks.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Gambling Commission takes care to ensure it operates within all relevant data protection rules and engages with the Information Commissioner's Office when necessary. Its consultation and call for evidence on Remote Customer Interaction sought to build on existing requirements for how operators identify and intervene where customers may be at risk of harm, including by spending more than they can afford, and called for evidence specifically on the important issue of balancing data protection and consumer protection.

The Commission published an interim update setting out its next steps in this area and committed to engage stakeholders on concerns around consumer privacy in a further consultation on more detailed proposals. The interim update is available at:

<https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/news/article/update-on-remote-customer-interaction-consultation>

■ **Gambling: Licensing**

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[40906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will commit to supporting the introduction of a registration and licensing regime for gambling affiliates.

Mr John Whittingdale:

All gambling adverts, wherever they appear, must be socially responsible and are subject to strict controls on content and placement to protect children and vulnerable people from harm. Codes are published by the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), which covers online and non-broadcast spaces, and by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP), and these are administered by the Advertising Standards Authority. The standards set by the CAP apply to gambling affiliates, and operators are liable to enforcement action from the Gambling Commission if their affiliates' marketing activities do not comply with the rules. The Commission has worked closely with the ASA on the issue of affiliates in recent years and has tightened its Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP).

I also refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley on the 24th June to Question 18509.

Local Broadcasting and Local Press: Internet**Julian Knight:**[\[40951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that (a) local news providers on digital and social platforms are on a level playing field with broadcasters and (b) the Sports News Access Code is extended to the operations of those news providers.

Julian Knight:[\[40952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that sports journalists' freedom of expression right to use short extracts of current events in news reports on digital and social platforms is protected.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government recognises the value of local journalism, including sports reporting, to local communities, as well as the prominent role of broadcasters in generating coverage of popular sporting events.

The online use of short extracts of copyright protected broadcasters' sports content by other news providers and journalists is subject to fair dealing exceptions in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. This provides for the use of copyrighted works, including extracts of TV broadcasts, for the purposes of criticism, review, quotation or news reporting. Fair dealing exceptions must be applied to each case based on its own circumstances, and can apply to online use as well as in traditional media. Where there is any uncertainty in the application of the exceptions, some industries choose to develop their own voluntary codes.

The Sports News Access Code is a voluntary, broadcaster-owned initiative intended to provide clarity and confidence where broadcasters use each other's content under the current legislation.

Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:** [\[38184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, of 21 May 2021, on fan ownership of football clubs, reference ZA56528.

Nigel Huddleston:

A reply was sent to the Hon member of 10 June. Since receiving this PQ my department has written to the Hon Member twice (23 July and 24 August) to attempt to confirm receipt.

Mobile Phones: Fees and Charges**Chi Onwurah:** [\[40905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will ask Ofcom to (a) make an assessment of the cost orientation of the EU roaming charges introduced by (i) EE and (ii) Vodafone and (b) require that Vodafone informs customers who are upgrading or changing their service with Vodafone that they will lose the right to free roaming in the EU as a result.

Matt Warman:

Since the end of the Transition Period on 31 December 2020, the UK has no longer been part of the EU Roaming Regulation known as 'Roam Like at Home'. This means it is a commercial decision for mobile operators as to whether they impose a surcharge on their consumers travelling abroad to the EU for their mobile phone usage.

As per Ofcom regulations, providers must make sure their contract terms are fair and transparent. They must also tell customers about changes to their contracts. Where those changes will particularly disadvantage customers, providers must give them at least a month's notice and the right to exit their contracts without being penalised.

Further requirements to prevent roaming bill-shock include providers publishing roaming charges on their website and sending alerts with pricing information when customers start roaming. They must also apply a default £45-a-month (exc VAT) cut-off limit on data roaming unless customers choose to extend this. Our advice is that consumers check with their operators before travelling abroad.

Parks: Tennis**Mohammad Yasin:** [\[41117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the condition of park tennis courts in England.

Mohammad Yasin: [\[41118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if his Department will take steps to tackle the deteriorating condition of park tennis courts in England.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity providers and facilities are at the heart of our communities, and play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active. Having access to high quality facilities is central to this.

Through the pandemic, Sport England has provided £220million directly to support community sport clubs and exercise centres, via a range of funds including their £35million Community Emergency Fund. This includes 164 awards to tennis totalling £787,879 through Covid funding since March 2020. Sport England also invested £2,084,948 in the Lawn Tennis Association as part of the rollover of NGB national funding in 2021/22.

In January 2021, Sport England also published their strategy 'Uniting the Movement' and as part of this have committed an extra £50million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Beyond Covid, Sport England has awarded £14,807,641 to tennis projects since 2017, 101 of which had elements of capital investment (totalling £2,474,618). Sport England also made 578 awards to multi-sport projects (totalling £38,199,899) where tennis is expected to benefit in the same period.

The Government continues to work closely with the Lawn Tennis Association and local partners to support the maintenance and development of these facilities.

■ Rugby: Australia and New Zealand**Ruth Jones:**[\[38416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of Australia and New Zealand withdrawing from the Rugby League World Cup.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government was extremely disappointed by the decision to postpone this year's Rugby League World Cup, but recognises that this was the inevitable result of a number of factors outside of the organisers' control, including the decision of the Australian and New Zealand teams not to participate. DCMS continues to work closely with the Rugby League World Cup organisers, as they now work towards the rescheduled tournament which will be held between Saturday 15 October – Saturday 19 November 2022.

EDUCATION**■ English Language: Training****Sir Charles Walker:**[\[41741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether training organisations other than Further Education colleges offering English as an additional language (EAL) and LCL accredited qualifications can deliver courses under the Lifetime Skills Guarantee; and

what guidance his Department has produced explaining how eligible training organisations register as a provider of courses through that Guarantee.

Gillian Keegan:

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee which my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, announced in September 2020, promises to help people across England get the skills they need at every stage of their life as we build back better from COVID-19. We know that now, more than ever, we need to invest in adult skills and training.

As part of this, the Free Courses for Jobs offer gives an estimated 11 million adults in England who are 24 and over and do not yet have A levels or equivalent qualifications the opportunity to take their first level 3 qualification for free. The courses available offer good wage outcomes and address skills needs in the economy, empowering adults with the tools they need to secure a better job.

Providers delivering to adult learners resident in areas not devolved to Mayoral Combined Authorities or the Greater London Authority can deliver level 3 qualifications included in the Lifetime Skills Guarantee if they have received funding for this offer via the recent Adult Education Budget (AEB) procurement, or if they have received funding for the offer via an Education and Skills Funding Agency grant. Any providers with an AEB grant, who did not receive funding for the offer due to a lack of historic delivery, have been able to request funding for first time delivery.

Providers seeking to deliver the qualifications in areas with devolved or delegated adult education functions should contact the relevant Mayoral Combined Authority.

Further details about the performance management and funding arrangements for this policy can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1010290/AEB_2021_to_2022_funding_rules_v2_FINALAugust2021.pdf.

Also under the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer.

In January 2021, we launched a procurement process for a second wave of Skills Bootcamps to be delivered through the 2021/22 financial year. This was open until 12 February to further education providers, employers, and other sector bodies across England. We have carefully evaluated the bids submitted through this competitive process and selected the highest-quality projects to be awarded funding. The list of Skills Bootcamps is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-courses-for-jobs>. We will continue to update it as new Skills Bootcamps become available.

For learners requiring English for Speakers of Other Languages provision, we fully fund or co-fund adults through the AEB for courses and qualifications from pre-entry through to level 2. Full funding is also available through the AEB for learners who need English and maths skills (and have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 or higher) to undertake a range of courses from entry level to level 2; and for adult

learners with no or low digital skills to undertake new Essential Digital Skills qualifications at entry level and level 1.

■ National School Breakfast Programme

Kate Osborne:

[\[42169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to monitor and publish impact data on the effect of school breakfasts provided through the National School Breakfast Programme on (a) reducing classroom hunger, (b) educational attainment outcomes and (c) health outcomes in the 2021-22 academic year.

Vicky Ford:

The government is committed to continuing support for school breakfast clubs and we are investing up to £24 million to continue our national programme for the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas, meaning that thousands of children from low-income families will be offered free nutritious breakfasts to better support their attainment, wellbeing and readiness to learn.

The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas. Throughout the contract we will be working with our provider, Family Action, to monitor the benefits the programme is having on pupils who are attending. We will consider opportunities to share information on the programme as it progresses.

■ Schools

Peter Dowd:

[\[41908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of pupils whose choice of school is limited to a faith school; and what steps he will take to ensure pupils have access to a non-faith school.

Nick Gibb:

Faith schools have played a longstanding and important role in our education system. Faith schools are popular with parents, with many being high performing and are more likely to be rated good or outstanding by Ofsted than non-faith schools.

The Department has not made an estimate of the number of pupils whose choice of school is limited to a faith school.

Parents are able to express a preference as to the school they would like their child to attend and, subject to very limited exceptions, local authorities and school admission authorities must comply with that preference.

The vast majority of parents are offered a place at a school of their choice. In 2021, 98% of parents received an offer from one of their top 3 choices of primary school, while 93.4% received an offer from one of their top 3 choices of secondary school.

■ Schools: Coronavirus**Julian Sturdy:**[\[40888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to put in place to help protect clinically extremely vulnerable parents from covid-19 infection from the beginning of the autumn term when children return to school.

Nick Gibb:

Shielding was paused on 1 April 2021, and on 19 July 2021 people previously identified as clinically extremely vulnerable were advised to follow the same guidance as the rest of the population.

All nurseries, schools and colleges are continuing to put measures in place to minimise the spread of COVID-19. These include handwashing, enhancing cleaning, ventilation and managing confirmed cases. Nurseries, schools and colleges should continue to conduct risk assessments and take appropriate action in line with the guidance.

If parents or carers are anxious about attendance, they should speak to the nursery, school or college about their concerns and discuss the measures that have been put in place to reduce the risk.

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within nurseries, schools, colleges and universities to keep as many staff, pupils and students on site as possible. The Department has been delivering a programme of rapid asymptomatic testing for the primary school, secondary school, further education and higher education workforce and for pupils in Year 7 and above (or equivalent). Testing continued for all those on site over the summer and has resumed after the summer holidays, including two on site tests for all secondary pupils and college students.

From 9 April, all people in England have been able to access twice weekly rapid tests for COVID-19. Twice weekly rapid testing is a vital tool in helping to identify cases of COVID-19 that would otherwise not be found.

■ Schools: Denton and Reddish**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[41745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether emergency funding is available to local authority primary schools in the event that school buildings are found to be structurally unsafe.

Andrew Gwynne:[\[41746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if (a) he or (b) a Minister in his Department will urgently meet the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish to discuss the dangerous structural condition of a primary school in Denton and Reddish constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[41747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the structural safety of school buildings in Denton and Reddish constituency.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[41748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria his Department uses to determine whether to allocate funding for urgent building work to a primary school building that has been found to be structurally unsafe.

Nick Gibb:

Local authorities receive an annual School Condition Allocation to invest in capital maintenance and upgrades across the schools for which they are responsible. This funding should be used to ensure their schools are kept in safe, working order. The Department will always engage with those responsible for school buildings to discuss particular issues and provide support on a case by case basis, considering the relevant circumstances, including severity of need.

The Department has also launched a new School Rebuilding Programme with a commitment to 500 projects over the next decade. The Department is currently consulting on how to prioritise future places on the programme and expects that there will be opportunities for evidence of severe condition, including structural issues, to be submitted for consideration. Further details and the criteria for prioritisation will be set out in due course.

The Department is in ongoing discussions with Tameside Council regarding the condition of a primary school in Denton and Reddish.

■ Schools: Discipline

Louise Haigh:

[\[41998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he plans to consult young people in addition to teachers and parents in the current call for evidence on behaviour in schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Department will consult with young people as part of the consultation regarding the revisions to the Behaviour and Discipline Guidance and the Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions guidance later this year.

The call for evidence on behaviour management, in-school units and managed moves closed on 10 August 2021 and the Department has received responses directly from young people and from organisations who represent their interests.

■ Schools: Internet

Peter Kyle:

[\[42022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools lack full-fibre internet connectivity (a) nationally, (b) regionally and (c) by local authority.

Nick Gibb:

According to data from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 14,259 schools are in postcodes that either currently have access to full fibre internet, or are in areas of proposed commercial build within the next five years. Around 2,000 schools are in the scope of DCMS' Gigabit Hubs programme and will have access to gigabit capable connectivity by 2025. These figures do not account for schools that have access to fibre through a private leased line arrangement to enable gigabit capable connectivity.

■ Students: Mental Health Services**Sarah Owen:**[\[42160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of ending blended learning on the mental health of college-aged students who are accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Gillian Keegan:

The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. As set out in the '16 to 19 Study Programmes: Guide for Providers', on-site education should be the norm for the majority of the 16-19 curriculum. However, remote or online learning can add value for some students and courses where it is underpinned by a clear educational rationale and forms part of a clear strategy.

In making decisions concerning the use of remote and online delivery, providers should give particular consideration on how best to support vulnerable and disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs and disabilities and mitigate effects on their mental health and wellbeing. Providers should also be considerate of the wider socio-economic and well-being implications of remote and online learning.

In all circumstances, quality should be the key criteria for determining use of remote and online learning.

The department realises that many students and staff members will be feeling uncertain and anxious at this time. Further education providers should identify young people who may need additional support and engage with them and their representatives to understand their needs, and ensure they have appropriate mental health and wellbeing support in place. To provide support, the government remains committed to its joint green paper delivery with the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England, which is establishing Mental Health Support Teams, covering an estimated £3 million children and young people by 2023, and providing senior mental health led training to all state schools and colleges by 2025. As part of this commitment, from this autumn, we will offer 7,800 schools and colleges in England grants to train a senior mental health lead in their setting, which is being backed by £9.5 million.

■ Teachers: Training

Peter Kyle:

[\[42021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to page 4 of the Department's Realising the potential of technology in education: A summary report, published in April 2019, how many teachers have participated in training courses on the use of education technology since 2019.

Nick Gibb:

The EdTech Demonstrator programme, launched in April 2020, provided peer-to-peer support on making the best use of technology to support remote teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak. Over 4,000 schools and further education colleges received support as part of Phase 1 of the EdTech Demonstrator Programme, with over 11,000 accessing live weekly webinars and tutorials.

891 schools and further education colleges have now registered for Phase 2 of the EdTech Demonstrator Programme, which aims to bridge the gap from crisis response to long-term sustained use of technology.

■ Vocational Education: Qualifications

Zarah Sultana:

[\[42185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on students from disadvantaged backgrounds of the Government's recent decision to remove funding for the provision of BTEC qualifications.

Gillian Keegan:

Employers are facing a skills shortage that we must act to address. It is vital in a fast moving and high-tech economy that technical education closes the gap between what people study and the needs of employers. This is why we are introducing over 20 T Levels, developed with 250 leading employers, and reviewing the wider post-16 qualifications system at level 3 and below.

