



## Daily Report

Friday, 10 September 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 10 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:37 P.M., 10 September 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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



## ANSWERS

### ATTORNEY GENERAL

#### ■ Attorney General: Protective Clothing

**Philip Davies:**

[38197]

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

**Lucy Frazer:**

Throughout the pandemic, the Civil Service, including the Attorney General's Office (AGO), Government Legal Department (GLD), Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Serious Fraud Office (SFO) and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI), have followed, and continue to follow, the latest government guidance in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace, including any variations between the four nations of the UK.

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

Whilst it is for individual employers to determine which mitigations are appropriate to adopt as they review their workplace risk assessments in light of the updated guidance. Face coverings, which are no longer required by law, are one possible mitigation employers could adopt if the situation / context warranted it.

HMCTS requires all court users to continue to wear face coverings in court buildings. The CPS's advice to staff, which has been agreed with trade unions is that, unless exempt, all court users are required to wear a face covering in all public areas of court and tribunal buildings.

The AGO, GLD, CPS, SFO and HMCPPI fully support individuals who choose to wear a face covering in the workplace.

#### ■ Serious Fraud Office

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[38329]

To ask the Attorney General, what the Serious Fraud Office's conviction rate was for (a) individuals and (b) corporations in 2020-21.

**Michael Ellis:**

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO), by its specialist nature, takes on a relatively small number of large, complex economic crime cases which can take several years to investigate. This means that small changes in case numbers can lead to significant fluctuations in the SFO's conviction rate.

Against this context, in 2020-21 the SFO's conviction rate for individuals was 67 percent, which included three convictions in the \$1.7bn Unaoil bribery case and one guilty plea in the Petrofac bribery case. No corporations were brought to trial in 2020-21. The SFO also secured two Deferred Prosecution Agreements against corporates in 2020-21, returning £47.4m in fines and penalties to the UK taxpayer and compelling these organisations to reform.

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[38330\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the decision making process within the Serious Fraud Office on whether to open, continue or close a criminal investigation into a corporate entity.

**Michael Ellis:**

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) has robust assurance processes in place to ensure effective decision-making on whether to open, continue, or close a criminal investigation into a corporate entity. This includes the SFO's Case Evaluation Board (CEB) and Case Review Panels (CRPs), both of which are chaired by the SFO General Counsel.

The CEB reviews intelligence submissions against the Director's Statement of Principle and assesses strategic and tactical risks, costs, and resource implications to make an informed recommendation to the Director on whether to initiate or decline an investigation. CRPs seek to scrutinise all cases at least twice a year to ensure that sound judgement and appropriate investigative and legal expertise are being used in cases, and that cases are progressing appropriately and comply with all relevant legal and operational guidance.

While the SFO exercises independence in its individual casework decisions, I am regularly updated by the Director and her senior leadership team on the SFO's casework.

## ■ Serious Fraud Office: Public Appointments

**Kevin Hollinrake:**

[\[37525\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether he has had a discussion with the Director of the Serious Fraud Office on a renewal or extension to the five-year appointment to that post.

**Michael Ellis:**

I have had no discussions with the Director of the Serious Fraud Office on a renewal or extension to the five-year appointment to that post, which is not due to come to an end until August 2023.

**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY****Batteries: Safety****Jerome Mayhew:**[\[37596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the cross-Departmental group coordinated by his Department is assessing lithium-ion battery safety in domestic settings in addition to large-scale battery storage facilities.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

BEIS established an industry-led storage health and safety group with an independent chair, following the joint BEIS and Ofgem 2017 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan.

This group considers the safety of lithium-ion storage both in domestic settings and for large-scale facilities.

**Biofuels****Zarah Sultana:**[\[41329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of biomass energy on (a) CO2 emissions and (b) animal biodiversity.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government follows scientific advice which indicates that sustainable biomass could play a role in decarbonising the energy sector as part of a diverse renewable energy mix and in achieving net zero. Recent reports from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) all support this view.

The UK only supports biomass which complies with strict sustainability criteria which considers a range of environmental issues including protecting the biodiversity of forests from which the biomass is sourced, irrespective of its location.

**Paula Barker:**[\[41367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of biofuels, including the burning of wood pellets in the UK, on the loss of biodiversity and deforestation overseas.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK only supports biomass which complies with strict sustainability criteria. This considers a range of environmental issues including protecting the biodiversity of forests from which the biomass is sourced, irrespective of its location.

Where biomass is sourced from forests, it is typically waste wood and residues from commercial forestry operations that already occur, and it is a requirement that the relevant legal requirements to protect biodiversity and the environment are adhered

to. The evidence does not show that deforestation or biodiversity loss have occurred in the areas from where UK electricity generators source their biomass.

## ■ Biofuels: Subsidies

**Zarah Sultana:** [\[41330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of reallocating Government subsidies for biomass energy to other renewable energy sources.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government follows scientific advice which indicates that sustainable biomass could play a role in decarbonising the energy sector as part of a diverse renewable energy mix and in achieving net zero. Recent reports from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) all support this view.

We have no plans to remove support for electricity generation from biomass prior to 2027 for generators that are already supported under the Renewables Obligation (RO) and the Contract for Difference (CfD).

## ■ Boilers

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[40894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what advice his Department is providing to members of the public deciding on routine replacement of their current gas boilers as part of the Government's policy phase-out traditional domestic gas boilers.

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[40895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance and support his Department is providing to the public on (a) heat pumps, (b) electric boilers, (c) hydrogen appliances and (d) other affordable alternatives to gas boilers as part of its policy to phase-out traditional domestic gas boilers.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As set out in last year's Energy White Paper, the Government will set a clear path that sees the gradual move away from fossil fuel boilers in homes over the next fifteen years as and when individuals decide to replace their appliances. By the mid-2030s we expect all newly installed heating systems to be low carbon or to be appliances that we are confident can be converted to a clean fuel supply. There is no single technology alternative to fossil fuels. Electric heat pumps and hydrogen, green gas and shared heat networks all have their part to play.

In all pathways to net zero, heat pumps will have a major role to play. We are pursuing policies to grow the heat pump market to 600,000 installations a year by 2028 and are providing funding support to deliver these targets through schemes such as the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) and forthcoming Clean Heat Grant.

The Department is also working with industry to assess the feasibility, costs and benefits of using 100% hydrogen for heating, to enable strategic decisions in 2026 on the role of hydrogen in decarbonising heating. We aim to consult later this year on the case for enabling, or requiring, new natural gas boilers to be easily convertible to use hydrogen ('hydrogen-ready') by 2026. The public can also find more information in the [Hydrogen Strategy](#) which sets out the approach to developing a thriving low carbon hydrogen sector in the UK to meet our ambition for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030.

The Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy in due course, which will set out the actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings.

### ■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Finance

**Alan Brown:**

[\[38308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to announce a payment mechanism for the storage of carbon dioxide relative to carbon capture and storage.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution sets out our aim to establish CCUS in at least two industrial sites by the mid-2020s and a further two by 2030 at the latest.

In December 2020 and May 2021, we published details on a Transport and Storage business model and we will publish a further update in Q4 2021. Our aim is to finalise all CCUS business models in 2022.

### ■ Carbon Emissions

**Paula Barker:**

[\[41370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the ability of the UK to achieve net zero by 2050; and whether the UK is currently on track to meet that target.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Over the last three decades, the UK has achieved record clean growth and has met its world-leading climate change commitments. Between 1990 and 2019, our economy has grown by 78% while our emissions have decreased by 44%, this is the fastest reduction in the G7.

The UK over-achieved against the first (2008-12) and second (2013-17) carbon budgets, and the latest projections show that we are on track to meet the third (2018-22). We recognise the need for further action to meet the fourth (2023-27) and fifth (2028-32) carbon budgets. Our sector decarbonisation strategies, and wider plans to deliver a green economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, will contain further proposals to support delivery of carbon budgets 4 and 5.