The department's plans for reform of level 3 qualifications were published on 14 July 2021. We will continue to fund high quality qualifications that can be taken alongside or as alternatives to T Levels and A levels where there is a clear need for skills and knowledge that T Levels and A levels cannot provide. This may include some Pearson BTECs, provided they meet the new quality criteria for funding approval.

The impact assessment published alongside the consultation response recognised that some students may find it more difficult to achieve level 3 qualifications in future. However, the assessment stated that the changes will generally be positive as students will have access to higher quality qualifications in the future, including new T Levels. This will put students in a stronger position to progress onto further study or skilled employment. The assessment acknowledged that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to take qualifications that could have their funding approval removed. These students should gain the most from these changes because they are the most likely to be taking qualifications that do not

deliver the skills employers need. We are committed to ensuring that T Levels are accessible to all young people and have introduced flexibilities for students with SEND. The T Level Transition Programme will support young people who are not yet ready to progress to a T Level but have the potential to succeed on it after some further preparation.

All qualifications will need to meet new quality criteria to be approved for funding in future. Technical qualifications will need to be approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) to be considered for funding approval. For academic qualifications, the department will set criteria to ensure all qualifications approved for funding are necessary alongside A levels. Ofqual will provide advice about quality to both the Institute and the department. This will ensure that all qualifications are high quality and provide the skills needed to support progression either into skilled employment or further study.

Alongside our reforms to level 3 qualifications, the department wants to improve study at level 2 and below, which has been neglected for too long. Improving level 2 and below is key to making sure that every student has a clear progression route, whether that is to high quality level 3 qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships, or directly into skilled employment at level 2. The department is considering feedback to the call for evidence, which ran from 10 November 2020 to 14 February 2021, and there will be consultation on reform proposals later this year.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Birds of Prey

Drew Hendry:

[\[41968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with Natural England on steps taken in response to the High Court judgement of 13 November 2015, in *R (McMorn) v Natural England* and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [2015] EWHC 3297, on standardising licensing processes when licences are issued in relation to raptor species.

Rebecca Pow:

Raptor species, along with all other wild birds, are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is illegal to kill them without a licence. Natural England, in its role as a wildlife licensing authority, can issue licences to control birds under certain circumstances.

Following the McMorn case, Natural England developed internal guidance covering licence applications for predatory species for the purpose of preventing serious damage and for the purpose of conserving species. These were designed to establish standard criteria for assessing such applications and have been agreed with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

■ Housing: Sewers

Alan Brown:

[\[41983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of ending housing developers right to connect to the sewer system; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

On 26 August, the Government announced its intention to undertake a review of the case for implementing in England Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 concerning sustainable drainage. This review will look at the benefits and impacts of implementation as well as alternative methods for ensuring that sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are incorporated in future developments. The review will engage with a range of stakeholders, and inform future policy decisions on this issue.

As well as the Schedule providing for statutory build standards for SuDS on new developments, it would also make the 'right to connect' surface water to foul sewer conditional on local planning approval of the developer's proposed drainage system.

■ Poultry Meat: Labelling

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[41674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will require all poultry which is intended for human consumption and which has been injected with water and/or salt, to be clearly labelled as such in a large typeface, or stated to be so at the point of sale, whether such an item is sold packaged or unpackaged, raw or cooked, to allow consumers to make an informed choice before they purchase that product.

Victoria Prentis:

Under UK regulations on the provision of food information to consumers, it is already the case with meat products and meat preparations which have the appearance of a cut, joint, slice, portion or carcase of meat, that an indication of the presence of added water, if the added water makes up more than 5% of the weight of the finished product, must accompany the name of the food. The presence of water, if added, will also be included in the ingredients list. As mandatory information, this indication with the name of the food as well as the information in the ingredients list must be marked in a conspicuous place in such a way as to be easily visible, clearly legible and, where appropriate, indelible. It shall not in any way be hidden, obscured, detracted from or interrupted by any other written or pictorial matter or any other intervening material.

Under the Food Information Regulations 2014 Regulation 6 (applicable in England, similar regulations are in place in the Devolved Administrations), the name of the food is required for food that is not prepacked, and therefore the indication accompanying the name of the food as related above will also appear. Additionally, under Regulation 7 of the Food Information Regulations 2014, a 'Quantitative Indication' of the meat

ingredients must be provided which can help the consumer understand what proportion of the whole product is meat.

There is no current intention to add further to these requirements. However, the Government will be reviewing food labelling more broadly to ensure consumers continue to be provided with the information they need to make safe and informed food choices.

■ Theft: Pets

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[42204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the press release of 3 September 2021, Pet abduction to be made new criminal offence in crackdown on pet theft, whether proposals to make pet abduction a new criminal offence will also apply in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

Animal Welfare is a devolved matter and once the details of the proposed new pet abduction offence have been developed Welsh Government Ministers will be invited to consider whether they wish these reforms to apply in Wales.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Armed Conflict

Sir Desmond Swayne: [\[41601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to support resistance to the Taliban in the Panjshir Valley.

Nigel Adams:

We are watching the developments on the ground very carefully, but it is fair to say that the Taliban are in control of the vast majority of Afghanistan and we have to adjust to the new reality we see on the ground.

Sir Desmond Swayne: [\[41603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his NATO counterparts on the potential to support forces resisting the Taliban in the Panjshir Valley.

Nigel Adams:

Our focus is on the immediate priorities of ensuring safe passage for anyone remaining in Afghanistan who is eligible to come to the UK and wishes to leave, supporting the thousands of new arrivals in the UK, and continuing to provide assistance to the Afghan people. We have long argued for properly inclusive, representative government.

John Healey:

[\[41644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications of the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban for the security of the UK and its allies.

Nigel Adams:

One of our key objectives is to stop Afghanistan from again becoming a base for terrorist attacks around the world, to reduce the threat to the UK and the international community. We will work with our allies and use all the levers at our disposal to achieve this.

■ **Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad**

Sarah Owen:

[\[42159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish an evaluation of his Department's repatriation programme of UK nationals following the 2021 Taliban offensive in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Our immediate focus is on ensuring safe passage for anyone remaining in Afghanistan who needs to leave, supporting the thousands of new arrivals in the UK, and continuing to provide assistance to the Afghan people. The Foreign Secretary told the FAC that he understands the importance of learning the lessons from this response.

■ **Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals**

Stephen Morgan:

[\[42081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the ongoing security risk to those Afghan nationals whose details were left at the British Embassy in Kabul; and what steps are being taken to protect those Afghan nationals.

Nigel Adams:

We are grateful to The Times for sharing the information retrieved with us and working with us to enable us to get these three families to safety.

■ **Afghanistan: LGBT People**

Chris Bryant:

[\[41732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to provide evacuation for LGBTQ+ people escaping persecution in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

We worked round the clock to airlift over 15000 people out of Afghanistan. We are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK can secure for safe passage. Minister for Human Rights

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[42190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to provide evacuation for LGBTQ+ people escaping persecution in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

We worked round the clock to airlift over 15000 people out of Afghanistan. We are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK can secure for safe passage. Minister for Human Rights Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[42191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect LGBTQ+ people from persecution, arrest and potential execution in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

We worked round the clock to airlift over 15000 people out of Afghanistan. We are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK can secure for safe passage. Minister for Human Rights Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people. As the Prime Minister said earlier this week, we will also include Afghans who have contributed to civil society or who face a particular risk from the Taliban, for example because of their role in standing up for democracy and human rights or because of their gender, sexuality or religion.

■ Afghanistan: USA

Paula Barker:

[\[42197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he made a request to his US counterpart for an orderly and gradual US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Following President Biden's 14 April announcement, and NATO's 15 April decision to withdraw troops, we worked intensively with the US, both on military and civilian channels to ensure an orderly and co-ordinated withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan.

■ Ahnaf Jazeem

David Linden:

[\[38395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Government of Sri Lanka on the ongoing detention of young poet and teacher, Ahnaf Jazeem.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government remains concerned at the ongoing detention of Ahnaf Jazeem under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). On 7 June, the UK's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva and International Ambassador for Human Rights issued a joint statement with European partners calling on the Government of Sri Lanka to release Ahnaf Jazeem or uphold his right to a fair trial. We also highlighted our concerns in a statement to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on 22 June, and have raised the case privately with the government of Sri Lanka. We continue to call on the government to replace the PTA with human rights compliant counter terrorism legislation.

■ Barbados: Foreign Relations

Ruth Jones:

[\[41265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last had discussions with the Prime Minister of Barbados; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs last spoke to the Prime Minister of Barbados on 19 May 2020. He and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for the Caribbean, speak to Ministerial colleagues in Barbados regularly, with the most recent such call being on 18 March 2021. The UK High Commissioner to Barbados is also in close contact with the Government of Barbados including Prime Minister Mia Mottley. They last met on 24 August 2021.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory

Patrick Grady:

[\[37499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July 2021 to Question 31362 on the British Indian Ocean Territory, whether the UK's 1965 undertaking referred to in that answer and which was found to be legally binding by the Arbitral Tribunal of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in its Dispositif of 18 March 2015 was to return the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius rather than to cede sovereignty.

Nigel Adams:

The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT, also referred to as the Chagos Archipelago), which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. The United Kingdom has, however, a

long-standing commitment, first made in 1965, to cede BIOT to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. We stand by that commitment. Use of the term 'return' in this connection has reflected the fact that before 1965 the Chagos Archipelago was administered as a dependency of Mauritius.

■ **Chevening Scholarships Programme: Coronavirus**

Caroline Lucas: [\[41804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will liaise with Cabinet colleagues and issue guidance to universities on the advice they should give to Chevening scholars and their dependents on whether to remain in their quarantine accommodation until such time that they have suitable onward accommodation confirmed; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The Chevening Secretariat is in touch with all Afghan Chevening scholars and their families, and is liaising with universities, local authorities and the Home Office to help scholars access support in the UK. Afghan scholars and their families who travelled in evacuation flights have automatically been granted an initial 6 months leave to remain in the UK. This means that those scholars and their dependents can work, study, receive healthcare and apply for support with accommodation and living costs. The Home Office is offering all Afghan arrivals bridging accommodation, if they have not yet been able to identify permanent accommodation. Scholars entering from third countries will come on student visas.

■ **Dominic Raab: Holidays**

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [\[41960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what date his 2021 summer holiday commenced.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary has been overseeing the FCDO's response to the situation in Afghanistan throughout, including engaging with international partners and directing the FCDO's crisis response.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [\[41959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will provide a copy of the FCDO ministerial rota for each day in August 2021.

Nigel Adams:

There is a well-established system across Whitehall of Duty Ministers which ensures that all decisions are made in a timely fashion.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: [\[41962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what dates during the month of August 2021 he spoke with (a) US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, (b) NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg and (c) High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell.

Nigel Adams:

Our immediate focus is on ensuring safe passage for anyone remaining in Afghanistan who needs to leave, supporting the thousands of new arrivals in the UK, and continuing to provide assistance to the Afghan people. The Foreign Secretary told the FAC that he understands the importance of learning the lessons from this response.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Accountancy**Daniel Zeichner:** [\[40936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the timeframe is for the publication of his Department's annual accounts.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO's annual report and accounts are planned to be published in September, subject to the National Audit Office's (NAO) audit process. Departmental accounts are usually published before the summer recess. However, because of the extra complexity of producing accounts for a new, merged department, the FCDO agreed with HM Treasury and the NAO that a longer timeframe would be needed this year.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Directors**Fleur Anderson:** [\[37609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which of his Department's non executive directors were appointed through open competition.

Nigel Adams:

All Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Non-Executive Directors were recruited according to the guidance set out in the corporate governance code for central government departments. Baroness Helena Morrissey was directly appointed on 27 July 2020 as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Lead Non-Executive Director. She transferred to the FCDO as Lead Non-Executive Director on 2 September 2020. John Coffey, Beverley Tew and Ann Cormack were appointed Non-Executive Directors to the FCDO through open competition.

The FCDO announces the appointments (including reappointment dates) of Non-Executive Directors, as well as their experience, in the Annual Report and Accounts; the FCDO Annual Reports and Accounts 2020-2021 is due to be published shortly.

The biographies for all four FCDO Non-Executive Directors are available on www.gov.uk.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Ethnic Groups

Ruth Jones: [\[37581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Black and ethnic minority staff employed in his Department.

Nigel Adams:

As of 30 June 2021, 16.9% of FCDO UK Based Staff who declared an ethnicity self-identified as Black, Asian or minority ethnic.

■ International Monetary System

Patrick Grady: [\[37502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 33300, whether the value of any Special Drawing Rights channelled by the UK to low income countries will be counted towards the UK Government's target of spending 0.5 per cent of GNI on Official Development Assistance in 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The UK counts a proportion of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) channelled for lending to low-income countries as Official Development Assistance, in line with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) rules for concessional loans through multilateral organisations. The Government remains committed to international development and providing support to the world's poorest, and intends to return to the 0.7% target when the fiscal situation allows. The UK remains one of the leading development donors in the world, providing £10 billion this financial year towards our key international development priorities including poverty reduction, climate change, and global health security.

■ Jamaica: Foreign Relations

Ruth Jones: [\[41267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last had discussions with the Prime Minister of Jamaica.

Nigel Adams:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister of State for the Caribbean, speak to Ministerial colleagues in Jamaica regularly with the most recent such call on 29 June 2021. The UK High Commissioner to Jamaica is also in close contact with the Government of Jamaica including Prime Minister Andrew Holness. They last met on 14 August 2021.

■ Mali: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[37580\]](#)

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

James Duddridge:

I [Minister Duddridge] condemned the coup in May 2021, including the forced resignation and detention of government figures. In country and at the UN Security Council we continue to urge the transitional authorities to respect the conditions set by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We have also called for progress on the Peace Process and a renewed commitment to tackling impunity for human rights abuses and violations. I [Minister Duddridge] welcomed the lifting of all restrictions on the former President and Prime Minister in August 2021, and called for the release of all others who remain detained without charge following events in May.

The UK is concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Mali, and condemns all attacks against civilians, and national, regional and international forces. Through our recent deployment to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and our programmatic support for stabilisation and conflict resolution, the UK is committed to building long-term peace and stability in the Sahel. We also use our humanitarian assistance to support those worst affected by conflict.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[38192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 9 June 2021 on religious violence in India, reference ZA56734.

Nigel Adams:

I apologise for the unacceptable delay in responding to the Member for West Lancashire's correspondence on religious violence in India. We have now responded.

■ Overseas Aid

Patrick Grady:

[\[37501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with organisations taking part in the UK Aid Match programme on the impact of the decision to delay funding until April 2022 on their operations in developing countries.

Nigel Adams:

FCDO officials have been in touch with all 16 organisations affected by the delay to UK Aid Match round 4. The FCDO has agreed to sign grant agreements in advance of the project start dates in order to provide additional assurance to the partners and

supporters of affected organisations that the FCDO is still matching their fundraising appeals pound for pound.

■ Prisoners: Torture

Tulip Siddiq: [\[37543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 July 2021 to Question 27271 on Prisoners: Torture, whether he has (a) publicly acknowledged and (b) condemned the torture of any British citizen imprisoned overseas.

Nigel Adams:

As I stated in my answer of 8 July to question 27271, we take all allegations of torture and mistreatment very seriously and will follow up with action appropriate to the circumstances of the case. The FCDO does not conduct investigations into alleged crimes committed overseas. This is set out in the publication, Support for British nationals abroad

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/961671/Guide_Support_for_British_nationals_abroad_Feb_2021.pdf), which outlines the support we can offer to British nationals who allege they have been subjected to torture and mistreatment overseas. Although we cannot investigate torture or mistreatment allegations, with the individual's permission, we can raise them with the local authorities, demanding an end to the mistreatment, and that the incident is investigated and the perpetrators are brought to justice. The FCDO does not make judgments or determinations as to whether British nationals have been subjected to torture and mistreatment. The FCDO does not keep statistics or records of the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs' references to individual cases in public statements.

■ Rwanda: Overseas Aid

Andrew Bridgen: [\[41876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the overseas aid budget has been allocated to Rwanda; and in what years that budget was allocated.

James Duddridge:

Full budgets per country and a final audited spend for 2021/22 will be published in due course, including in our regular Statistics on International Development and in the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts.

■ South Africa: Civil Disorder

Rachael Maskell: [\[38315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his South African counterpart on supporting South African access to food and essential supplies during the recent period of unrest and violence.

James Duddridge:

The UK is concerned by the outbreak of violence in July in South Africa, and strongly supports President Ramaphosa's emphasis on the importance of the rule of law. 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. This quickly restored access to food and essential supplies. The UK is also helping fund initiatives that are providing food and health-related support in the affected provinces.

The British High Commission in South Africa engage regularly with South African authorities. The Foreign Secretary last met with the South African Foreign Minister at the G7 Foreign Minister Meeting, and the UK-South Africa Bilateral Forum. The Prime Minister met with President Ramaphosa at the G7 Summit.

■ South Africa: Security**Richard Thomson:**[\[37614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent (a) assessment he has made of the domestic security situation in South Africa in light of civil unrest in that country and (b) discussions he has had with humanitarian agencies on support to those adversely affected by the unrest in that country; and if he will make a statement.

James Duddridge:

The UK is concerned by the outbreak of violence in July in South Africa, which sadly resulted in loss of life, injuries, and substantial damage to buildings and businesses. 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. The situation is now calm, and access to food and essential supplies has been restored.

We support President Ramaphosa's emphasis on the importance of the rule of law. Our Integrated Review sets out our commitment to fighting threats to democratic values and open societies around the world.

■ Sri Lanka: Conflict, Stability and Security Fund**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[40912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to review the Overseas Security and Justice Assessment related to Conflict, Security and Stability Fund programmes on Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

All Overseas Security and Justice Assessments (OSJA) are regularly reviewed in line with our OSJA policy which can be found online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-security-and-justice-assistance-osja-guidance>. The UK's programme work in Sri Lanka is subject to regular and robust OSJA assessments that analyse the potential human rights,

international humanitarian law, political and reputational risks of any proposed assistance to ensure that it supports our values and is consistent with our domestic and international human rights obligations.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[40913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to conduct a new Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability on Sri Lanka, as recommended in the annual review of Conflict Security and Stability Fund programmes for 2019-20.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office will undertake a new Joint analysis of Conflict and Stability on Sri Lanka in the autumn.

■ Sri Lanka: Human Rights

David Linden: [\[38396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to UN Resolution 46/1, what steps he is taking to protect human rights in Sri Lanka.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government, alongside our partners in the Core Group on Sri Lanka, has led international efforts over many years to promote accountability, reconciliation and human rights in Sri Lanka, including at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). On 23 March the UNHRC adopted a new UK-led resolution, 46/1. This resolution provides a continued framework for international engagement on human rights in Sri Lanka, and highlights serious concerns about the situation, including those detailed in the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to make progress on accountability and human rights, and stresses the importance of a comprehensive accountability process for all violations and abuses committed in Sri Lanka.

The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised the importance of accountability, justice and reconciliation on several occasions with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and the former Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Dinesh Gunawardena, most recently during calls on 10 May and 17 June respectively. We continue to engage with the government of Sri Lanka on these important issues.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Luke Pollard: [\[41243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Government Department is responsible for conveying the latest covid-19 quarantine policies to UK citizens living overseas.

Nigel Adams:

Inbound travel restrictions are the responsibility of Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Department for Transport (DfT), or their Devolved Administration equivalents. Changes to inbound travel restrictions are communicated via GOV.UK webpages owned by DHSC and DfT and are reflected in FCDO Travel Advice. FCDO Travel Advice provides information to help British nationals make informed decisions about foreign travel and remains under constant review to ensure it reflects our latest assessment of risks to British nationals travelling overseas. The border entry requirements in overseas destinations are the responsibility of host governments. FCDO Travel Advice pages have an entry requirements section that reflects the current rules at each destination.

■ **Vietnam: Visits Abroad****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he recently travelled to Vietnam on an A321 aircraft leased from CMT; and whether the costs of that flight were met from his Departmental budget.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary's travel expenses for Ministerial trips are published quarterly at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings-january-to-march-2021>

Information pertaining to the Foreign Secretary's travel to Vietnam will be published at the same link in due course, in accordance with timelines set out by the Cabinet Office.

■ **Zimbabwe****Ruth Jones:**[\[37574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the (a) security, (b) human rights and (c) economic situation in Zimbabwe.

James Duddridge:

The UK remains concerned about the human rights situation in Zimbabwe, including abductions, arrests and assaults of civil society and opposition activists. The UK regularly urges the Zimbabwean Government to meet its international and domestic obligations by respecting the rule of law and the freedoms and rights enshrined in the Zimbabwean Constitution, safeguarding human rights, and committing to genuine political and economic reform for the benefit of all Zimbabweans. I most recently raised the human rights situation in Zimbabwe with Foreign Minister Shava on 9 June. While the human rights situation is worrying, the security situation remains stable.

The Zimbabwean economy faces severe challenges and remains fragile. This is largely due to ongoing corruption and the Zimbabwean Government's failure to

properly address problems with the exchange rate and subsidies, exacerbated by Covid-19 and 2019's drought. Our Embassy in Harare continues to monitor developments closely, encouraging the Government of Zimbabwe to focus on taking coordinated measures to improve economic policy and management, while protecting the poorest. We will continue to speak out, both privately and in public, where we have concerns, and work alongside the international community to support a better future for all Zimbabweans.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Air Pollution

Fleur Anderson:

[38439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support people with damaged lungs as a result of air pollution.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working with organisations such as Health Education England and the Royal Colleges to ensure that healthcare professionals are equipped to treat those vulnerable to the health impacts of air pollution.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance 'Air pollution: outdoor air quality and health', also provides advice for people with chronic respiratory or cardiovascular conditions and the impacts of air pollution. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs181>

NHS England and NHS Improvement are taking a whole system approach to asthma management which includes addressing environmental triggers. The children and young people's transformation programme has asked local systems to prioritise local improvements in asthma care. This will include supporting clinicians to discuss the short and long-term adverse effects of air pollution on children with asthma and any mitigation strategies.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

Dan Carden:

[42080]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the 19.6 per cent annual increase in alcohol specific deaths; and what steps he is taking to reduce alcohol harm.

Jo Churchill:

There is a programme of work underway to address alcohol-related health harms and their impact on life chances, including the establishment of specialist alcohol care teams in hospitals and supporting children of alcohol dependent parents. The new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will spearhead efforts to improve

treatment and support and we have made the largest increase to drug and alcohol treatment funding for 15 years, with £80 million of new investment.

We have also committed to publish a new United Kingdom-wide cross-Government addiction strategy which will consider a range of issues, including drugs, alcohol and problem gambling.

■ Allergies: Health Services

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[41076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase funding for NHS allergy services.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans to increase funding for allergy services. Most allergy services are commissioned locally through clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). CCGs are allocated funding from NHS England and NHS Improvement calculated using the CCGs funding allocation formula.

■ Blood Tests: Bottles

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[41675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate supplies of blood bottles for use in routine blood tests; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

We have secured tens of millions of additional blood tubes, including importing additional supplies from the European Union and the United States, which are now in use and there continues to be stock in place to ensure clinically urgent testing continues. The Department is working closely with NHS England, the devolved administrations and the National Health Service to minimise any impact on patient care.

■ Cancer: Drugs

Mick Whitley:

[\[42142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the efficacy of Project Orbis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has been participating in Project Orbis since 1 January 2021. The Project has accelerated the pathway for patients in the United Kingdom for quicker access to innovative drugs including Osimertinib (Tagrisso), a post-surgery treatment for lung cancer.

The MHRA has been involved in 11 Orbis projects since January 2021 with several close to completion. The MHRA has processed these applications within significantly shortened timelines, liaising with the United States' Food and Drug Administration

and other regulators. Project Orbis will continue to provide patients in the UK with faster access to innovative cancer treatments with potential benefits over existing therapies.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Helen Hayes: [\[42024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Cancer Research UK Cancer Patient Survey 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure cancer services fully reopen to allow family members to join patients and to increase face to face support for cancer patients.

Jo Churchill:

In March 2021, the National Health Service updated guidance on visiting healthcare inpatient settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance supports visiting in a COVID-19 secure way. This is limited to one close family contact or somebody important to the patient, including to assist their communication and/or to meet their health, emotional, religious or spiritual care needs. Guidance for NHS settings, including hospitals and primary and community care, is regularly reviewed.

Helen Hayes: [\[42025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the support available to cancer patients whose treatment has been delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The majority of cancer services have been maintained throughout the pandemic and 381,500 people started cancer treatment between March 2020 and June 2021 - 95% of whom started treatment within 31 days.

The National Health Service is focusing on reducing the number of people waiting over 62 days on cancer pathways, particularly rescheduling diagnostic procedures or treatment for those who have had their care delayed by the pandemic. While some people have experienced changes to their treatment and care, cancer teams are supporting patients with any changes and access to support.

■ Cancer: Screening

Rachael Maskell: [\[41006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of cancer screening tests that have taken place for each type of cancer in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

Annual statistics for the three National Health Service cancer screening programmes are available online. The data for each of the last five years is reproduced in the following table:

NHS CANCER SCREENING PROGRAMME (NUMBER OF TESTS, MILLIONS)			
Year	Bowel	Cervical	Breast
2015-16	2.41	3.13	2.16
2016-17	2.61	3.21	2.20
2017-18	2.53	3.22	2.14
2018-19	2.74	3.47	2.23
2019-20	2.81	3.23	2.12

Source: www.digital.nhs.uk, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-screening-programmes-annual-report>, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-population-screening-programmes-kpi-reports>

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Patrick Grady:

[41935]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with representatives of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on the time taken to publish updated guidance on Myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME).

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for developing its guidelines in line with its established methods and processes.

NICE has advised that it plans to host a roundtable event in September to gain support for the guideline to ensure effective implementation.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Mr Mark Harper:

[R] [40739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the evidential basis is for the decision to change the NHS Covid App's operational rules to reduce the time period to notify contacts from within five days to within two days of asymptomatic cases testing positive; and what estimate he has been made of the scale of the consequential reduction in notifications from that change.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: For people who tested positive for COVID-19 but did not have symptoms, it is difficult to know when the period of infectiousness started. Someone without symptoms may have been tested at any point between the start and end of their period of infectiousness. Advice from Public Health England, taking into account operational, clinical and other factors, is that the highest risk

period for contacts is most likely to be two days from the test date, this is in line with standard contact tracing practice. The NHS COVID-19 app has therefore been updated to look back two days from the positive test date for contacts of cases who had no symptoms. This change strikes a balance between protecting public health and reducing potential social and economic disruption. The anonymous nature of the app means it is not possible to robustly calculate what impact this change will have, however we are confident this will significantly reduce the number of low-risk contacts being advised to self-isolate.

■ Coronavirus: Public Inquiries

Patricia Gibson: [\[40968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what preparations his Department has made for the holding of the public inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 outbreak; and what progress the Government has made towards holding that inquiry in Spring 2022 since that inquiry was announced on 12 May 2021.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: The public inquiry into COVID-19 has not yet been set up and its terms of reference are not yet confirmed. The Department is undertaking the appropriate preparatory work ahead of the terms of reference for the inquiry being announced, for example on planning, staffing, and how the Department will work with other relevant partner organisations within the health and social care sector.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Justin Madders: [\[35711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) details of the MHRA's review into the Innova covid-19 lateral flow tests and (b) criteria applied to determine that those tests are satisfactory for use.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department and NHS Test and Trace have taken on the role of legal manufacturer for lateral flow self-tests, which have been given a Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) exceptional use authorisation for the purpose of detection of COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals as part of the national testing programme. As legal manufacturer, the Department and NHS Test and Trace are required to have a Quality Management System (QMS) in place. The QMS is separate to that of the Innova Medical Group in the United States of America (USA) and ensures that tests being used in the United Kingdom (UK) are subject to appropriate controls.

After the US Food and Drug Association safety notice was issued on 10 June, MHRA asked the Department and NHS Test and Trace to investigate whether the UK could be affected by any of the concerns raised. MHRA were satisfied of the limited applicability of the FDA's actions in the USA to the products supplied in the UK by the

Department and NHS Test and Trace and their proposed actions to mitigate risks from these issues.

The Department published information and data on the performance of lateral flow tests in the UK which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lateral-flow-device-performance-data>

Rachael Maskell:

[35756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which organisations, sectors and businesses are involved in the Government's covid-19 daily contact testing study; and when each of those bodies commenced their involvement in that study.

Jo Churchill:

The following organisations have been participating in the workplaces Daily Contact Testing pilot evaluation scheme since March 2021:

- John Lewis;
- Jaguar Land Rover;
- Primula (Kavli);
- Northumbria Water;
- Oxford Biomedica;
- Greencore;
- Co-op - Castlewood;
- British Steel;
- Longley Farm;
- Agrial Fresh Produce;
- Pilgrim's;
- Moy Park;
- AB Foods Silver Spoon;
- Danish Crown Pork;
- Apetito;
- Network Rail;
- Transport for London;
- London Heathrow; and
- Border Force.

In May 2021 Cabinet Office – Building 5 was enrolled in the scheme. There has also been a secondary schools and colleges daily contact testing clinical study, trialling assisted on-site testing. This was a randomised control trial, sponsored by the Department and Public Health England.