We have already published the Energy White Paper, Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Hydrogen Strategy, and will publish the Heat and Building Strategy in due course. We will also publish a comprehensive Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26, setting out the Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy. This will raise ambition as we outline our path to meet net zero by 2050, our Carbon Budgets and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

## ■ Climate Change: Weather

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[38426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the threats posed by the climate emergency following the extreme weather events in (a) the UK, (b) Germany and (c) China.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Recent global weather and climate extremes observed in the UK, Germany and China are consistent with expectations from climate research that we will see increases in the frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events. This is being borne out by observations; the recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the Physical Science Basis of Climate Change says, "the frequency and intensity of heavy precipitation events have increased since the 1950s over most land area for which observational data are sufficient for trend analysis (high confidence), and human-induced climate change is likely the main driver."

## ■ Companies: Renewable Energy

**Alan Brown:**

[\[38306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take in order for the UK Government to assume a leadership role for Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs); whether he plans to arrange workshops and other forums to encourage corporate entities to adopt and increase renewable electricity procurement; and what steps he is taking to encourage the disclosure of PPA strategies pursued by corporate entities.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Everyone has a role to play in achieving the UK's ambitious decarbonisation targets. In November, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister appointed my Hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith MP) as the UK's Net Zero Business Champion to support the country's business community to make credible plans to reach net zero by 2050 or earlier.

Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) are one approach businesses can take to contribute to their decarbonisation effort. We urge corporates to consider ways to make their energy consumption greener. This includes through the uptake and disclosure of ambitious PPA strategies. Given our highly ambitious carbon budget and net zero targets, we anticipate that PPAs will be an important part of the

landscape to complement Government mechanisms such as the Contracts for Difference scheme. Officials are investigating whether government can play a role in encouraging further growth in the PPA market.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Listed Buildings**

**Tim Loughton:**

**[44165]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Amanda Solloway:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is advised on the management of designated heritage assets in its portfolio by Historic England's Government Historic Estate Unit. Further details can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/advice-for-government-historic-estates/>.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy does not collect or collate data on the value or income data for these assets.

■ **Heating**

**Alan Brown:**

**[40992]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of making a heat pump sector deal; and will he make a statement.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK Government is working closely with the heat pump industry to collaboratively address sector-specific issues and remove barriers to the deployment of heat pumps across the UK.

■ **Heating: Housing**

**Dr Alan Whitehead:**

**[40570]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans for consumer choice for low carbon heating systems to be part of its Heat and Building Strategy for off-grid homes.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

As announced in the Ten Point Plan, we will bring forward regulations to phase out fossil fuel heating in off grid areas. We intend to consult on these plans in due course.



**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[40896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to assist the energy and heating sector in moving its customers off traditional domestic gas boilers.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), provides financial support in installments to homeowners, for the generation of heat through low carbon technologies such as heat pumps. The scheme, which launched in 2014, will remain open to new applicants until March 2022.

The successor scheme to the RHI, the Clean Heat Grant, which is due to launch in Spring 2022, will provide upfront capital grants for the installation of heat pumps and, in limited circumstances, biomass boilers in both domestic and small nondomestic buildings. This support will help grow confidence in these low carbon technologies and supply chains and help address the barrier of upfront costs faced by many consumers. We will publish our Government Response with details of the scheme and scheme eligibility in due course.

## ■ Hydrogen

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[38475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses responded to the Green Hydrogen Project Capture survey, which closed on 9 April 2021.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

BEIS received 89 responses to the Green Hydrogen Project Capture survey from 63 individual businesses and organisations.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[38476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how the information gathered by the Green Hydrogen Project Capture survey has informed his Department's plans on (a) the 1GW by 2025 hydrogen production target and (b) the 5GW by 2030 hydrogen production target set out in the Energy White Paper entitled Powering our Net Zero Future, published by his Department in December 2020.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Information gathered through the Green Hydrogen Project Capture survey, alongside ongoing industry engagement, has been integral in building up our understanding of the project pipeline. Our recent consultations on the Net Zero Hydrogen Fund, Hydrogen Business Model, and setting an emissions standard for low carbon hydrogen, will further inform our plans as we work with industry to delivery on our ambition for 5GW of low carbon hydrogen production by 2030.

The survey results confirm the strength of ambition from UK industry to help meet these production levels and has helped build our understanding of potential projects, including their deployment timelines and locations. As set out in the Hydrogen



Strategy, we are aware of a potential pipeline of over 15GW of projects, from large scale CCUS-enabled production plants in our industrial heartlands, to wind or solar powered electrolyzers in every corner of the UK. This includes plans for over 1GW of electrolytic hydrogen projects, ranging from concept stage to fully developed proposals, which are aiming to deploy in the early 2020s.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[38489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of waiving grid fees for electrolyzers for the production of green hydrogen.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government recently published the UK Hydrogen Strategy package, which sets out our comprehensive package of support for hydrogen production technologies, including electrolytic 'green' hydrogen, to help meet our 5GW ambition.

We have considered a range of policy options to support deployment of electrolytic hydrogen, including assessing costs related to hydrogen production, such as grid connection fees and are currently seeking views on the best way to overcome such issues via the live consultation on a proposed hydrogen business model.

We will continue to engage with electrolytic hydrogen producers, Ofgem, National Grid and wider industry to promote electrolytic hydrogen production in line with our stated ambitions.

## ■ Hydrogen: Meters

**John Spellar:**

[\[38136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the compatibility of existing smart meters with hydrogen gas supply.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government has published the first ever UK Hydrogen Strategy, alongside key policy detail to lay the foundations for a hydrogen economy. The Department is also working with industry to assess the feasibility, costs and benefits of using 100% hydrogen for heating, to enable strategic decisions in 2026 on the role of hydrogen in decarbonising heating.

In the meantime, the HyDeploy industry consortium, at the Government-funded Smart Energy Network Demonstrator (SEND), is working to develop the safety case for blending of hydrogen and methane together in the gas network at hydrogen concentrations of up to 20%. Part of this activity includes working with smart meter manufacturers to develop and trial a software configuration to allow accurate metering of such blends without meter replacement.

Furthermore, the £25m Government-funded Hy4Heat programme is currently supporting the development of prototype commercial, industrial and domestic appliance models including smart hydrogen meters for 100% hydrogen.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Rosie Cooper:** [\[38190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to respond to the letter of 4 June 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on licensing for carbon capture and storage, reference ZA56684.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

I wrote to the Hon. Member on 26 August about licence requirements for carbon capture and storage.

**■ Nuclear Reactors****John Spellar:** [\[40588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress his Department has made of the development of small modular nuclear reactors.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

In the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced an up to £385 million Advanced Nuclear Fund to invest in the next generation of nuclear technologies. The Advanced Nuclear Fund includes up to £215 million to develop a domestic Small Modular Reactors (SMR) design and up to £170 million for an Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) research and development programme, with an aim to build an AMR demonstrator by the early 2030s.

We are also committed to supporting the wider UK nuclear energy sector to help deliver advanced nuclear technologies to market.

**■ Offshore Drilling: Shetland****Janet Daby:** [\[41245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential environmental effects of Cambo drilling for oil near Shetland, Scotland.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Projections of future supply of oil and gas from the UK, as used by BEIS and the Climate Change Committee, factor in assumed production from fields that have been licensed to date (including Cambo).

All development proposals for oil and gas fields with existing licences are subject to a robust regulatory process before a decision on approval is made by the Oil and Gas Authority.

## ■ Oil: Shetland

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[38141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the proposed fossil fuel development by Siccar in the Cambo area, in partnership with Shell, with the UK's climate change commitments.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

Projections of future supply of oil and gas from the UK, as used by BEIS and the Climate Change Committee, factor in assumed production from fields that have been licensed to date (including Cambo).