Paul Blomfield: [\[41848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the official list of covid-19 symptoms which trigger testing.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders MP) on 30 June to Question [25024](#).

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Fleur Anderson: [\[37602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the covid-19 vaccine app will be changed to enable people of 17 years and 9 months to book a vaccine appointment.

Nadhim Zahawi:

A COVID-19 vaccine app which allows vaccine appointments to be booked in the United Kingdom does not exist. COVID-19 vaccinations can be booked via the National Booking System which can be accessed online or by calling 119, or alternatively, by booking through an individual's General Practice. On 12 August 2021, SMS messages were sent to all individuals aged over 17 years and 9 months inviting them to book their COVID-19 vaccination appointment.

Helen Hayes: [\[38354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to publish the impact assessment on making covid-19 vaccination a condition of deployment in care homes; and what engagement is planned with the social care sector on that matter.

Helen Hayes: [\[38355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Statement of impact – The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2021 updated 19 July 2021 and the estimated of £100 million for making vaccination a condition of deployment in care homes, how that cost will be funded; and what (a) legal and (b) employment expertise will be made available to care home providers to implement that policy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: The £100 million estimate set out in the Impact Statement refers to the midpoint of the potential cost of the policy; the number of staff leaving care homes and the impact on employers could be lower than this estimate. Given this uncertainty, we are continuing to monitor the uptake rate and the potential impact of the regulations on the ability of care homes to continue delivering the best quality care.

The Government published operational guidance on 4 August 2021 to support providers to implement the policy. The Guidance provides information on good

employment practice for care homes, including on the importance of following a fair procedure before dismissing.

We are working with Skills for Care to ensure that resources such as guidance and best practice are available to support providers and local authorities with capacity and workforce planning, recruitment and well-being.

To support providers with the implementation of the policy, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) have published high-level advice on vaccination as a condition of deployment. ACAS are developing more detailed guidance to further support and share good practice across the sector.

The full impact assessment on making COVID-19 vaccination a condition of deployment in care homes will be published as soon as possible.

The Department has worked closely with stakeholders throughout the development of this policy and will continue to do so throughout its implementation.

Paula Barker:

[\[41373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the viability of a covid-19 booster jab for vulnerable groups who were vaccinated earlier in 2021 ahead of winter 2021-22.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) interim advice is that COVID-19 booster vaccines should first be offered to the most vulnerable. The JCVI advises a two staged approach, with individuals in stage one offered a COVID-19 booster and flu vaccine, as soon as possible from September. Individuals in stage two would be offered a booster vaccine as soon as practicable after stage one, with equal emphasis on deployment of the flu vaccine where eligible.

Final decisions on the timing, scope and eligibility will be confirmed once the JCVI has provided their final advice.

Hilary Benn:

[\[41664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who normally receive a flu vaccination, including people with asthma and lung conditions, will receive a covid-19 booster vaccination in autumn 2021.

Duncan Baker:

[\[42174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of (a) the ONS that chronic lower respiratory disease is the third most common underlying condition with death as a result of covid-19 in quarter 2 of 2021 and (b) of the British Lung Foundation, in its 2012 survey, that 81 per cent of chronic lower respiratory disease is asthma, if he will make it his policy that people with asthma who receive a free annual flu vaccination will be included in any covid-19 booster vaccination programme.

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 advises a two stage approach, with individuals in stage one offered a booster vaccine and flu vaccine, as soon as possible from September. Individuals in stage two would be offered a booster vaccine as soon as practicable after stage one, with equal emphasis on deployment of the flu vaccine where eligible. The JCVI suggests those aged 16 to 49 years old who are in an influenza or COVID-19 at risk group, including some patients with chronic respiratory disease and asthma are currently included in stage two.

Final decisions on the timing and scope and cohort eligibility, booster programme will be confirmed once the JCVI has provided their final advice.

Sir Charles Walker:

[\[41742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to provide similar guidance to the temporary clinical authorisation granted by the Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine on 2 December 2020, to the MHRA in regards to the fast-tracking of nasal covid-19 vaccines; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

COVID-19 vaccines which can be administered nasally are currently in early clinical trials. Any route to approval of such treatments will be subject to the developer seeking regulatory approval from the United Kingdom's independent medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

■ Dental Services

Julian Sturdy:

[\[40886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of dental practices in York accepting new NHS adult patients; and what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the ability of dental practices to accept new NHS patients in (a) York and (b) England.

Jo Churchill:

No estimate of the number of dental practices in York or England accepting new National Health Service (NHS) adult patients has been made. NHS England and NHS Improvement are responsible for commissioning primary dental care services to meet local need, including for new patients.

Availability of NHS dentistry continues to be constrained in many cases due to the impact of COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures. NHS dentists have been asked to meet as many prioritised needs as possible, focussing first on urgent care and vulnerable groups, followed by overdue appointments. The Department are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement and Public Health England to increase access taking into account the ongoing infection prevention and control and social distancing requirements.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Food**Philip Dunne:**[\[40777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to encourage procurement of British produce within meals available for (a) staff in his Department and (b) patients since 1 January 2021.

Edward Argar:

The catering provider contracted to supply services to the Department has adopted a United Kingdom-first sourcing policy.

The National Health Service is required to purchase food through the appropriate frameworks which identifies safe working practices and the quality of the product. The NHS Supply Chain and NHS organisations have shown an ambition to source with local producers where possible.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Uniserve**John McDonnell:**[\[41624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what payments have been made to Uniserve Ltd for (a) demurrage and (b) detention fees for each month in the last six months for which figures are available.

Jo Churchill:

We are unable to provide the information requested as it is commercially sensitive.

■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment**Kim Leadbeater:**[\[41398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the use of Freestyle Libra glucose monitoring equipment in the NHS to help monitor and control diabetes.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: The NHS Long Term Plan set out a commitment that “in line with clinical guidelines, patients with type 1 diabetes benefit from life changing flash glucose monitors from April 2019, ending the variation patients in some parts of the country are facing”. This commitment was followed by published guidance in March 2019, which set out new national funding arrangements and included a specific target for 20% of all type 1 diabetics in England to receive access to flash glucose monitoring by March 2021.

By July 2020, 31.5% of all people living with type 1 diabetes in England had access to this technology. By March 2021, uptake had risen to 47%. As of 1 April 2021, commissioning and financial responsibility reverted to local commissioners, who are continuing to support patient access to this technology.

■ Functional Neurological Disorder

Ben Lake: [41136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help ensure that specific information on Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) is available on NHS Choices and NHS Inform websites through a dedicated FND page.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Choices website has been rebranded as NHS.UK and is managed by NHS Digital. Information on functional neurological disorder is available on NHS.UK and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/medically-unexplained-symptoms/>.

NHS Digital receive regular requests for new content on the NHS.UK website which are prioritised. NHS Digital are currently reviewing their process for how content is maintained and expanded.

NHS Digital are not responsible for the content on NHS Inform as this is managed by NHS Scotland.

■ General Practitioners

Julian Sturdy: [40874]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on access to GPs of the transition to a telephone and online triage model for appointments.

Julian Sturdy: [40875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department took to consult patients prior to the transition to a telephone and online triage model for appointments across general practice.

Julian Sturdy: [40876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the guidance issued by his Department in May 2021 requiring general practices to offer face-to-face appointments, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that face-to-face appointments are being offered to patients across general practice.

Julian Sturdy: [40877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact on older people and those who are less confident with technology of the transition to an online and telephone triage model across general practice; and whether his Department plans to put in place measures to respond to the impact of that transition on those groups of people.

Jo Churchill:

General Practices (GP) have remained open throughout the pandemic, offering face to face appointments to those who need them as well as telephone and online consultations and are grateful for the effort they have made to support their patients. As outlined in the NHS England and NHS Improvement's letter of the 19 July 2021 to GP practices, it remains a clear expectation that practices should offer a blend of face to face and remote appointments, with remote triage where possible. This is the approach many practices are taking and in July 2021, over half of all appointments (excluding vaccination appointments) were face to face (57.2%).

NHS England and NHS Improvement have commissioned an independent evaluation to understand the impact for staff, patients and the wider health and care system of using digital tools in primary care (and in particular the effectiveness of online consultation systems and triage approaches in general practice) to inform its long-term strategy.

The Department continues to work with NHS England and NHS Improvement and GPs to assess the impact of different types of appointment and to improve access for all patient groups. The public sector equality duty requires public authorities to have due regard to the impact of their policies on different protected characteristics, one of which is age.

■ Health Services: Asylum**Patrick Grady:**[\[41936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of exempting refused asylum seekers from NHS overseas charges.

Patrick Grady:[\[41937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total amount of NHS charges that have been (a) charged to and (b) collected from refused asylum seekers was in each of the last ten years.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015, include exemptions from charge for certain categories of vulnerable migrants and overseas visitors. Failed asylum seekers who are receiving state support are exempt from National Health Service charges on the basis of recognised barriers to return or because they have children. The Department continues to consider evidence relating to the Regulations under review, including evidence on charges for failed asylum seekers.

The Department does not hold the requested data on the amount charged to and collected from, failed asylum seekers.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Derek Twigg:

[\[40612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria his Department will use to determine whether the temporary expansion of eligibility for flu vaccination to people aged over 50 should be made permanent.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: Advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) noted that it was advisable to continue the vaccination of the 50–64-year-old cohort because from the age of 50 years old, individuals are at a greater risk of being hospitalised as a result of COVID-19 and the result of coinfection of COVID-19 and flu is likely to be more severe. However, no decision has been made on whether the eligibility of this cohort will be made permanent.

The Department will continue to consider the advice of the JCVI in decisions on which flu cohorts are recommended for a flu vaccine in the future. The JCVI use the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's methodology and criteria to assess whether a vaccine programme can be considered cost effective or not.

■ Medical Equipment: Databases

Patricia Gibson:

[\[40969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) risk assessment has been carried out on and (b) regulations govern the use of mesh as a treatment for hernias; and what progress has been made on establishing the UK-wide Medical Device Information System.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: The benefits and risks of using mesh for hernia repair have been considered in detail by clinicians and the professional bodies who represent them and there remains a clinical need for these devices.

The requirements of the medical device regulations are such that the manufacturer of the medical device must hold all relevant scientific and clinical evidence to demonstrate the safety and performance of their device before they can place the product on the market. For these types of devices, they must then obtain certification from an independent third-party conformity assessment body who will undertake a full review of all the manufacturers data and how it supports the claims being made. Once they are satisfied that the device is safe and performs as expected they will issue a certificate to the manufacturer confirming that they device complies with the regulations.

A UK-wide Medical Device Information System (MDIS) is being developed. We intend to begin a formal public consultation on the MDIS regulations later this year with the aim of laying the regulations in due course, subject to parliamentary time.

Members: Correspondence

Tony Lloyd: [\[19489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 25 February 2021 from the hon. Member for Rochdale on the legislative proposals for a Health and Care Bill.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 24 June 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member on 3 September 2021.

John Penrose: [\[30339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letters of 19 March 2021 and 6 May 2021 from the hon Member for Weston-super-Mare, on behalf of a constituent Charles Athcley on DIY abortions.

Helen Whately:

We replied to the hon. Member on 2 August 2021.

Mental Health Services: Sheffield

Louise Haigh: [\[42000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of effect of funding allocated to early support hubs on trends in average waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services in Sheffield.

Louise Haigh: [\[42001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of funding allocated to early support hubs on trends in the number of young people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No specific assessment has been made.

NHS: Motor Vehicles

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[41651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that ambulances and fleets of NHS vehicles are fuelled and powered sustainably.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[41652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of ambulances are hybrid or electrically powered.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[41653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on ensuring that NHS ambulances do not contribute to worsening air quality in urban areas.

Edward Argar:

No such discussions have been held. The proportion of ambulances that are hybrid or electrically powered is not collected centrally. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement advises that a small number of electric or alternative fuel vehicles are currently in use across the ambulance fleet.

The Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service strategy, published in October 2020, sets out the ambition that the National Health Service will transition to a zero-emission fleet, ahead of its commitment to become net zero by 2040. Work is underway to develop zero emission ambulances.

■ NHS: Publications**Peter Dowd:**[\[41906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what NHS England publications and data collection have been paused or suspended from quarter 4 of 2020-21 to quarter 2 of 2021-22.

Edward Argar:

Two collections were paused and have subsequently been retired following a consultation. The Mental Health Community Teams Activity data collection was paused for quarter 4 2020-21 and The Dementia Assessment and Referral data collection was paused for quarter 4 2020-21 to quarter 1 2021-2.

The Mixed Sex Accommodation for data relating to October 2021 and the Quarterly Monitoring of Cancelled Operations for data relating to quarter 3 2021-22 were paused for quarter 4 of 2020-21 to quarter 2 of 2021-22 and will resume. The Critical Care Bed Capacity and Urgent Operations, Delayed Transfers of Care, Direct Access Audiology and Venous Thromboembolism collections were paused from quarter 4 of 2020-21 to quarter 2 of 2021-22 and remain paused.

Peter Dowd:[\[41907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when a decision will be taken to reinstate the collection and publication of NHS data in currently paused publications or series.

Edward Argar:

The Mixed Sex Accommodation for data relating to October 2021 and Quarterly Monitoring of Cancelled Operations for data relating to quarter 3 2021-22 collections are due to resume.

The Critical Care Bed Capacity and Urgent Operations, Delayed Transfers of Care, Direct Access Audiology and Venous Thromboembolism collections were paused from quarter 4 of 2020-21 to quarter 2 of 2021-22 and will remain paused. NHS England and NHS Improvement will keep the paused collections under review to establish at which point further collections should be reinstated and update published information when the status of the collections change.

■ Primary Health Care

Feryal Clark: [\[41358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer on 27 July 2021 to Question 35950 on Primary Health Care, what steps his Department is taking to support people to self care for minor ailments.

Jo Churchill:

All community pharmacies in England delivering National Health Services (NHS) provide support for patients to self-care. This support can include provision of advice, information, and where appropriate the sale of medicines to patients, carers and the general public to support their self-care for minor ailments.

Additionally, over 10,500 community pharmacies in England are registered to deliver the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service. This enables patients to be referred from NHS 111 and General Practice to quickly and conveniently have their symptoms of minor illness assessed by the pharmacist, who will carry out a physical assessment as appropriate, or offer a remote consultation. In the majority of cases patients receive health advice or may purchase medicines to support self-care.

Feryal Clark: [\[41361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answers on 27 July 2021 to Question 35950 on Primary Health Care and Question 35951 on Integrated Care Systems, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of its policy to promote self care for minor ailments; and whether he has appointed a governing body to oversee that policy.

Jo Churchill:

The Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework 2019-2024 five-year deal sets out the joint vision of the Government, NHS England & NHS Improvement and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee for how community pharmacy will support the NHS Long Term Plan by providing more clinical services and becoming the first point of call for minor ailments. There are no plans to appoint a governing body to oversee the promotion of self-care for minor ailments.