All development proposals for oil and gas fields with existing licences are subject to a robust regulatory process before a decision on approval is made by the Oil and Gas Authority.

## ■ Professions: Qualifications

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[38130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the financial impact to UK businesses of the loss of mutual recognition of professional qualifications between the UK and the EU since January 2021; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

The Professional Qualifications (PQ) Bill strengthens the UK's ability to negotiate and deliver ambitious arrangements on the recognition of professional qualifications with current and future trade partners beyond the European Union. It means we can further empower UK regulators to strike deals on recognition with their overseas counterparts, helping UK professionals get their qualifications recognised internationally. The end of EU-based rules and new trade deals mean the landscape is changing – new transparency requirements, and the continued provision of an Assistance Centre will help professionals to navigate it. This will help spread UK skills, knowledge and innovation across the globe, and boost UK businesses exporting services beyond the EU.

## ■ Renewable Energy: Competition

**Alan Brown:**

[\[38307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to support renewable electricity procurement clubs to have shared Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) within the context of existing competition law; and what plans he has to bring forward changes to competition law in relation to common electricity procurement.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The UK has robust competition laws, which protect consumers from harmful behaviour and promote competitive markets. There is published guidance on how competition law can apply to cooperation between businesses, including joint purchasing agreements, which ensures that the current rules do not prevent innovative and pro-competitive behaviour. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently wrote to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to request its advice on how the UK can better use the tools available under competition law to achieve our Net Zero and sustainability goals. The CMA will provide its advice in early 2022.

**Renewable Energy: Finance****Alan Brown:**[\[38305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the potential merits of a larger number of Power Purchase Agreements in the UK electricity market and (b) the effect of those agreements on (i) Government subsidies provided to renewable energy generators through the Contract for Difference scheme and (ii) electricity cost for consumers; and if he will make a statement.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government recognises that achieving our 2050 net zero target will require increased deployment across a range of renewable technologies. The UK's main support mechanism is the Contracts for Difference Scheme (CfD), which has been hugely successful at bringing forward large-scale renewable generation at low costs to the consumer.

Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) can improve the financial viability of renewable projects built without Government support. PPAs of this nature do not add to consumer levy costs, have the potential to create additional renewable generation capacity and can reduce overall demands on the grid if meeting the needs of large energy users. All routes to deploy cost effective low carbon generation are welcome and given our highly ambitious carbon budget and net zero targets, we anticipate that PPAs will be an important part of the landscape to complement Government mechanisms such as the CfD.

**Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation: Hydrogen****Alexander Stafford:**[\[38487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on reforms to the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation Order to support an increase in green hydrogen production.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[38488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on reforms to support green hydrogen production at sites connected to the electricity grid.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Department is in regular contact with the Department for Transport (DfT) on these issues. DfT recently consulted on changes to the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), including the use of power purchase agreements (PPAs) and eligibility of hydrogen used in maritime, rail and non-road vehicle, which will allow a broader range of electrolytic hydrogen producers to be eligible for support.

BEIS officials are working with those in the DfT on how the RTFO and our proposed hydrogen business model, currently out for consultation, can be complimentary in promoting hydrogen production in line with our stated ambitions.

#### ■ **Water Power: Finance**

**Stephen Flynn:**

[\[37593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether dedicated (a) capacity and (b) strike price arrangements, to support tidal stream and wave technology, will be included in Contracts for Difference Auction Round 4 in 2021.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The draft auction parameters for the fourth Contracts for Difference allocation round, including the administrative strike prices for wave and tidal stream, and any minima for particular technologies, will be published shortly.

#### ■ **Wind Power: Seas and Oceans**

**Dan Carden:**

[\[41181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there is sufficient supply chain development in the UK to support the delivery of floating wind beyond 2030.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

The Government's £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio fund, announced in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a green industrial revolution, is accelerating the commercialisation of low-carbon technologies, systems and business models in power, buildings, and industry. An important element of this is the Floating Offshore Wind Demonstration Programme which aims to support development and demonstration of state of the art technologies and products in the future offshore wind industry.

Our Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Support Scheme has recently supported the development of significant new offshore wind manufacturing capacity in the UK.

**Dan Carden:**

[41182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of potential floating wind projects that could be developed by 2040.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

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

## CABINET OFFICE

### ■ Cabinet Office: Ethnic Groups

**Ruth Jones:**

[37591]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many Black and ethnic minority staff hold management positions in his Department.

**Ruth Jones:**

[38414]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff employed in Number 10 are from a black or minority ethnic background.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Cabinet Office has a headcount of 8,889 as of 31 July 2021 (Data Source: SOP platform) of which 4,972 staff have declared their ethnic background. There are 984 ethnic minority members of staff in management grades that have declared their ethnicity; this is 19.8% of all staff that have declared their ethnic background. This is higher than the Civil Service average of 14.3% (Source: Annual Civil Service Employment Survey) and the Economic Active Population for ethnic minority people which is 13.6% (Source: [ONS August 2021](#)) The absolute number of ethnic minority staff in management positions is likely to be higher given the number of staff who have not made a declaration. The Cabinet Office has plans to increase the declaration rate in the department with a campaign during National Inclusion week in September.

Number 10 is an integral part of the Cabinet Office and is included in this figure.

Management grades are identified as grades Executive Officer (EO) and above.

For more wider information the government publishes statistics on Civil Service demographics annually on March 31st via the Office for National Statistics. This can be found on the Gov.uk website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>

## ■ Cabinet Office: Listed Buildings

**Tim Loughton:**

**[43371]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Cabinet Office is advised on the management of designated heritage assets in its portfolio by Historic England's Government Historic Estate Unit. Further details can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/advice-for-government-historic-estates/>

The Cabinet Office does not collect or collate data on the value (property value) or income data for these assets.

## ■ Cabinet Office: Protective Clothing

**Philip Davies:**

**[38198]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his current policy is on the wearing of face coverings in his (a) Department, (b) departmental agencies and (c) related bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Julia Lopez:**

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

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

It is for individual employers to determine which mitigations are appropriate to adopt as they review their workplace risk assessments in light of the updated guidance.

Cabinet Office fully supports individuals who choose to wear a face covering in the workplace and asks staff to comply with any additional Health and Safety procedures in buildings they enter in the course of their work.

## ■ Care Homes: County Durham

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

**[40682]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the mortality rate for care home residents is in County Durham by month for each year since 2007.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ40682 [UKSA response to PQ 40682 .pdf]

**■ Civil Servants: Location****Alicia Kearns:**[\[37616\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what criteria are being used to evaluate value for money of possible relocations of Government offices under the Places for Growth programme.

**Julia Lopez:**

The Government has committed to ensuring that the administration of Government is less London-centric through the relocation of 22,000 civil service roles to locations across the United Kingdom.

Departments are taking into account a range of factors including their operating model, workforce and location analysis to assess possible locations for roles. The department will select places that they judge to have the skills, transport links and capacity to meet their needs and flourish in their chosen locations as well as ensuring locations are suitable for the long term success and sustainability of the civil service.

**■ Coronavirus: Death****Philip Davies:**[\[38194\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the (a) age, (b) underlying medical conditions and (c) actual cause of death of each person recorded as having died in the last 14 days with or from covid-19.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ38194 [UKSA response to PQ 38194 .pdf]

**■ Coronavirus: Public Inquiries****Kim Leadbeater:**[\[38495\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to communicate with covid-bereaved families the timescales for the covid-19 public inquiry.

**Patrick Grady:**[\[40962\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including the Covid-19 Bereaved



Families for Justice group in the public inquiry into the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic, announced on 21 May 2021.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

On 12 May, the Prime Minister confirmed the public inquiry into COVID-19 will begin in Spring 2022. The Government understands that to ensure we learn lessons from the pandemic, it is imperative that we engage and consult with bereaved families and others, before the terms of reference are finalised. Throughout the pandemic senior ministers, including the Prime Minister, have met and will continue to meet with bereaved families.