Peter Dowd: [\[41904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) encourage people to self-care and (b) educate healthcare professionals to support people to self-care for minor ailments.

Jo Churchill:

Supported self-management or self-care is part of the NHS Long Term Plan, to encourage and empower people to manage their ongoing physical and mental health conditions. It is also included in NHS England's action plan 'Universal Personalised Care: Implementing the Comprehensive Model' published in 2019 which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/universal-personalised-care-implementing-the-comprehensive-model/>

Peter Dowd: [41905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to develop a national strategy to promote self-care for minor ailments.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans to introduce a dedicated national strategy to promote self-care for minor ailments. However, supported self-management or self-care is an integral part of the NHS Long Term Plan, to encourage and empower people to manage their ongoing physical and mental health conditions.

All community pharmacies in England delivering NHS services provide support for patients to self-care, including for minor ailments. This support can include provision of advice, information, and where appropriate the sale of medicines to patients, carers and the general public to support their self-care for minor ailments.

■ **Schools: Coronavirus**

David Warburton: [41114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to protect clinically extremely vulnerable children in mainstream education from covid-19, including children under the age of 12, following the easing of restrictions in schools.

Jo Churchill:

Following the results of recent clinical studies which showed that children and young people face a very low risk of serious illness if they catch COVID-19, the United Kingdom Clinical Review Panel recommended that all children and young people should be removed from the Shielded Patient List. As a result, there are no longer any children or young people under the age of 18 who are considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19.

■ **Sickle Cell Diseases: Drugs**

Hilary Benn: [40609]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to exempt medicines required to treat sickle cell disease from prescription charges.

Jo Churchill:

Sickle cell disease is not included on the list of conditions that entitle people to free prescriptions. The Government currently has no plans to review or extend the prescription charge medical exemptions list. Around 89% of prescriptions are dispensed free of charge and extensive arrangements are already in place to help people. To support those with the greatest need who do not qualify for an exemption, the cost of prescriptions can be spread by purchasing prescription pre-payment

certificates. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just over £2 per week.

■ **Supermarkets: Coronavirus**

Catherine West: [\[41107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will support supermarkets which continue to ask customers to wear face masks in their stores during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Government expects and recommends that members of the public continue to wear face coverings in crowded and enclosed spaces where they are mixing with other people they do not normally meet, which may include supermarkets.

Supermarkets and other businesses may consider encouraging the use of face coverings by both customers and employees in their stores, as part of their COVID-19 risk assessment.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq: [\[41099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) scientific and (b) medical basis for the decision to include Egypt on the covid-19 travel red list.

Jo Churchill:

The data supporting the decision to place Egypt on the travel red list in June can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-informing-international-travel-traffic-light-risk-assessments-3-june-2021>

Information on the methodology can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-risk-assessment-methodology-to-inform-international-travel-traffic-light-system/risk-assessment-methodology-to-inform-international-travel-traffic-light-system>

Ministers take the Joint Biosecurity Centre risk assessments into account alongside other factors to inform watchlists and make decisions. We are unable to provide the specific (a) scientific and (b) medical basis, which informs these decisions as it relates to the ongoing development of Government policy.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[40620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Covishield covid-19 vaccine will be recognised by the Government for the purposes of inbound international travel.

Jo Churchill:

There are a large variety of COVID-19 vaccines being administered worldwide. Work is ongoing to determine which non-United Kingdom (UK) administered vaccines we might be confident to recognise, including AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines branded as Covishield. We want to welcome international visitors back to the UK and are working to extend our approach to vaccinated passengers from key holiday destinations.

Helen Hayes:[\[41066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure people's data collected by private companies providing covid-19 testing for travel is secure and only used for public health purposes.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has reminded private providers not to process data for a purpose that would be incompatible with the purpose for which the data was initially collected. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has also set out frequently asked questions on data collection and data protection relating to COVID-19 that provide further information. This reminder together with a link to the ICO's guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/testing-on-day-2-and-day-8-for-international-arrivals>.

■ **Trodelyv****Zarah Sultana:**[\[41323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent representations he has made to representatives of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on accelerating the approval of Trodelyn for treating metastatic triple negative breast cancer (TNBC).

Ms Nadine Dorries:

No such representations have been made. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for independently assessing the efficacy and safety of drugs before approval.

HOME OFFICE■ **Asylum****Tommy Sheppard:**[\[41955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average period of time is that asylum seekers have been on Section 95 support by the time of case resolution in each of the last three years.

Chris Philp:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers on Asylum Support. These statistics can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics which shows the average period of time that asylum seekers have been on Section 95 support by the time of case resolution of the last three years. These figures are not available in a reportable format and to provide the information could only be done at disproportionate cost.

■ **Deportation: Afghanistan**

Anne McLaughlin:

[41950]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government's immigration returns agreement with Afghanistan is no longer valid.

Chris Philp:

Enforced returns to Afghanistan have been paused

■ **Deportation: Jamaica and Zimbabwe**

Paul Blomfield:

[41845]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any of those people deported on the charter flight to (a) Zimbabwe on 21 July 2021 and (b) Jamaica on 11 August 2021 or any of those who were scheduled for deportation on those two flights but were not placed on the planes on the day were under the age of 12 when they came to the UK.

Chris Philp:

The Government is fully committed to discharging the obligation under the UK Borders Act 2007, which is that a non-British citizen convicted of an offence in the UK and sentenced to 12 months or more imprisonment and to whom an exception does not apply is deported from the UK. A person's age upon arrival to the UK or their nationality are not exceptions to automatic deportation, but may be relevant factors in considering whether an exception applies.

The length of time a person has lived in the UK, as well as the strength of their social, cultural and family ties to the UK, are factors considered when determining any Article 8 claim and whether there are very compelling circumstances which satisfy the requirements of the Immigration Rules. A foreign criminal is given the opportunity to make submissions as to why they should not be deported and all claims raised are fully considered and decided upon before deportation, including, where applicable, via the Courts.

We only return those with no legal right to remain in the UK, including foreign national offenders. Individuals are only returned to their country of origin when the Home Office and, where applicable, the Courts deem it is safe to do so.

Our priority will always be to keep our communities safe and since January 2019 we have removed 8,441 foreign criminals.

■ Entry Clearances: Afghanistan

Patricia Gibson: [\[41939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to accelerate the provision of visas to the 35 Afghan Chevening scholarship students.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government worked tirelessly to support the evacuation from Afghanistan, up until the UK's final withdrawal on 28 August. All 35 Chevening scholars were contacted and the Afghan Chevening Scholars who arrived in the UK were given conditions of permission which allow them to start their course of study.

We are aware that there a small number of scholars who are currently in a third country overseas and we are working to find the best solution for them to come to the UK to start their course, unless they choose to defer their studies until next year. Those overseas in a third country can make a visa application as normal.

■ Hamas

Theresa Villiers: [\[41744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will add the political wing of Hamas to the list of proscribed terrorist groups.

Damian Hinds:

The Government does not routinely comment on whether groups are, or are not, being considered for proscription. The Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under review.

■ Refugees

Chris Green: [\[41909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were granted refugee status in each year since 2010 broken down by local authority allocation.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of the initial decisions made on asylum applications and the number of refugees resettled by local authority through one of the UK's resettlement schemes are published in tables Asy_D02 and Res_D01 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#); breakdowns by year are available. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest published statistics relate to data up to the end of June 2021.

Please note the Home Office does not publish local authority breakdowns on asylum applications as the asylum system operates on a national level. Additionally, when an individual is granted refugee status they are no longer required to inform the Home Office of their address and are free to move around the UK. Additionally, the Home Office publishes further data on asylum and resettlement in the [asylum and](#)

[resettlement summary tables](#). The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

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

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Caroline Lucas:

[41802]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme will open for applications; for what reasons that scheme was not prepared and available in advance of the US and UK troop withdrawal from Afghanistan; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK's military evacuation from Afghanistan concluded on 28 August. It was the largest UK military evacuation since the Second World War. Our armed forces and Civil Service staff worked around the clock to evacuate over 15,000 people.

At the same time the Government has worked at pace to develop a new and bespoke resettlement scheme, announced on 18 August, which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable Afghans in its first year, rising to 20,000 long-term – one of the most generous schemes in British history. The Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is in addition to the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy (ARAP), which has brought around 7,000 Afghans to the UK since launching in April 2021.

Under the ACRS we will work with the international organisations to identify those at risk, as we have done in respect of those who fled the war in Syria - but we will also include Afghans who have contributed to civil society or face a particular risk from the Taliban, for example, because of their role in standing up for democracy and human rights, or because of their gender, sexuality or religion. We are working at pace to get the ACRS up and running and we will announce further details as soon as possible.

The UK has an enduring commitment to the people of Afghanistan and the Government is continuing to work with international partners on a shared plan for the people of Afghanistan which will contribute to long-term regional stability.

Paula Barker:

[42198]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the roll out and implementation of the Afghanistan resettlement scheme; and when hon. Members will receive a detailed briefing on that scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

On 18th August the Prime Minister announced a new and bespoke Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) to relocate 5,000 vulnerable Afghans in its first year, rising to 20,000 over the long-term – one of the most generous schemes in British history.

On 6th September, the Prime Minister provided further information on the Scheme, including announcing that those arriving through the ACRS will be granted immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain, allowing them to benefit from full rights and entitlements and providing them with the certainty and stability they need to build their life here.

Given the current complex picture in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, it is important that the Government fully considers the operational delivery of the scheme with its international partners. We are working urgently to open this route and further details will be announced in due course on gov.uk. Parliamentarians will be kept informed in the usual ways.

The ACRS is an integral part of the UK's response to the humanitarian situation and will provide protection for thousands of Afghan citizens and other refugees identified as most at risk.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[38188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 21 May 2021 on Government grants for asbestos removal, reference ZA56579.

Christopher Pincher:

A response to the Letter from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire was sent on 16 August.

■ Right to Buy Scheme: Housing Associations

Stephen McPartland:

[\[41867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to extend right to buy to housing association tenants after the completion of the 2017 pilot scheme.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to the Right to Buy and to spreading the dream of home ownership to even more people. The Midlands pilot of the Voluntary Right to Buy scheme completed this year and has been fully evaluated. The Government is looking at the findings, which will be used to inform future policy. As set out in the 2019 manifesto, the Government will evaluate new pilot areas and we will be announcing more details on that.

■ Waking Watch Relief Fund: Leeds

Hilary Benn:

[\[41668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will provide details of all the buildings in (a) LS1, (b) LS2, (c) LS6, (d) LS7, (e) LS9, (f) LS10 and (g) LS11 postcode areas that have received funding from the Waking Watch Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

As at 6 September 2021, 12 applications covering 14 buildings have been approved for funding from the Waking Watch Relief Fund in the areas covered by the LS1, LS2, LS10, LS6, LS7 and LS9 postcodes.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Dispute Resolution

Emily Thornberry:

[\[40764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Government's proposed 2022 ban on the promotion of unhealthy foods will fall under the scope of the ISDS provisions in CPTPP should the UK accede before that ban comes into force.

Greg Hands:

Acceding to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will not prevent the UK regulating in the public interest, including in relation to public health. CPTPP explicitly reaffirms states' right to regulate under international law. It also protects this right through numerous safeguards, including procedural provisions to minimise the impacts of frivolous and unsuccessful Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) claims faced by states.

■ Department for International Trade: China

Tim Loughton:

[\[41604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many meetings her Department has had with representatives of the People's Republic of China since 12 January 2021; what was discussed at each of those meetings; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

Neither Ministerial colleagues nor officials in London have met with the Chinese administration during this time.

Through the UK's diplomatic missions in China, there is regular engagement with Chinese government counterparts to support UK trade interests.

■ Developing Countries Trading Scheme**Emily Thornberry:** [\[38169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571 on Trade: Developing Countries, whether genocide against religious minorities will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under her new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571 on Trade: Developing Countries, whether instituting a system of racial segregation or apartheid will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under the new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether the use of forced or compulsory labour as a means of racial or religious discrimination will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under the new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether failure to prevent the use of children for prostitution or for the production of pornography will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under the new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under her new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether the mass detention of civilians without charge or trial will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under her new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether the state-sanctioned use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment will remain an act that could lead to the variation or

suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under her new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether the use of capital punishment against children and pregnant women will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under her new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether failure to prevent the trafficking and forced marriage of women will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under her new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Emily Thornberry: [\[38178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 35571, whether failure to prevent the organisation, funding and execution of acts of terrorism will remain an act that could lead to the variation or suspension of a nation's preferential treatment under her new Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Decisions on the Developing Countries Trading Scheme have not yet been taken, given the ongoing public consultation. When considering the conditions that could lead to varying or suspending preferences, HM Government will give due consideration to the views expressed through the consultation.

■ **Generalised System of Preferences: Afghanistan**

Emily Thornberry: [\[40760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to suspend Afghanistan's access to the tariff preferences available under the Least Developed Countries framework of the UK's Generalised Scheme of Preferences.

Emily Thornberry: [\[40761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the compliance of the new government in Afghanistan with the conditions determining access to the Least Developed Countries framework of the UK's Generalised Scheme of Preferences.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

It is too early to say what impact the current situation will have on the United Kingdom's trade relationship with Afghanistan. However, HM Government continues to monitor the situation there closely.

■ Iron and Steel: India**Jessica Morden:** [\[40783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to support increased UK steel exports to India.

Graham Stuart:

India is a major steel producer and is second only to China in terms of annual production with an output of 100.3mmt in 2020. India's low production costs mean it is not a priority market for bulk steel from the UK but it is an important market for specialist UK steel products. The Department for International Trade supports all UK companies who wish to export through our extensive trade promotion network and has been actively working to reduce trade barriers to India, including through our Free Trade Agreement negotiations.

■ Trade Agreements: Consumers**Emily Thornberry:** [\[40771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish a copy of the presentation discussed by her Strategic Trade Advisory Group on 19 July 2021 on the consumer interest in trade deals.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG) meetings are private so, whilst individual presentations are not made publicly available, summaries of STAG meetings are published on GOV.UK

JUSTICE**■ Crimes of Violence: Prison Sentences****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[40742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of people aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who have been remanded in custody for offences related to (i) violence and (ii) gang related violence (A) in total and (B) by home local authority area in England since 2018.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[40743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of girls aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who have been remanded in custody for offences related to (i) violence and (ii) gang related violence (A) in total and (B) by home local authority area in England since 2018.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[40744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of people aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who have been given a custodial sentence for

offences related to (i) violence and (ii) gang related violence (A) in England and (B) by the person's home local authority address in England, since 2018.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[40745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of girls aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who have been given a custodial sentence for offences related to (i) violence and (ii) gang related violence (A) in England and (B) by the person's home local authority address in England, since 2018.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[40746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of people aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who have returned to custody after release for reoffences related to (i) violence and (ii) gang related violence (A) in England and (B) by the person's home local authority address in England, since 2018.