I want to thank the Bereaved Families for Justice group for all their efforts in representing bereaved families throughout the pandemic. Every death from this virus is a tragedy and our deepest sympathies are with everyone who has lost loved ones. The Government remains steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that these families have the scrutiny of the Government's response to managing the pandemic that they deserve.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Paula Barker:**

[\[41386\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of covid-19 vaccine certificates; and what plans the Government has to introduce such certificates to access certain amenities.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

I refer the hon. Member to the [answer](#) given by The Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment, Minister Nadhim Zahawi on 8 September 2021.

*“ Our vaccination programme has given this nation a wall of protection against this deadly virus. Data from Public Health England estimates that two doses of a covid-19 vaccine offers protection of around 96% against hospitalisation and that our jabs have prevented over 100,000 deaths, over 143,000 hospitalisations and around 24 million infections. It is this protection that allowed us to carefully ease restrictions over the past few months. However, we must do so in a way that is mindful of the benefits that both doses of the vaccine can bring.*

*On 19 July, the Prime Minister announced that:*

*“by the end of September—when all over 18s will have had the chance to be double jabbed—we are planning to make full vaccination the condition of entry to nightclubs and other venues where large crowds gather. Proof of a negative test will no longer be sufficient.”*

*We will be confirming more details in due course.”*

**■ Crime: Urban Areas**

**Paula Barker:** [\[41377\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of (a) recent trends in crime in urban centres and (b) whether the current recruitment targets are adequate to tackle crime in cities.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ41377 [UKSA final response to PQ41377.pdf]

**■ Crimes of Violence**

**Philip Davies:** [\[40786\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of victims of violent crimes were (a) female aged 18 and over, (b) men aged 18 and over, (c) female under 18 and (d) male under 18 for the latest year for which figures are available.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ 40786 [UKSA response to PQ 40786.pdf]

**■ Electoral Register: British Nationals Abroad**

**Owen Thompson:** [\[44404\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Government plans to take steps to mitigate the potential risk of foreign electoral interference as a result of the extension of the franchise to British citizens who have lived abroad for more than 15 years in the Elections Bill, prior to that Bill coming into force.

**Chloe Smith:**

The extension of the franchise for UK parliamentary elections will enable greater participation in our democracy. Most British citizens who move overseas retain deep ties to the UK. And it is only British citizens who have been registered to vote or resident in the UK who will be eligible, as this denotes a strong degree of connection to the UK.

As is currently the case, individuals will register in respect of only one UK address and will have to demonstrate their connection to that address, as well as prove their identity. Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) who suspect fraud, for whatever reason, will not register an individual if they are not satisfied.

Registered overseas electors are eligible to make political donations, as important participants in our democracy; it is only right that they should be able to donate in the same way as other UK citizens registered on the electoral roll. The changes within this Bill will simply scrap the arbitrary 15 year limit on these rights. UK electoral law already sets out a stringent regime of spending and donations controls to ensure that only those with a legitimate interest in UK elections can donate or campaign. Measures in the Elections Bill go even further to stop ineligible foreign spending on electoral campaigning.

■ **National Security Council: Afghanistan**

**Lisa Nandy:**

[\[44332\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on how many occasions the National Security Council discussed Afghanistan between 1 January 2021 and 31 July 2021.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The National Security Council is a committee of Cabinet. It is a long-established precedent that information about the discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its Committees, and how often they have met, is not shared publicly.

■ **Office for Veterans' Affairs: Finance**

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[44352\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to increase the budget for the Office for Veterans' Affairs; and if he will make a statement.

**Leo Docherty:**

HMG has recently announced an additional £5 million in funding to assist veteran charities in addition to the £3 million already invested into mental health support through NHS England's Op Courage. This additional funding is provided with the aim of ensuring that veterans are able to receive the support they may need. The OVA continues to engage with other departments and external stakeholders, including charities to deliver the Strategy for our Veterans and improve coordination of veterans' work across Government.

We are not prepared to comment on ongoing budget discussions during this spending review period. However, the Office for Veterans' Affairs continues to increase in size and capability, and is making progress in delivering the Strategy for our Veterans. The Office for Veterans' Affairs has all the necessary resources and support from the rest of government to continue its work making the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.

## ■ Public Bodies: Ventilation

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[37610]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 July 2021 to question 30420 on on Public Bodies: Ventilation, what (a) budget has been made available for enforcement activities and (b) enforcement action has been taken in respect of ventilation in buildings in which civil servants work in each of the last ten years; and when he last met (i) civil service permanent secretaries, (ii) chief executives of arms-length bodies and (iii) representatives of civil service trade unions to discuss ventilation in buildings in which civil servants work.

**Julia Lopez:**

As outlined in the response to [PQ 30420](#) on 16 July 2021, the safe return of more civil servants to the workplace will be enacted by departments in line with updated Safer Working guidance from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive. This includes guidance for ventilation.

The enforcement of this guidance lies with the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

Any budgets for any action taken in respect of ventilation in buildings has been managed by each department responsible for the buildings.

Details of official Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

## ■ UK Commission on Covid Commemoration

**Patrick Grady:**

**[40964]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment the Government has made to the potential merits of including the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group in the Commission on Covid Commemoration.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

Every death during the pandemic has been a tragic loss, made so much harder for those unable to say goodbye or grieve as they would have wished. It is absolutely right that we come together to mark and remember this period appropriately.

The Prime Minister announced on 12th May that the Government will support these efforts by establishing a UK Commission on Covid Commemoration. The Commission will carefully consider how communities across the country can remember those who have lost their lives and recognise those involved in the response in a fitting and permanent way.

The Government is aware of Bereaved Families for Justice' call to be included in the membership of the Commission. I am thankful to them for all their efforts throughout the pandemic. We recognise the need for bereaved families to be represented on the Commission and are committed to ensuring this happens. The Government will set out the Commission membership and terms of reference in due course.

## ■ UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[38128\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on the formal set up of governance structure, including the 23 specialised committees that will be responsible for the oversight, amendment, and dispute settlement of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement; and if he will make a statement.

**Penny Mordaunt:**

The [first meeting of the Partnership Council](#) took place on 9 June. It launched the governance structures of the TCA. It also agreed to facilitate establishing the Civil Society Forum (CSF) so it can meet this year and encouraged the respective Parliaments of the UK and EU to establish the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.

Three of the eighteen TCA Specialised Committees have now met, including the committee on Social Security Coordination which met on 6 July, the committee on Energy which met on 14 July and the committee on Fisheries which met on 20 July. All the other Specialised Committees are due to meet this autumn.

## ■ Unemployment: Suffolk

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[40839\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people have been unemployed in (a) Suffolk and (b) Central Suffolk and North Ipswich constituency in each year from 2009-10 to date .

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[40840\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the youth unemployment figures are for (a) Suffolk and (b) Central Suffolk and North Ipswich constituency for each year from 2009-10 to date.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA response PQ40839,40 [UKSA final response to PQ40839\_40840.pdf]

## ■ Voting Methods: Visual Impairment

**Sir George Howarth:**

[\[38144\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timescale is for a review of the postal voting system to ensure that system is fully accessible for blind and partially sighted people.

**Sir George Howarth:**

[\[38145\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to work with blind and partially sighted people to produce more accessible voting options.

**Jo Gideon:**

[\[41351\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what training his Department (a) makes available and (b) plans to make available for Returning Officers on how to support visually impaired voters.

**Jo Gideon:**

[\[41352\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he plans to take to help ensure that blind and partially sighted people can vote independently in 2022.

**Chloe Smith:**

The Government is committed to ensuring that elections are accessible for all those eligible to vote.

To that end, the Government has introduced a number of measures to support the accessibility of elections in the recently introduced Elections Bill, such as removing restrictions on who can act as a companion to support voters with disabilities and placing a broader requirement for Returning Officers to consider the needs of all disabled voters when providing equipment for polling stations.

Specifically on issues related to sight loss, we were pleased to be able to carry out some testing of accessible voting solutions for blind and partially sighted electors with the RNIB and Broadland District Council at the recent elections in May, and we are currently considering our next steps. We will continue to work with the RNIB and other interested groups in taking this forward and have already talked with RNIB about looking at the postal vote system to see how and where that can be improved to support engagement.

We also continue to work with the members of the Accessibly of Elections Working Group, including the Electoral Commission, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and the Association of Electoral Administrators. The Association of Electoral Administrators provides training and guidance for Returning Officers and their teams to further improve the support provided to enable disabled electors to participate in future elections.

**COP26****■ Carbon Emissions****Gill Furniss:**[\[41116\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what recent assessment he has made of the potential for an agreement between world leaders on measures to reach net zero at the COP26 conference.

**Alok Sharma:**

The science is increasingly clear that in order to keep 1.5 degrees celsius within reach, we must halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero CO2 emissions by the middle of the century. The UK COP26 Presidency has made it a priority to encourage all countries to make net zero commitments and they now cover over 70% of the global economy, up from 30% at the start of our Presidency. We will continue to press all countries to make such commitments as part of an outcome in Glasgow that keeps 1.5C within reach.

**■ Livestock Industry: Biodiversity and Climate Change****Barry Gardiner:**[\[37347\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether the Government plans to use the COP26 Conference to discuss the effects of global intensive animal agriculture on (a) climate change and (b) biodiversity loss; and if he will make a statement.

**Alok Sharma:**

COP26 will hold a Nature Day event in Glasgow highlighting forests, agriculture and wider land use as key priorities to mitigating the climate crisis. We are calling for international action to reduce emissions from agriculture, deforestation and other land use. We are working with international partners to promote sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture; to mobilise increased and more targeted finance for nature; and to build the political consensus for ambitious action.

At the G7 summit, leaders committed to work to accelerate an inclusive global transition to sustainable and climate resilient agriculture, as well as committing to achieving net zero emissions no later than 2050.

The UK has also played a central role in promoting the 'Leaders' Pledge for Nature', which now has over 80 signatories. The pledge sets out ten urgent actions to put nature on a path to recovery by 2030, addressing both biodiversity loss and climate change.

**■ Livestock Industry: Greenhouse Gas Emissions****Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[40572\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, if the Government will take steps to encourage world leaders attending COP26 to develop a global strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by the intensive animal agriculture sector.

**Alok Sharma:**

At COP26 in November, as part of our Nature Campaign, we will be hosting a World Leaders Summit to put forward high-level ambition, by pushing for ambitious commitments from countries to transition to sustainable agriculture and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture, forestry and other land-use accounts for 23% of global emissions, so action in this area is critical to keeping the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5° within reach.

Together with the World Bank, we are co-hosting an international policy dialogue on the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture and developing a Policy Action Agenda on this issue to be launched at COP26.

**DEFENCE****■ Afghanistan: Immigration****Ms Harriet Harman:**[\[44168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many requests he has received as at the date of answering from hon. Members on behalf of Afghan citizens who wish to come to the UK since 15 August 2021.

**James Heappey:**

Multiple Government departments have been contacted by MPs regarding Afghan citizens requesting relocation to the UK, which has resulted in large quantities of duplicate correspondence. Colleagues across Government have worked hard to triage these to the most appropriate points of contact, and to provide appropriate answers as swiftly as possible.

**John Healey:**[\[44193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many individual Afghan Locally Employed Staff were relocated to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy in each month since April 2021.

**James Heappey:**

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) has been one of the most generous in the world, under which circa.1,200 Locally Employed Staff (LES) have been relocated to the UK since April 2021, with a large proportion being evacuated on over 100 RAF flights as part of Operation PITTING.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all Afghan nationals who risked their lives working alongside UK forces. For this reason the ARAP scheme is not time-limited and will endure, facilitating the relocation of Afghan LES and their families, from third countries if possible.

LES individuals relocated by month:



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APRIL	0
May	1
June	24
July	188
August (inc. Operation PITTING)	981

The figures given above do not include accompanying family members.

**Dan Jarvis:**

[\[44351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure that people eligible to relocate to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy are prioritised for safe passage to the UK.

**James Heappey:**

Under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), all current and former Locally Employed Staff are eligible for priority relocation to the UK. We are clear that the Taliban must ensure safe passage for these people out of Afghanistan and any engagement with them will emphasise this first and foremost.

We continue to receive a large quantity of enquiries and applications and have plans in place to work through the backlog of correspondence to ensure they are all responded to in the most appropriate way. We are prioritising consular cases of British Nationals, those who have worked for HMG and the most vulnerable individuals, however all previous applications will be processed as swiftly as possible.

## ■ Ajax Vehicles

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[38160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the weight is of the Ajax AFV (a) with and (b) without the additional armour package.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the right hon. Member to my response to his question 36563 which was answered on 26 July 2021.

### **Attachments:**

1. 36563 - Armoured Fighting Vehicles [36563 - Armoured Fighting Vehicles.docx]

## ■ Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[44215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the 40mm armoured piercing ammunition intended for use by the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle employs depleted uranium.

**Jeremy Quin:**

No it does not.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[40699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which regiments of the British Army have been involved in his Department's trial programme for the Ajax Fighting Vehicle programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Trials are being run out of the Armoured Trials and Development Unit (ATDU). Due to the breadth of trials carried out by ATDU, personnel assigned to this unit are drawn from a broad cross section of the British Army.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Testing**

**Mr Mark Francois:**

[\[43711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Written Ministerial Statement of 6 September 2021, HCWS260, on the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) Programme, how many of the 310 MoD personnel who (a) have been assessed or (b) are awaiting assessments for potentially having suffered hearing damage as a result of participating in the Ajax trials programme have been administered with steroid injections to date.

**Jeremy Quin:**

As I stated in my update to the House on AJAX (HCWS260), I will update the House on the number of personnel affected by noise and vibration in due course and provide further details.

**Chris Evans:**

[\[44324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which officials in his Department were informed of vibration issues in respect of Ajax before trials started; and on what dates those officials were informed.

**Chris Evans:**

[\[44325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which officials in his Department were notified that a design upgrade to the Ajax vehicle was required; and what steps his Department took in response to that notification.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Member to HCWS260, the written statement I laid in this House on Monday 6 September which provided a comprehensive update on the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) programme. As I stated, extensive work has been undertaken on the Health and Safety aspects of the Noise and Vibration concerns raised on Ajax. A report is being undertaken independently of the Ajax Delivery Team by the MOD's Director of Health and Safety. I will publish this report once it is finalised, which will contain a full timeline in relation to Health and Safety issues.

**Attachments:**

1. HCWD260 - Armoured Calvary Programme (Ajax) [HCWS260 - Armoured Cavalry Programme.docx]

**Chris Evans:**[\[44326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of the number of personnel affected by noise exposure on the Ajax project are in need of medical treatment.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the hon. Member to HCWS260, the written statement I laid in this House on Monday 6 September which provided a comprehensive update on the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) programme and my commitment to provide further information in due course.

**Attachments:**

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

**Chris Evans:**[\[44327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the expected costs are of the (a) additional trials for the Ajax vehicle and (b) modifications to that vehicle being tested.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The cost of the Millbrook trials are commercially sensitive. The trials are essential to allow us to safely bring Ajax into service. We have a firm price contract with General Dynamics Land Systems which requires them to deliver 589 vehicles that meet the agreed specification for a cost of £5.5 billion.