Alex Chalk:

The Government is committed to tackling crime and serious violence. The Beating Crime Plan was published in July and introduces bold new measures to drive down crime and tackle the underlying causes of repeat offending. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will protect the public by giving the police the tools needed to tackle crime and disorder, and by addressing the root causes of serious violent crime using multi-agency approaches to prevention.

The full information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. This is because it would require manually searching case files. However, the questions can, in part, be answered by published statistics in the Criminal Justice Statistics annual report data tools.

The Ministry of Justice publishes court outcomes by offence, remand status, sex, age and several other characteristics. This information from 2010 to 2020 is available in Criminal Justice Statistics 2020 annual report here, see in the following data tools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2020>

- Outcomes by offence data tool
- Remands: Magistrates' court data tool
- Remands: Crown Court data tool

For example:

40742 - 40743: in the Remands: Magistrates' court tool, filter on 'age range', 'sex' and 'offence group'.

40744 – 40745: in the Outcomes by offence data tool, filter on 'age range', 'sex' and 'offence group'.

Note that offences are recorded under the specific offence recorded in law, so while violence is an offence group, gang-related violence is not centrally held in the court proceedings database and could only be obtained by manually searching court

records at disproportionate costs. The same applies for address/local authority of defendants.

■ **Prison Officers: Ethnic Groups**

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[41775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Recruitment diversity statistics June 21, published on 19 August 2021, if he will make a statement on the Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service's commitment that 14 per cent of new prison officer recruits would come from BAME backgrounds by December 2020.

Alex Chalk:

In response to recommendation 28 of the 2017 Lammy Review, HMPPS remains committed to achieving a target of 14% of all staff recruited being from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background.

The proportions for offers formally accepted by BAME candidates for prisoner officer roles varied each quarter between December 2019 and March 2021 ranging from 8.7% to 32.0%.

HMPPS regularly reviews and evaluates candidate performance during the prison officer recruitment process for fairness and efficacy and no adverse impact has been found against any group participating in the prison officer recruitment process at any stage of the recruitment process, including BAME candidates. We continue to recruit prison officers and tailor our marketing and attraction to increase diversity of applications. HMPPS is targeting prisons where there is disparity between the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workforce population and the local population through using an enhanced recruitment approach.

■ **Prisoners: Ethnic Groups**

Ruth Jones: [\[37577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the number of children in prison from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds.

Alex Chalk:

Monthly statistics on the population of children and young people within secure children's homes (SCHs), secure training centres (STCs) and young offender institutions (YOIs) can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-custody-data>. The publication contains detailed information on the make-up of the custody population, including ethnicity.

The number of children and young people in custody has decreased considerably over the past ten years across all ethnic minority groups, however we recognise that this decrease has not fallen evenly for children of different ethnicities which is a matter of concern.

Addressing race disparities is extremely important to the Ministry of Justice and we continue to prioritise this work, examining and acting on the issues highlighted in

several reviews, recent independent inspections, and collecting and interrogating data in the spirit of “explain or change”.

The MoJ and the Youth Justice Board work closely together in seeking to tackle racial disparities in the youth justice system, including custody. Work in this area includes providing the tools and data to help frontline youth justice services to understand the needs of ethnic minority children, work with the Magistrates’ Association to build awareness of disparity among sentencers, securing over £1m in funding to use physical activity to improve outcomes for 11,000 ethnic minority children at risk of entering the criminal justice system and improving Youth Custody Service workforce diversity.

■ Prisoners: Gender Recognition

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[37449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what provisions are in place to prevent men claiming to identify as a woman to ensure their transfer to a female prison.

Alex Chalk:

Decisions regarding the allocation of transgender prisoners are made on a case-by-case basis, as set out in the Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service policy framework ‘The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender’.

Where a prisoner wishes to be moved to a prison that does not match their legal gender, a Complex Case Board (chaired by a senior prison manager) must be held to consider this request. The prisoner is encouraged to make their views known, but this does not oblige HMPPS to allocate them accordingly. In the decision-making process the assessment of risk is paramount (including any risks posed to, and by, the prisoner and the risk of self-harm). The policy requires the Case Board to consider, amongst other factors, the strength of a person’s evidence of living in their acquired gender (including any evidence that may raise concerns about an offender’s sincerity or motivations), as well as a prisoner’s index offence and offending history.

We are confident that this approach allows us to appropriately balance and protect the rights, safety and wellbeing of all prisoners.

■ Probation: Statistics

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[38220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Official statistics announcement, Community Performance Quarterly, update to June 2021, as updated on the 26 October 2020, how he plans to consult stakeholders on the future form that probation performance statistics take; and when he plans to publish his Department’s plans for future statistical publications on probation performance.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice’s official statistics announcement of 26 October 2020 set out the move from the previous quarterly publication of probation statistics to an annual

publication in 2020/21. It also flagged the need for a new publication once reforms to unify delivery of probation services had taken effect in June 2021, to reflect changes to the performance framework for probation under this new delivery model. The Ministry of Justice will consult users of these statistics on proposals on new arrangements for future publication of probation performance data during the autumn of 2021. The consultation will be undertaken in line with relevant Government Statistical Service guidance (which is informed by the Code of Practice on Official Statistics).

■ Youth Custody

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[38219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Action Plan: Outcomes for Young Adults in Custody, published on 20 January 2021, what progress has been made on the preparation of a national Young Adults Strategy; and when he plans for that strategy to be published.

Alex Chalk:

Following the publication of the Action Plan: Outcomes for Young Adults in Custody in April 2021, a project team has been established to identify existing good practice from the prison estate to develop a national strategy for Young Adults (aged 18-25). This will support the existing Model for Operational Delivery for young adults.

Nine pilot sites have been selected to develop approaches to improve their offer for young adults. The evaluation of these approaches will aid the development of the strategy moving forward.

There are no current plans for the strategy to be published as it is intended as operational guidance to help staff working with young adults in prisons.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Education: Northern Ireland

Alex Davies-Jones: [\[42203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent assessment he has made of the progress on the Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland being undertaken by the Department of Education Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Independent Review of Education was an important commitment made in the New Decade, New Approach Agreement, to be taken forward by the Northern Ireland Executive. It presents a real opportunity to ensure that Northern Ireland's education system works for all children and young people, and helps promote integration and reconciliation at its core.

The Government welcomes the establishment of the Review, the publication of its Terms of Reference and the completion of the recruitment process for the Panel. We hope this progress will continue and look forward to the Panel's findings, which will be for the Northern Ireland Executive to consider and take forward.

The Government firmly believes that greater integration within Northern Ireland's education system is an essential aspect of the reconciliation process in Northern Ireland. That is why, as part of the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements, the Government committed to providing up to £500 million of funding to support shared and integrated education projects. The £400 million New Deal for Northern Ireland will also support initiatives to enable children from different community backgrounds to be educated together.

■ **Integrated Schools: Northern Ireland**

Alex Davies-Jones:

[\[42202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the findings of the poll conducted by the Integrated Education Fund, published June 2021, what steps he is taking to increase access to integrated schools for children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government firmly believes that greater integration within education is an essential aspect of the reconciliation process in Northern Ireland. That is why, as part of the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements, the Government committed to providing up to £500 million of funding to support shared and integrated education projects. This funding is supporting the building of 23 integrated schools and 5 shared campuses.

The £400 million New Deal for Northern Ireland will also support initiatives to enable children from different community backgrounds to be educated together. The Government is currently exploring ways in which this funding can best be deployed.

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Ethnic Groups**

Ruth Jones:

[\[37587\]](#)

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

Mr Robin Walker:

To effectively collate and capture diversity data, the department encourages staff to complete a diversity declaration questionnaire. The HR team regularly analyses this data. Current data held suggests 2.5% of staff have declared to be from a Black and ethnic minority background. 35% of staff have not declared their background and 2% have stated "Prefer not to say". These figures are based on 92 staff members completing their diversity data, out of a total of 164.

Ruth Jones: [\[37592\]](#)

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

Mr Robin Walker:

We have taken management positions to mean Senior Civil Servants, of which there are 17 from the overall headcount of 173, within the Northern Ireland Office. The diversity declaration data we currently hold shows that no senior civil servants have declared to be from a black or minority ethnic background.

SCOTLAND

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Rob Roberts: [\[903230\]](#)

What recent progress the Government has made on establishing the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

James Grundy: [\[903234\]](#)

What recent progress the Government has made on establishing the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Mr Alister Jack:

From 2022, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will target the people and places most in need, and we will publish our prospectus in due course.

This will complement work already underway on the Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund and Community Ownership Fund where applications are currently being considered.

Jamie Stone: [\[903231\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the implementation of the Government's new Hydrogen Strategy.

Iain Stewart:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy works closely with the Scottish Government and other devolved administrations on the implementation of the Hydrogen Strategy, and will continue to do so.

Mr Mark Harper: [\[903233\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to help students attending Scottish universities to study and work overseas.

Iain Stewart:

We have introduced the Turing Scheme, a UK-wide programme that will support students who wish to take up opportunities for education and training in over 150 destinations around the world. Scottish universities are on course to receive more than £8.2 million support under the scheme.

Ports: Scotland**Dame Meg Hillier:**[\[903227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on resources deployed at Scottish ports to help manage the movement of goods since the Northern Ireland Protocol came into effect on 1 January 2021.

David Duguid:

The Secretary of State for Scotland holds regular conversations with Cabinet colleagues regarding the implications of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

This Government is unequivocal in its commitment to ensuring unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods moving to the rest of the UK and will ensure the required resources are deployed at Scottish ports.

TRANSPORT**Bus Services: Coronavirus****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[41889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding has been allocated from the £226.5 million covid-19 bus operator recovery grant (a) to each combined authority area and (b) in total from the commencement of that grant until 1 September 2021.

Rachel Maclean:

The Bus Recovery Grant will support Local Transport Authorities and commercial operators to deliver bus services until the end of the current financial year. Allocations for each local authority will be announced shortly.

Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals**Peter Grant:**[\[41964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2021 to Question 145054 on Driving Licences: Foreign Nationals, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to further extend the 12-month period for which holders of foreign driving licences can drive in Great Britain using that licence.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government does not intend to bring forward legislation to extend the period for which holders of foreign driving licences can drive in GB using that licence.

Driving Licences: Medical Examinations**Jamie Stone:**[\[42064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many blood samples were requested by DVLA as part of a fitness to drive medical in each of the last five years.

Jamie Stone:

[\[42065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many blood sample tests requested by DVLA as part of a fitness to drive medical were required to be retaken due to a previous blood test being a (a) haemolysed sample, (b) clotted sample and (c) insufficient sample in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

The number of blood tests requested by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency as part of a medical fitness to drive investigation in the last five years is shown in the table below:

YEAR	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2020/21
Total requests	35,524	36,792	36,125	43,332	34,216

Information on the number of blood tests that needed to be retaken or the reason why is not readily available. Retrieving this information would require the interrogation of each individual case to identify the reason for which the blood test needed to be retaken.

■ Driving Tests: Highlands of Scotland

Drew Hendry:

[\[41967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with the DVSA on increasing the number of driver theory tests available in the Scottish Highlands.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is aware that demand for theory tests in Scotland is currently high and it is doing all it can to offer more tests at centres by increasing opening hours and running tests on extra days where possible. The provision of additional testing is dependent upon the availability of venues and agreements with landlords. The DVSA is working with its theory test provider, Reed In Partnership Ltd, to explore further ways in which it can further increase theory test capacity including the possibility of adding temporary sites to deliver additional theory tests.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Tests

Drew Hendry:

[\[41969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of the DVSA on ensuring that HGV trainer qualification module tests are available for training companies that wish to provide the off-road element HGV assessment in the event that HGV testing rules change.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is currently considering the approval scheme that would be required, should the delegation of manoeuvres to third party trainers go ahead. The DVSA will work with the Department for Transport (DfT) to provide advice for ministers to make final decisions on the qualification requirements that could apply subject to the outcome of the consultation.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Qualifications**Peter Grant:**[\[41963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of covering the fees for Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) cards to help to alleviate the shortage of lorry drivers.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport is working with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus to support those returning to driving including with the renewal of their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) where appropriate.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Working Hours**Matt Western:**[\[42069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on road safety of his decision to extend the temporary relaxation of the enforcement of the retained EU drivers' hours rules.

Rachel Maclean:

The temporary relaxation to Drivers' Hours rules offers flexibility to operators and permits HGV drivers to either increase their daily driving limit from 9 hours to 11 hours up to two times in a week, or to change their weekly rest patterns. Reduced rest periods must be compensated for.

Implementation of the relaxation should be through agreement between employers, employees, and driver representatives. Operators must notify the Department if this relaxation is used.

Driver safety must not be compromised, and employers remain responsible for the health and safety of their employees and other road users.

Motorways: Accidents**Patricia Gibson:**[\[41941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of Smart Motorways on the number of fatalities caused by a collision.

Rachel Maclean:

One year on from the publication of the *Smart Motorway Safety Evidence Stocktake and Action Plan*, National Highways (formerly Highways England) published a report

which shows that in terms of fatality rates, smart motorways are the safest roads in the country. Per mile travelled, fatal casualty rates are a third higher on conventional motorways (0.16 per hundred million vehicle miles, hmvm) than on All Lane Running (ALR) motorways (0.12 per hmvm). Per mile travelled, fatal casualty rates on strategic road network A-roads (0.44 per hmvm) are more than three and a half times the rate on ALR motorways.

■ **Railway Stations: Visual Impairment**

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[38490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of ensuring provision of tactile paving across all Network Rail stations by 2025.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We have accepted the Rail Accident Investigation Board's recommendations in the Eden Park report in full, and we are working with Network Rail to develop a programme to aim to install platform edge tactile strips on every platform in Great Britain.

■ **Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation: Hydrogen**

Alexander Stafford: [\[38490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential merits of waiving grid fees for electrolyzers to incentivise the production of green hydrogen as part of wider reforms to the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation.

Alexander Stafford: [\[38491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of waiving grid fees for electrolyzers for the production of green hydrogen, as has been implemented in Germany, as part of planned reform of the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation.

Rachel Maclean:

Officials from the Department for Transport and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are in regular contact on the development of our green hydrogen policies. This includes the matter of grid fees, or more specifically the network charges relevant to the production of green hydrogen.

The Department has consulted on options to reward renewable hydrogen more flexibly under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO). These include extending eligibility to renewable hydrogen production from energy supplied over the grid. A Government Response including final proposals will be published before the end of the year. However, the RTFO scheme does not offer a means of providing exemptions from network charges. The RTFO is a separate renewables support scheme to those run by Ofgem, and the RTFO applies no charges in respect of the

electricity used to produce renewable hydrogen. Consequently, there have been no ministerial discussions on waiving grid fees in the context of RTFO reform.

The Government's hydrogen strategy includes measures to develop and scale up hydrogen in transport over the 2020s, building on UK expertise and assets in both electrolytic (green) and Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) enabled (blue) hydrogen. It is our ambition to become a world leader in the production and use of green hydrogen. We are ensuring that transport trials use green hydrogen to help drive the development of the hydrogen vehicle and the green hydrogen production supply chains. To support hydrogen production the strategy also includes a consultation on Net zero hydrogen fund (£240m), low carbon hydrogen standard and the hydrogen business model, offering support beyond just transport.

■ Road Traffic: Cats

Alex Sobel:

[\[42088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to give cats the same protections as dogs under the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has no plans to give cats the same protection as dogs under the Road Traffic Act 1988. A focus for this Government is to make roads safer for all users, which will in turn reduce the risk to all animals.

Under section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, a driver is required to stop and report an accident involving specified animals including horses, cattle, asses, mules, sheep, pigs, goats or dogs, but not cats or wild animals. This requirement arises from their status as working animals rather than as domestic pets. To introduce such a measure within the provision of section 170, would require primary legislation.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Bill Wiggin:

[\[41681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much was spent per metre on roads in Herefordshire compared with other counties in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[41682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of road maintenance at a County level.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[41683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of expenditure by each local authority on contractors on road repairs and maintenance.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[41684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking with the Local Government Association to encourage local authorities to fix potholes.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[41685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure best practice from local authorities in maintaining roads.

Rachel Maclean:

Local highway authorities, including Herefordshire County Council, have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network in their area. Local highways teams, including private contractors, are accountable to the local authority they are working for. The Department for Transport is not routinely informed of the detailed breakdown of spend on the local highway network, as authorities are best placed to understand how to maintain their respective networks, based on local needs and priorities.

The Department has regular meetings with the UK Roads Liaison Group, Local Government Association and Association of Directors, for Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport. In addition, the Department endorses 'Well-managed highway infrastructure the Code of Practice for highway maintenance' by the UK Roads Liaison Group.

This guidance takes an integrated, risk based approach to managing highway infrastructure. The Department also worked with the Association of Directors, for Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport to publish 'Potholes: a repair guide' which guide offers practical advice to highway authorities.

Of course, well-planned maintenance to prevent potholes and other defects forming on the roads is vital. Councils that do this well get better value for every pound spent and improve their customer satisfaction. So, from 2016/17, this Government introduced an incentive element and a self-assessment questionnaire to help encourage local highway authorities to manage their road networks better and achieve greater efficiencies.

■ Rotherhithe Tunnel: Repairs and Maintenance

Neil Coyle:

[\[40922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to provide Transport for London with funding for urgent renovations to the Rotherhithe Tunnel in order to prevent its potential closure.

Rachel Maclean:

TfL is responsible for the maintenance of its assets, including Rotherhithe Tunnel.

This Government has demonstrated its commitment to transport in London throughout the pandemic, with over £4 billion in extraordinary support packages since May 2020. These support packages must be fair to taxpayers, and on the condition that action is taken to put TfL on the path to long-term financial sustainability.

■ Travel Restrictions: Pakistan

Sarah Owen: [\[42161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria Pakistan needs to meet to move to the amber list for covid-19 travel restrictions.

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.

■ Travel Restrictions: South Africa

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[42046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of moving South Africa from the red list for international covid-19 travel restrictions to the amber list for international covid-19 travel restrictions.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[42047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of moving Colombia from the red list to the amber list for international covid-19 travel restrictions.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[42049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what comparative assessment he has made of the potential effect of moving Brazil from the red list for international covid-19 travel restrictions to the amber list with India's placement on the amber list.

Robert Courts:

The traffic light system categorises countries, based on risk to protect public health and the vaccine rollout from variants of COVID-19. The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) produces risk assessments of countries and territories. Decisions on Red, Amber or Green List assignment and associated border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account the JBC risk assessments, alongside wider public health factors.

All classification changes have been decided by ministers, informed by the latest data and analysis by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and wider public health considerations, to help the public understand the risks to public health of travelling to different destinations. The country allocations are reviewed on a three weekly cycle

and the Government will not hesitate to take action where a country's epidemiological picture changes.

TREASURY

■ Help to Buy Scheme: Individual Savings Accounts

Alex Sobel: [\[42089\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to review the help-to-buy ISA threshold in light of rising house prices.

John Glen:

The Help to Buy: ISA scheme aims to help those struggling to save enough to get onto the housing ladder. The property price cap allows the Government to target support at the first-time buyers who need it the most. The scheme includes a higher property value cap of £450,000 for properties in London compared to £250,000 anywhere else in the UK.

The latest statistics show that since the scheme was launched in 2015 410,075 property completions, including more than 26,000 completions in London, have been supported through the scheme with a mean property value of £175,010 compared to an average first-time buyer house price of £222,712. The Government keeps all aspects of savings policy under review.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

Patricia Gibson: [\[41940\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the reduced rate of VAT on hospitality goods and services.

Claire Hanna: [\[42196\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the reduced VAT rate for hospitality until 31 December 2021.

Jesse Norman:

In order to support the cash flow and viability of around 150,000 businesses and to protect over 2.4 million jobs, the Government has applied a temporary reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to goods and services supplied by the tourism and hospitality sectors, which will now end on 30 September 2021. On 1 October 2021, a new reduced rate of 12.5 per cent will be introduced for these goods and services to help affected businesses manage the transition back to the standard rate. The new rate will end on 31 March 2022.

The Government has been clear that the reduced rate of VAT is a temporary measure. It is right that, as restrictions are lifted and demand for goods and services in the tourism and hospitality sectors increases, this relief is reduced and eventually removed in order to rebuild and strengthen the public finances. This policy will cost

the Exchequer over £7 billion and, while the Government keeps all taxes under review, there are no plans to make the reduced rate of VAT permanent.

■ **Monetary Policy Committee: Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[42155\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many persons appointed to the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee by his Department in the last five years have been educated at a Scottish university; and if he will specify the date on which those persons were appointed to that Committee.

John Glen:

Appointments to the Monetary Policy Committee are made on merit following fair and open competition. In the last 5 years appointments have come from diverse educational and professional backgrounds to ensure the committee benefits from a wide range of expertise.

■ **Universal Credit**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[41882\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the impact on the Exchequer of ending the £20 uplift to universal credit.

Steve Barclay:

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 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.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Access to Work Programme: Electronic Government**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[42017\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Disability Strategy, published in July 2021, whether her Department plans to make Access to Work a digital service.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work already offers an online route for individuals to apply for the grant; however currently, when it comes to claiming the grant, this is a paper-based process. We are currently working on a new service to enable claiming the grant as well; this will allow users to:

- Submit a new claim online for any type of award.
- View previously submitted claims.
- See how much of their grant they have left.
- Upload any evidence required as part of the same interaction.
- Have claims counter-signed by employers/suppliers online.

We aim to release this new service to a small number of users towards the end of the year and scale it up over the subsequent months. Aside from the online claims portal we also have plans to transform the complete end-to-end journey, including agent-facing systems, in order to improve usability, accessibility and efficiency across the whole service.

■ AEA Group: Pensions**Martyn Day:**[\[41038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions officials in her Department have had with representatives of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman on a potential investigation into the AEA Technology pension scheme.

Guy Opperman:

There have been no meetings between Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) officials and PHSO representatives regarding a potential investigation into the AEA Technology pension scheme. PHSO is an independent body accountable directly to Parliament, it would be inappropriate for DWP officials to influence its investigations.

Martyn Day:[\[41039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help people affected by the collapse of the AEA Technology pension scheme.

Guy Opperman:

On 7 July 2016 the AEA Technology (AEAT) pension scheme transferred to the Pension Protection Fund (PPF).

The PPF is the statutory compensation scheme. It provides compensation to members of eligible defined benefit pension schemes where the sponsoring employer has become insolvent and the scheme is unable to secure its pension liabilities at least at PPF compensation levels.

AEAT scheme members who are over their scheme's normal pension age (NPA) at the date that their employer became insolvent would receive 100 per cent of their accrued scheme benefits, as calculated at the date of employer insolvency. Those

members under NPA at the date that the employer became insolvent would receive PPF compensation paid at 90 per cent of accrued scheme benefits, as calculated at the date of employer insolvency.

Martyn Day: [\[41041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of establishing an independent savings and pension commission to better ensure that pensions and savings policies (a) are fit for purpose and (b) avoid such instances as the collapse of the AEA Technology pension scheme.

Guy Opperman:

No assessment has been made, but the Pension Protection Fund continue to provide statutory compensation where a sponsoring employer becomes insolvent.

■ Children: Maintenance

Martyn Day: [\[42007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what criteria the Child Maintenance Service uses to determine whether pensions contributions made by non-resident parents are reasonable when deciding whether to make a child maintenance payment variation on grounds of diversion of income.

Martyn Day: [\[42008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Child Maintenance Service is taking to ensure that (a) effect on children and (b) other relevant factors are considered when making child maintenance payment adjustments relating to non-resident parent increased pension contributions.

Guy Opperman:

The Child Maintenance Service can consider whether pension contributions made by the non-resident parent are reasonable if the parent with care has sufficient grounds for a variation application, based on diversion of income. Pension contributions can then be compared to the non-resident parent's personal circumstances, such as their age and income, to determine whether they should be considered excessive.

The Service will always try to ensure that the maintenance calculation accurately reflects the non-resident parent's ability to pay child maintenance. If pension contributions could be considered to be affecting support given to the child, the Service will investigate and take action if appropriate.

Darren Jones: [\[42070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what provisions are in place to ensure continued receipt of child maintenance payments from a parent who is imprisoned but still in receipt of income from personal assets.

Guy Opperman:

Where a paying parent is in prison and receives income from certain assets, then a variation can be considered and that income may be taken into account when calculating the maintenance liability.

If the paying parent fails to make payments that are due, the Child Maintenance Service can make arrangements to enforce payment of any arrears.

Coronavirus: Disease Control**Jonathan Edwards:**[\[41814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has she undertaken of the effect biological cleaning systems can have on (a) personal sensitisation, (b) sanitising work and (c) social places as part of work to reduce the spread of the covid-19 virus.

Mims Davies:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has taken the context of this question to mean that the term biological cleaning systems are the use of industrial enzymes (microbial and other animal sources) that are added to certain specialised healthcare and industrial cleaning products, typically used to pre-treat/clean equipment surfaces prior to finally cleaning or disinfection. HSE is not aware of the use of any biological cleaning systems like these being used to reduce the spread of COVID-19. HSE does provide guidance on [Cleaning, hygiene and handwashing to reduce coronavirus \(COVID-19\) transmission \(hse.gov.uk\)](#) as well as [Disinfecting using fog, mist and other systems during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic \(hse.gov.uk\)](#).

Department for Work and Pensions: Assessments Policy Forum**Stephen Timms:**[\[41621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will place in the Library a list of the members of her Department's Assessments Policy Forum; and whether that the Forum will continue to meet.

Justin Tomlinson:

We will place in the Library a list of those members of the Assessments Policy Forum who are content to be named. We will continue to engage with a forum to discuss assessments and broader issues going forward.

Kickstart Scheme**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[42151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many participants in the Kickstart scheme are single claimants and have declared that they are looking after a child under the age of 16.

Mims Davies:

An initial assessment of the first 50,000 claimants starting a Kickstart job found that around 1,700 young people on the Kickstart scheme were single person claimants responsible for a dependent child under the age of 16. This equates to 2% of all participants during this period. This compares to 3% of UC claimants in the Intensive Work Search group aged 16-24 who made a claim during the same time period above.

The Department will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart scheme throughout its implementation, and will continue to evaluate the longer term outcomes for Kickstart participants after they have completed their six-month jobs. This will include an examination of the demographic make-up of participants, including family type.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Food Supply**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[41872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart placements have been created in food distribution industries.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [36791](#) for Kickstart Scheme jobs created by sector.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Job Creation**Alison Thewliss:**[\[41933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobs have been created in third sector organisations through the Kickstart scheme in (a) Glasgow, (b) Scotland and (c) the UK as at 2 September 2021.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ [36791](#) for Kickstart statistics on sectors and geographical areas. We are currently not able to publish a breakdown below the regional and national level although expect to be able to do so in due course.

We do not currently hold details of the number of charitable or voluntary sector organisations participating in Kickstart, but this something we plan to investigate as part of the evaluation for scheme. The information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Maternity Allowance

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[42053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the change in the number of maternity allowance starts between 2016-17 and the second half of 2020-21.

Guy Opperman:

No assessment has been made. However, any change will be contributed to by the total fertility rate, which has decreased in recent years.

- The total fertility rate decreased for the seventh consecutive year:

[Births in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

■ Post Office Card Account

Margaret Ferrier: [\[40937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of security and fraud risks posed by Post Office Card Account (POCa) voucher alternatives offered in £100 denominations.

Guy Opperman:

The new Payment Exception Service has been designed as a simple service to ensure customers have access to cash. Vouchers will be uploaded to a card or sent electronically via SMS text or email. Customers will need to cash the full amount of the voucher (vouchers are maximum £100) but do not have to cash all of their vouchers at the same time. This is a similar process to when customers used to be issued with Order Books and Girocheques.

PayPoint retailers and the Post Office will ask for customer ID when someone cashes a voucher. Customers are provided with the list of acceptable ID in their welcome letter from the new PES supplier.

In designing the new service, the same levels of security have been applied as they were to HMG PES. Fraud will be treated as a business as usual process in line with existing DWP Policy.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[40938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a secure alternative to the Post Office Card Account (POCa) card for those without a bank account, which offers face-to-face support for those requiring assistance.

Guy Opperman:

We recognise that not all of our customers are able to open and operate standard accounts, which is why we offer an alternative for those customers.

The Post Office card account (POca) contract is due to end and the Department plans to start moving customers to the replacement Payment Exception Service (PES) during the coming months.

The new PES is similar to Her Majesty's Government Payment Exception Service (HMG PES) which has been in place since 2018 and is due to end in September 2021. The HMG PES service has successfully served our most vulnerable customers by the issue of vouchers which are uploaded to a card or sent electronically via SMS or email.

The replacement PES has also been designed for customers who cannot open or manage a basic bank or standard account. We have ensured that the new service enables users to continue to obtain cash payments in their local area (including suburban and rural locations) following the end of the Post Office card account contract.

Customers identified as at risk of harm will receive additional support before being migrated to the new service. This includes outbound calls to make contact with the customer or their nominated representative and referral to the DWP visiting service to make face-to-face contact where a call is unsuccessful or identifies that a visit is required. Post migration we will track the encashment of vouchers by all customers to ensure that they are accessing the payments they receive at the level we would expect. This post migration support is significantly stronger than currently exists for POca.

■ **Restart Programme: Food Supply**

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[41873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have successfully moved into work in food distribution after participation in the Restart scheme.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is not available. No information is collected on the numbers of people moving into work in food distribution.