**■ Ajax Vehicles: Weapons****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[44216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the maximum rate of fire is of the 40mm main armament of the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

**Jeremy Quin:**

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

**■ Armed Forces: Radio****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the contract notice entitled United Kingdom-Bristol: Radio equipment, reference 2020/S 08-211218, for what reason that invitation to tender for UK radio equipment is subject to Directive 2009/81/EC.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Defence and Security Public Contract Regulations (DSPCR) 2011 implemented the European Union (EU) Directive 2009/81/EC into UK law. The directive sets EU rules for the procurement of arms, munitions and war material (plus related works

and services) for defence purposes. Consequently, the DSPCR applies to all defence and sensitive security procurements procedures beginning on or after the 21 August 2011. The Multi-Mode Radio procurement therefore fully complied with the DSPCR 2011.

Amendments to the Defence and Security Public Contracts Regulations (DSPCR) came into force at the end of the Transition Period to ensure these rules operate effectively following the UK's departure from the EU. The main change is that legal rights of access to UK procurements are now limited to UK and Gibraltar based suppliers.

As set out in the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy published in March 2021, the Government is using the opportunity offered by our departure from the EU to develop a defence and security procurement regime tailored to better meet the UK's needs. We have embarked on a comprehensive review of the DSPCR, as part of the broader Cabinet Office led reforms of procurement regulations set out in the December 2020 Green Paper on Transforming Public Procurement.

#### ■ **BOWMAN Combat Radio System**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[40632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment his Department has made of the status of BOWMAN ComBAT Information and Platform Battlefield Information Systems 5.6 (a) upgrade and (b) integration.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Bowman, Common Battlefield Application Toolset, Information and Platform Battlefield Information System Applications (BCIP) 5.6 achieved Full Operating Capability on 3 December 2020. The 5.6 upgrade will continue to be supported until it is replaced by MORPHEUS.

#### ■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[44204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the prime contractor for the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract must be a UK-based company.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by my noble friend, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie), on 13 July 2021 to Question HL1745 in the House of Lords.

**Attachments:**

1. HL1745 - Fleet Solid Support Ships [HL1745 - Fleet Solid Support Ships.docx]

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[44205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which capital adequacy tests the prime contractor for the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract must pass before the award of that contract.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Throughout the Fleet Solid Support ship's competition procurement process all bidders will be subject to economic and financial standing tests consistent with the relevant UK public procurement legislation and rules.

**General Dynamics****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[44208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he or another of his departmental Ministers has met the Corporate Chief Executive of General Dynamics in 2021 to discuss the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I met the Global Chair and Chief Executive of General Dynamics, Phebe Novakovic on 1 July 2021.

**HMS Bulwark****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the projected cost to the public purse of taking HMS Bulwark from low readiness to fully active and available for deployment.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The projected cost to the public purse of bringing HMS BULWARK out of her current upkeep period will be subject to a formal costing exercise, but is estimated to be in the region of £49.6 million.

**Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the UK Government has spent on the Autonomic Logistics Information System.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him to Question 40640 on 6 September 2021.

**Attachments:**

1. 40640 - Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft [40640 - Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft.docx]

**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[40642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to integrate into F-35 aircraft the ODIN system under development for that aircraft.

**Jeremy Quin:**

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to his Question 40640 on 6 September 2021

**Attachments:**

1. 40640 - Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft [40640 - Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft.docx]

**■ LE TacCIS Programme****Mr Mark Francois:****[40700]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) initial and (b) final operating capacity is of the (i) Morpheus and (ii) Le TACIS communications programmes.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The current forecast for MORPHEUS Initial Operating Capacity (IOC) is Quarter 4, 2025 and the forecast for Full Operating Capacity (FOC) is Quarter 2, 2029.

The Land Environment Tactical Communication Information System Programme does not have a single Initial Operating Capability or Full Operating Capability. Instead, it is comprised of a number of sub-programmes and projects (including MORPHEUS), each of which have their own in-service dates.

**■ Merlin Helicopters****Mr Kevan Jones:****[40644]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to Table 8 of his Department's UK armed forces equipment and formations 2020, published on 10 September 2020, for what reason the number of in service Merlin HM2 helicopters reduced from 25 in 2017 to 19 in 2020.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The Royal Navy has had 30 Merlin HM Mk2 air systems on the Active Military register since the transition from Merlin HM Mk1 in the early 2010s. Of these, five will always be in a period of Depth Maintenance, resulting in a Forward Fleet of 25 air systems. At times, some of these air systems are given over for equipment modifications and trials. This is managed to ensure that the temporary reduction in available air systems does not prevent the Merlin HM Mk2s from meeting Defence Tasks.

**■ Ministry of Defence: Staff****Mr Kevan Jones:****[40664]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many established job posts his Department has for (a) financial and (b) commercial officers; and how many of those posts are not filled as of 1 September 2021.

**Leo Docherty:**

As at 1 September 2021, the MOD Finance Profession had 3,340 established posts of which 461 were vacant.

As at 1 September 2021, the Defence Commercial Function had 2,830 established positions, of which 442 positions were vacant.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[40665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the employee turnover has been of (a) qualified commercial officers and (b) qualified financial officers at his Department over the last five years.

**Leo Docherty:**

Over the previous 12 months, 87 Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply professionally qualified commercial officers have left the Profession, but not necessarily the Department.

Over the previous 12 months 92 Qualified Staff left the MOD Finance Profession, but not necessarily the Department.

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[40666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what has been the average tour length of (a) a commercial officer and (b) a financial officer within his Department over the last five years.

**Leo Docherty:**

The Department cannot provide a comprehensive response as there have been many departmental changes over the last five years with posts being created or changed/removed.

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[40774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to answer Questions 27074 and 27072, tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 5 July 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[40775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to answer Question 27069, tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 5 July 2021.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[40776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to answer Questions 27067 and 27068, tabled by the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury on 5 July 2021.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

I responded to the right hon. Member's Questions (27067, 27068, 27069, 27072 and 27074) on 26 August 2021.

## ■ National Flagship

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

[\[40654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the total cost of bringing the National Flagship into service with the Royal Navy.

**Alan Brown:** [\[40986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the annual running costs of the proposed Royal Yacht.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

Estimates for the costs of building and operating the National Flagship will be established during market engagement.

## ■ Royal Yacht

**Alan Brown:** [\[40988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether an additional budget has been allocated to his Department for the procurement of the proposed Royal Yacht.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The capital costs of building the National Flagship will accrue over a number of years and on current assumptions they will be met from the existing Defence Budget.

**Alan Brown:** [\[40989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on which department is responsible for potential (a) risks and (b) overspend in respect of the procurement of the proposed Royal Yacht.

**Mr Ben Wallace:**

The management of risk and budget will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. The National Flagship will be delivered in the same way as other shipbuilding programmes run by this department.

## ■ Warships: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Mark Francois:** [\[40713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list all repair and refit tasks carried out by Babcock for the Royal Navy in the last 10 years, including for each such task (a) vessel name, (b) projected estimated length of time to complete the work, (c) actual time taken to complete the work and (d) fee paid to Babcock for completing that work.

**Jeremy Quin:**

It is not certain that the information requested by my right hon. Friend will be ascertainable for the entire 10-year period and such information would only be able to be provided after a significant commitment of resource. This is because the data required would need to be collated from a variety of sources, including the Maritime Delivery Support Framework contract, the data from which will be highly commercially sensitive.

I will write to him with further detail on his request with a focus on providing as much detail as possible for the recent period and I will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.



**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ 5G****Alexander Stafford:**[\[37626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with Ofcom on (a) domestic 5G diversification and (b) the role and regulation of UK networks in that matter.

**Matt Warman:**

The Government is working closely with Ofcom as it delivers the 5G Diversification Strategy.

The Government was delighted to see the “Smart Radio Access Network Open Network Interoperability Centre” – SONIC Labs – open its doors on 24th June. SONIC Labs is a joint programme between the Digital Catapult and Ofcom, and will be used for testing interoperability and integration of open networking solutions, starting with Open Radio Access Network. It will be vital for achieving our diversification ambitions whilst preserving and promoting security outcomes. It will be a secure research facility, allowing teams from academia, small and medium sized enterprise, critical industries and government to research, test and learn about security on the UK's telecoms networks.

Ofcom also provided expert advice to the Diversification Taskforce, chaired by Lord Livingston of Parkhead, which set out its recommendations in the spring.

**■ 5G: National Security****Alexander Stafford:**[\[37624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to achieve 5G diversification and encourage competition whilst guarding against threats to national security from malign overseas vendors.

**Matt Warman:**

The Government's 5G Diversification Strategy sets out plans to deliver a more healthy, diverse and competitive supply base for UK telecoms networks, in order to increase quality and innovation, and to address the potentially significant risks to the security and resilience of our critical national infrastructure.

As a first step towards delivering this long-term vision, the Government has committed an initial investment of £250 million. The Government's priorities have been informed by the expert advice of the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce, which was chaired by Lord Livingston of Parkhead, and which published its advice in the spring.

On 2 July 2021, the Government published its response, welcoming the recommendations and setting out the steps it is taking to implement them. These include the Future RAN Competition (FRANC) - an open competition, run by DCMS, that will allocate up to £30 million of R&D funding to projects that support the goals of

the government's 5G Supply Chain Diversification Strategy. The competition is aimed at helping to incentivise industry to create new products and services to unlock the full potential of Open RAN.

DCMS has also partnered with Ofcom and Digital Catapult to fund the SmartRAN Open Network Innovation Centre (SONIC Labs) to fund an industry-facing testing facility to foster Open RAN in the UK helping to develop a supply chain with multiple suppliers at every stage. SONIC Labs went live on the 24th of June 2021.

Alongside efforts to diversify the telecoms supply chain, the Government is committed to ensuring the security of the UK's telecoms networks. That is why we have introduced the Telecommunications (Security) Bill. This Bill will create one of the toughest telecoms security regimes in the world. It will protect our networks even as they grow and evolve, shielding our critical infrastructure both now and in the future. The Bill introduces a stronger telecoms security framework which places new security duties on public telecoms providers, and new national security powers to address the risks posed by high risk vendors.

#### ■ **Aerials: Middlesbrough**

**Grahame Morris:**

**[44295]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will bring forward proposals to part-refund television licenses for people affected by the Bilsdale transmitter fire.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

Under the Communications Act 2003, the BBC are entitled to make refunds for the TV licence fee in such circumstances as they may determine.

Following the Bilsdale mast fire, the BBC has announced that affected households which have been unable to receive TV coverage for over a month, and are also unable to view BBC programming through BBC iPlayer, and satellite and cable platforms, will be able to claim a refund or be offered a free extension to their TV Licence, depending on their TV Licensing payment plan. The BBC will make information available on these arrangements from 10 September on the TV Licensing website: <https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/transmitter>.

#### ■ **Broadband**

**Grahame Morris:**

**[40852]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to increase public awareness of the copper broadband switch off and the potential effect of that switch off on internet access.

**Matt Warman:**

There is currently no set date for the withdrawal of the copper broadband network. Ofcom, the independent telecoms regulator, set out clear criteria in their April 2021 wholesale fixed telecoms market review for the withdrawal of copper services, which includes 100% ultrafast broadband coverage in the exchange area.

## ■ Broadband: Morley and Outwood

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

[\[38348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to increase the average internet speed for properties in Morley and Outwood constituency.

**Matt Warman:**

It is the Government's view that the best way to achieve nationwide gigabit coverage is to create a competition-friendly environment in areas where deployment is commercially viable while focussing government funds on the 20% of the country where commercial deployment is unlikely. As a result of this approach, there is now a thriving market of over 80 providers rolling out gigabit broadband all over the UK.

Our strategy is working and this is no more evident than in the Morley and Outwood constituency with total Gigabit coverage now standing at 68.6% (significantly higher than the national average of 45%) according to figures from ThinkBroadband. Indeed, since January 2020, Gigabit coverage across the constituency has almost doubled which is testament to the competitive market we have facilitated.

This has a significant impact on average internet speed for properties in your constituency. In Q1 of 2019, average download speed in Morley and Outwood stood at 34Mbps, and today it stands at 58Mbps. Across the country today, over two in five premises can access gigabit-capable networks, up from just one in ten in November 2019. By the end of the year, 60% will have access, and by 2025 the Government is targeting a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage. The Government is also investing £5bn as part of Project Gigabit to ensure the hardest-to-reach areas in the UK receive coverage.

## ■ Broadband: Oxfordshire

**Layla Moran:**

[\[38405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many premises in Oxfordshire which are classified as rural by the ONS are included in Ofcom Area 2.

**Layla Moran:**

[\[38406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether premises in Oxfordshire that are deemed rural by the ONS and classified as being in Ofcom Area 2 are eligible for vouchers under his Department's Gigabit Voucher Scheme.

**Matt Warman:**

There are 14,678 premises in Oxfordshire that are classified as rural (using data from the Office for National Statistics) and in Ofcom's Area 2. These premises are not eligible for the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme as the independent market regulator for the telecoms market, Ofcom, as part of its Wholesale Fixed Telecoms Market Review 2021-26 has determined there is, or there is likely to be potential for, material and sustainable competition in the commercial deployment of competing networks. This avoids the risk of public money crowding out commercial investment,

and provides value for taxpayer money whilst delivering to those areas most in need. However, DCMS will continue to survey operators on their commercial build plans. If it becomes clear that premises are unlikely to benefit from a commercially delivered gigabit programme within a reasonable timeframe, then DCMS will take action to address this market failure. These detailed reviews will take place in partnership with the local authority through the process of Open Market Review and then Public Review to ensure an accurate map of existing networks is drawn up.

There are over 55,000 premises in Oxfordshire that are eligible for the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

## ■ Football Index

**Charlotte Nichols:** [41349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the independent review into the collapse of football gambling firm, Football Index, will be complete.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The Secretary of State has appointed Malcolm Sheehan QC to lead the independent review into the regulation of BetIndex Limited, the operators of Football Index. The independent review is expected to provide a report for publication shortly. Its findings will form part of the evidence informing the government's ongoing Review of the Gambling Act 2005, which was announced in December 2020.

## ■ Mobile Broadband

**Alexander Stafford:** [37623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to implement the transition from 2G and 3G networks to 4G and 5G networks.

**Matt Warman:**

We are committed to extending good quality mobile coverage across the UK. In March 2020, the Government announced a deal with the mobile network operators to increase 4G coverage to 95% of the UK landmass. The Government's ambition is for the majority of the population to have access to a 5G signal by 2027 and we are working to ensure that we can realise the full benefits of 5G as soon as possible by reducing barriers to deployment.

The Government is also working with mobile operators, suppliers, and users to set a clear roadmap for the sunsetting or streamlining of 2G and 3G technologies, following the recommendations of the Diversification Taskforce, published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

We will set out next steps in due course.

**Alexander Stafford:** [37625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of UK mobile network operators on sharing

and pooling 2G and 3G capabilities for use by the emergency services and other 2G and 3G dependent services and technologies.

**Matt Warman:**

The Government has regular discussions with mobile operators, suppliers, and users on 2G and 3G networks. The Government has committed to set out a clear roadmap for the sunseting or streamlining of 2G and 3G technologies, following the recommendations of the Diversification Taskforce, published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/telecoms-diversification-taskforce-findings-and-report/telecoms-diversification-taskforce-findings-and-report) \*<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/telecoms-diversification-taskforce-findings-and-report/telecoms-diversification-taskforce-findings-and-report>) and will set out next steps in due course.