The Restart Scheme is aimed at supporting people who have been on Universal Credit in the Intensive Work Search Regime for 12-18 months into sustained employment. Referrals to Restart began in July 2021 and participants can spend up to 12 months on the scheme.

■ **Self-employed: Mothers**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[42052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of self-employed mothers who have had a child through a surrogacy arrangement who have not been eligible for either (a) Statutory Adoption Pay or (b) Maternity Allowance in the last five years.

Guy Opperman:

No estimation has been made.

■ Social Security Benefits: Artificial Intelligence**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[41871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect of using algorithms, such as for fraud risk scoring, on benefits claimants' rights to privacy and non-discrimination.

Will Quince:

DWP have been exploring the use of algorithms and artificial intelligence where appropriate, focussing on everyday repetitive tasks so that our colleagues can spend more time supporting vulnerable claimants. We have identified value in developing algorithms in relation to assessing fraud and error risks, monitoring cyber-security, tailoring non-financial support offered to customers and reducing verification demands. We intend to use such technologies carefully in ways that improve citizen experiences and outcomes, along with operational efficiency. DWP does not use artificial intelligence to make decisions regarding people's benefit entitlement.

We have adopted a cautious approach and are evolving our governance in relation to such technologies. Our Data Protection Office and Legal team ensure we are applying legislation in relation to claimant's rights to privacy and non-discrimination. Our Central Analysis and Science Division provide methodological oversight. We also have a senior Data Board that will scrutinise the use of algorithms.

The opportunities and considerations associated with the use of algorithms continues to evolve, as outlined in the guidance on building and using artificial intelligence in the public sector, published on GOV.UK.

■ Social Security Benefits: EU Nationals**Helen Hayes:**[\[42039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of claimants granted pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme who will lose access to benefits; and what support her Department is putting in place in those cases.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Home Office's EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) allows EU citizens to apply for an immigration status and ensure that they have the right to live, work and access income based benefits. EU citizens may be granted settled or pre-settled status, depending on whether they have been resident in the UK for a continuous period of more than five years.

EU citizens with pre-settled status have the same access to benefits as they did prior to the introduction of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). They will satisfy the right to reside element of the Habitual Residence Test and can access benefits if they are

exercising a qualifying right to reside, such as a worker or self-employed person, and are habitually resident in the UK.

As long as an individual continues to exercise a treaty right, those with pre-settled status can continue to access benefits. Moving from pre-settled status to settled status will not result in losing benefits if the application is made in time.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Stephen Timms:

[\[41618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to extend awards under the special rules for terminal illness in line with changes made for claimants with severe lifelong conditions; and if she will make a statement.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to supporting people nearing the end of their lives. I can confirm that on 8th July 2021 I announced that following a wide-ranging evaluation, the Department intends to replace the current 6-month rule with a 12-month, end of life approach. This will mirror the current definition of end of life used across the NHS and ensure that people receive vital support through the Special Rules six months earlier than they do now. People who claim under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness are able to claim under a fast-tracked process, without the requirement for waiting periods or a face-to-face assessment and usually receive the highest rates of benefit.

Stephen Timms:

[\[41619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will amend the severe conditions criteria so that people who have already been diagnosed with a terminal condition do not need to go through a work capability assessment to claim benefits.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department provides fast-track access to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Universal Credit (UC) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for people who are nearing the end of their lives through the Special Rules for Terminal Illness. Claimants who have been diagnosed as being likely to live for 6-months or less, are able to claim under a fast-tracked process, without the requirement for waiting periods or a face-to-face assessment and usually receive the highest rate of benefit. On 8th July 2021, following an extensive evaluation into how the benefits system supports people nearing the end of their lives the Department announced its intention to replace the current 6-month rule with a 12-month, end of life definition.

We would like to highlight that as announced in the Shaping Future Support: Health and Disability Green Paper published 20th July 2021 we are testing the possibility of a new Severe Disability Group for those with severe and lifelong conditions to access ESA/UC and PIP. This will simplify the process by removing the need for a long form or a face-to-face assessment for this group and build on existing provision such as Severe Conditions and Special Rules for Terminal Illness. We will consider the test

results alongside the responses to the Green Paper when determining whether the policy should be rolled out further

Stephen Timms: [\[41620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will end the practice of Departmental assessors rejecting the clinical judgment of a medical professional that a patient is terminally ill in relation to accessing benefits under the special rules for terminal illness.

Justin Tomlinson:

A claim made under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness is in most cases supported by a DS1500. DS1500 forms have never been a requirement for a claim under the terminal illness rules but remain the quickest and most appropriate route to gather evidence to support entitlement in these cases. The DS1500 form is completed by the claimant's healthcare professional and provides information relating to their diagnosis, clinical features and past or current treatment. The Assessment Provider's healthcare professionals may, on occasion, contact the claimant's medical practitioner where additional information or clarification is required in order to process the claim under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness.

Where it is not possible to supply a DS1500 in support of a Special Rules for Terminal Illness claim we will consider alternative evidence and work flexibly and quickly with the claimant and/or their clinician(s) to make a determination.

■ Social Security Benefits: Vulnerable Adults

Jessica Morden: [\[41756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department accepts a statutory safeguarding duty of care to vulnerable benefits claimants.

Will Quince:

The Department does not have a statutory safeguarding duty or legal duty of care. The safety of claimants is of great importance to us and the Department provides staff with training and guidance to help them identify those who require further support beyond the provision of benefits.

Our staff can direct vulnerable claimants to agencies and services who are best placed to support them, including those who have statutory safeguarding duties such as local authorities and social services.

DWP supports the work of all statutory safeguarding agencies, either when formally requested to do so, or by engaging with them to identify, where possible, those who might need particular support.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[41749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether there have been any reported delays in processing initial payments for those who have reached state pension age.

Guy Opperman:

Normal service will be resumed by the end of October 2021.

The Department is working hard to clear backlogs which have occurred by reason of the Covid Pandemic and staffing issues which have now been rectified.

Hundreds of additional staff are currently being redeployed.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Age

Emma Hardy:

[\[41173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of reducing the state pension age to 60.

Guy Opperman:

People in the UK continue to live longer lives, and the proportion of adults that are over State Pension age is increasing. Raising State Pension age in line with life expectancy changes has been the policy of successive administrations over the years.

We committed in legislation to undertake a review of State Pension age every six years, which means that the statutory deadline for the publication of the next Government review is 2023. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the State Pension system is affordable, sustainable and fair to future tax payers.

■ State Retirement Pensions: British Nationals Abroad

Holly Lynch:

[\[41027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government has plans to form new reciprocal agreements to uprate the state pensions of British pensioners overseas.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has no plans for new reciprocal agreements on pensions uprating with countries where pensions are not currently uprated.

Holly Lynch:

[\[41028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with her counterparts in (a) Canada, (b) Australia and (c) other governments on the uprating of the UK state pension overseas.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has had no recent discussions on the up-rating of the UK State Pension overseas with her counterparts in Canada, Australia, and governments of other countries where up-ratings are not paid. Up-ratings are paid where there is a legal requirement to do so. This is a longstanding policy and the Government has no plans to change it.

Mick Whitley:[\[41274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has taken recent steps to pursue a reciprocal agreement with the Peruvian Government to allow British nationals who are resident in Peru to receive annual increments to their pensions.

Guy Opperman:

The UK has not had any recent discussions with the Government of Peru on a reciprocal pensions uprating agreement.

Mick Whitley:[\[41275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made a recent estimate of the number of British nationals resident in Peru who are (a) in receipt of a UK state pension and (b) not in receipt of any workplace or private pension.

Guy Opperman:

Information for the number in receipt of a UK state pension currently living in Peru is published and available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>. As of November 2020, there are 130 people in receipt of a UK State Pension, this cannot be broken down by nationality.

The Department does not hold information on those that are not in receipt of any workplace or private pension in Peru.

Guidance for users is available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females**Kirsten Oswald:**[\[40954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury on 22 June 2021, Official Report, col 748, whether it is her Department's policy (a) that the matter of changes to women's state pension age is settled and (b) to continue to engage with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into the communication of those changes.

Guy Opperman:

The Government has no plans to reverse changes to State Pension age brought in under successive Governments since 1995.

The Government decided over 25 years ago that it was going to make the State Pension age the same for men and women as a long-overdue move towards gender

equality. Raising State Pension age in line with life expectancy changes has been the policy of successive administrations over many years.

Changes to State Pension age were made over a series of Acts by successive governments from 1995 onwards, following public consultations and extensive debates in both Houses of Parliament.

Both the High Court and Court of Appeal have held that adequate and reasonable notification was given by the DWP and the Supreme Court refused the claimants' permission to appeal.

We have been working and will continue to work with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman in relation to the investigation into the communication of State Pension age increases.

Johnny Mercer:

[41034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department plans to take in response to the findings of 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:

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". It is not appropriate to comment on the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's report of 19 July 2021 on stage 1 of their investigation.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Ipswich**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[40842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the (a) total, (b) annual and (c) monthly basic state pension payment has been in (a) Suffolk and (b) the Central Suffolk and North Ipswich constituency in each year from 2009-10.

Guy Opperman:

The specific information requested on basic state pension payments is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The Department publishes quarterly State Pension caseload figures by grouped amount of benefit and Parliamentary Constituency. This data, available to November 2020, can be found at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The Department also publishes annual benefit expenditure tables and the latest publication by parliamentary constituency is for 2019/20 and available at: [Benefit expenditure and caseload tables 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2020)

■ State Retirement Pensions: Windrush Generation**Holly Lynch:** [\[41026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Government's frozen pensions policy on members of the Windrush generation.

Guy Opperman:

The policy on up-rating UK state pensions overseas is a long-standing one of successive post-war Governments. The UK State Pension is payable worldwide and is up-rated where there is a legal requirement to do so. There are no plans to change this.

No assessment has been made.

■ Universal Credit: Newport West**Ruth Jones:** [\[42118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will meet the hon. Member for Newport West, representatives of the Welsh Government and Newport City Council to discuss the effect on the people of Newport West of the decision to end the £20 uplift to universal credit.

Will Quince:

There is a well-established working relationship between the Department and The Welsh Government, ensuring that we work together on devolved and reserved areas effectively. However, UC is a policy reserved to the UK government.

■ Vacancies**Jonathan Reynolds:** [\[41874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help tackle labour shortages in food distribution.

Mims Davies:

The Department is helping jobseekers move into roles within the haulage and logistics sectors with a driver training pilot to support people to become HGV drivers and we encourage industry to access their local Jobcentre Plus network to take advantage of the range of support on offer.

Provisions such as the Sector Based Work Academy Programme (SWAPs) gives jobseekers the skills and qualifications they need to take up driver roles.

We are partnering with DfT and industry to collaborate on content for JobHelp, our virtual platform to advise and guide people looking for work. This includes video case studies; myth-busting documents; promoting vacancies in the sector; and guides to working in logistics.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Sport Broadcasting Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Tourism (Nigel Huddleston): **[\[HCWS271\]](#)**

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) wrote to the DCMS and Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Committees on 2nd August to set out the final decision on making an Exclusion Order under the Competition Act 1998, regarding the Premier League's domestic broadcasting agreements. This followed the open letter sent to the Premier League informing them of Ministers' "minded to approach" and inviting representations from interested parties. This approach sought to guarantee around £1.6 billion of funding for the football pyramid, including for grassroots football, women's football, and lower league clubs.

On 13 May 2021, in a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament, I confirmed that officials at DCMS had written to the Premier League, and to Sky, BT, Amazon and the BBC as the current holders of the Premier League's UK broadcast rights. This informed them that the Secretary of State for BEIS was minded to make an Exclusion Order under the Competition Act 1998, allowing the Premier League to renew its current UK broadcast agreements with relevant broadcast rights holders for a three-year period without carrying out the normal tender process. Such an Exclusion Order would be a temporary measure to provide stability for the football pyramid coming out of the pandemic, guaranteeing around £1.6 billion for the game. This funding would spread across the pyramid including grassroots football, women's football, funding for lower league clubs, and long-term income for clubs to plan for the future. This is crucial given the losses sustained by football during the pandemic, with around £2 billion lost by the Premier League and its clubs alone.

The Government invited interested parties to make representations before a final decision on the Exclusion Order was taken. Of the 15 representations submitted, most were supportive of the Exclusion Order because of the stability that would be provided by renewing the broadcast agreements. The Secretary of State for BEIS and DCMS Ministers acknowledge the concern that was raised in one representation about the inclusion of the "Near Live Package" of broadcast rights in the renewed agreements. However, we have concluded that subdividing the rights packages could disrupt the current arrangements, which would undermine the intended purpose of providing stability to the football pyramid. Moreover, the Government has not received representations indicating a potential bid for the Near Live Package if a tender were to be run.

We also note one concern raised about consumers potentially facing higher prices in the absence of a competitive tender process. We have carefully considered this point and concluded that the risk of higher prices is low and outweighed by the significant public policy benefits that would be delivered by providing stability to the English football

pyramid. We expect broadcasters to keep the costs of their packages at current levels, as a result of the renewed broadcast deal on existing terms. Finally, in response to a question that was raised by one stakeholder, I can confirm that the “fair dealing” exemption in copyright law will not be affected by the Exclusion Order.

Having carefully considered the representations made, the Secretary of State for BEIS has concluded that there are exceptional and compelling reasons of public policy to make the proposed Exclusion Order. I can therefore confirm that, subject to the Premier League formalising their financial commitments to the football pyramid with the Government, as set out in my Written Ministerial Statement on 13 May, the Government will bring forward secondary legislation to make the Exclusion Order.

The Exclusion Order will disapply UK competition law to allow the Premier League and the relevant broadcast rights holders to agree to extend the Premier League’s UK broadcast agreements on substantially their current terms to the 2022/23 – 2024/25 seasons, without the Premier League carrying out a competitive tender process.

If the Premier League’s current UK broadcast agreements are renewed for seasons 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25, the Premier League has committed to:

- guarantee existing levels of financial support for the football pyramid for four years from 2021/22 to the end of the 2024/25 season. This includes solidarity payments, parachute payments, youth development funding and funding for grassroots football at existing levels, worth over £1.5 billion over the three-year rights cycle;
- maintain at least this level of funding even if its international broadcast rights decrease in value when they are re-tendered individually over the next year into 2022, and to increase the level of funding if its international broadcast rights exceed their current value; and
- provide a further minimum £100 million in solidarity and good causes funding to the end of the 2024/25 season, in roughly equal shares, to the National League, women’s football, League One and Two clubs, grassroots football and cross-game initiatives. This would make a significant financial contribution, including doubling the support for the non-league system, and providing crucial financial support for the women’s game.

This Exclusion Order is a temporary measure in response to the pandemic. The normal tendering process is expected to be followed for the subsequent broadcast rights period following the 2024/25 Premier League season.