■ **National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service**

**Sir Peter Bottomley:** [\[41605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has for the ownership of Victoria Tower Gardens following the proposed construction of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

**Sir Peter Bottomley:** [\[41606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has for the management of the parts of Victoria Tower Gardens not required for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what his timetable is for announcing detailed arrangements.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The site will continue to be owned by Government. We are in discussion with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and The Royal Parks about the future management arrangements for Victoria Tower Gardens.

■ **Openreach: Fees and Charges**

**Greg Smith:** [\[41311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Government target of at least 85 per cent nationwide coverage of gigabit capable broadband by 2025, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Openreach's proposed discounts on its competitors' ability to attract investment, particularly those building in high cost rural areas.

**Matt Warman:**

Ofcom, as the independent regulator for telecoms, is responsible for regulating pricing in the telecoms market for operators that it has determined have significant market power. Ofcom is currently consulting on Openreach's proposed FTTP offer and whether it raises competition concerns, this consultation closes on 6 September 2021.

As referenced, the Government is targeting a minimum of 85% UK gigabit-capable coverage across the UK. It is the Government's view that the best way to achieve this

target is to create a competition-friendly environment in areas where deployment is commercially viable while focussing government funds on the 20% of the country where commercial deployment is unlikely. As a result of this approach, there is now a thriving market of over 80 providers rolling out gigabit broadband all over the UK.

Our plan, to stimulate investment, bust barriers and drive competition, is working and we are on track for one of the fastest rollouts in Europe and for 60% of all households to have access to gigabit speeds by the end of the year. It is a huge leap forward from 2019, when it was just one in ten.

## ■ Radio Frequencies: Carbon Emissions

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[37467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, in the context the decision of regulators in (a) Germany and (b) the Republic of Ireland to enable radio spectrum allocation to facilitate the transition to net zero, what recent assessment his Department has made of the viability of the allocation of radio spectrum to the energy network operators to accelerate decarbonisation of the UK economy.

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[37468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment his Department has made of the role of Ofcom in incentivising decarbonisation through the award of radio spectrum to energy network operators; and whether officials in his Department have (a) met and (b) plan to meet representatives of UK energy network operators to discuss the allocation of radio spectrum to accelerate decarbonisation of the UK energy system.

**Matt Warman:**

This Government is committed to reaching our net zero targets. Our Nationally Determined Contribution to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 is the most ambitious in the world. Harnessing the potential of spectrum will be crucial to helping us do this.

Ofcom is responsible for managing and authorising spectrum use and DCMS will continue to work with Ofcom on the potential allocation of spectrum to energy networks and other users so as to help us reach our net zero targets.

As outlined in its [Plan of Work 21/22](#), Ofcom is reviewing the role of spectrum in supporting energy distribution networks to meet Government targets on carbon neutrality and manage new distribution models. Ofcom is working with energy operators and other stakeholders in the sector to understand future spectrum requirements, and closely follows the progress of other international spectrum regulators in enabling smart grids.

DCMS Officials have attended industry-led events regarding the allocation of radio spectrum to the energy network operators and have met with representatives from the Strategic Telecoms Group of the Energy Networks Association (ENA) and the Joint Radio Company (JRC), a joint venture between the ENA and National Grid, to

discuss the radio spectrum needs of the UK gas and electricity network operators. DCMS is also in close contact with BEIS on this issue.

The Government will continue to work with Ofcom and other key stakeholders to help find a suitable, sustainable spectrum solution for energy networks.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Arts: Higher Education

**Emma Hardy:**

**[41179]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to fund arts subjects in higher education.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The government values arts and creative subjects in higher education. Ensuring that there is high-quality provision in a range of subjects is critical in order to build our workforce and support our public services. Provision for higher education in the arts is also intellectually rewarding and culturally enriching for those studying them, and for wider society. An estimated 8% of the total student population (in England) – i.e. 165,555 students – chose to take up courses in the creative arts and design[1]. Our student loan system supports students with the qualifications to benefit from higher education to access higher education, including arts and design courses with a total of £1.8 billion made available as tuition fee and maintenance loans in the 2019/20 academic year for students doing art and design courses[2].

The government also supports arts courses via the Strategic Priorities Grant, a funding pot to support the provision of higher education. This includes high-cost subject funding - extra money given to providers to deliver expensive subjects, including arts. For the 2021/22 academic year, the high-cost subject funding rate for arts courses will be £121.50, an investment of £18 million by the government into the teaching of creative arts, performing arts and media subjects[3]. We have also asked the Office for Students to invest an additional £10 million in our world-leading specialist providers, many of which specialise in arts provision.

We continue to support the provision of arts subjects and ensure that Strategic Priorities Grant funding is used effectively.

[1] Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Table 49:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-49> (English providers only).

[2] Analysis of information from the Student Loans Company on the loan outlay for HE arts courses for academic year 2019/20. This figure covers English-domiciled undergraduate and postgraduate students who were studying full- or part-time.

[3] Office for Students, Recurrent funding for 2021-22, Table 2:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/b2eae4b4-7fed-4eda-9868-a4671f170129/recurrent-funding-2021-22.pdf>.



## ■ Children in Care

**Dr Kieran Mullan:**

**[42211]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of social outcomes contracts in supporting looked-after children.

**Vicky Ford:**

A number of local authorities have used social impact bonds (SIBs) to try to secure improved outcomes for children and young people in the children's social care system. A research report published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport provides an overview of seven projects and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/life-chances-fund-social-impact-bonds-in-childrens-social-care>.

In addition, in 2018, as part of the government's commitment to supporting care leavers to make the transition from being looked after to independence, the Department for Education funded three payment by results projects, to assess whether SIBs can help local authorities to improve education, employment and training outcomes for care leavers. Projects were established in three areas: Apollo (Sheffield), Aspire (South East London) and Reboot West (West of England) and started operating in October 2018. Ecorys UK were appointed in December 2018 to undertake an evaluation to assess the effectiveness, impact and value for money of the three projects. The evaluation is ongoing and is currently scheduled for completion in March 2022. The final report will be published in due course.

## ■ Department of Education: Food

**Philip Dunne:**

**[40779]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to encourage procurement of British produce within meals available for (a) staff of his Department and (b) people in his Department's care since 1 January 2021.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has staff in 13 offices across England and is only responsible for the procurement of produce for meals in one of these offices. The Coventry Office contract to provide meals, available for staff to purchase, was let before 1 January 2021. The remaining 12 offices are managed by other government departments or other organisations where the Department for Education has no involvement with the meals contracts.

The supplier for the Coventry Office meals contract is committed to supporting local produce, with all fresh goods to travel a maximum of 50 miles. 100% of the fresh meat is reared and sourced through local British suppliers, all fresh fruit and vegetables are sourced through local and regional suppliers and all fresh bakery products are made by bakers in close proximity of the Coventry office.

Environments where teaching takes place, such as schools, colleges and universities, are autonomous and have the freedom to make their own procurement



decisions based on individual need and circumstances regarding British produce used within meals.

The Department has, and continues to review, a wide range of deals across public sector buying organisations, including three catering frameworks. All have been assessed for compliance with procurement regulations, ease of use, suitability and value for money.

## ■ Further and Sixth Form Education: Expenditure

**Peter Aldous:**

[\[41853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the IFS's briefing note, Further education and sixth form spending in England, published on 18 August 2021, what assessment he has made of potential effect the IFS-predicted 17% rise in the number of these students aged between 16-18 between 2019 and 2024 on education provision; and if he will provide a longer-term revenue and capital budget for education for students aged between 16-18.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The department forecasts 16-19 year old student numbers, taking into account population forecasts, when considering the need for future education funding for 16-19 year olds. The future budgets for this education provision will be considered in the Spending Review this autumn.

The department invested an additional £291 million in 16-19 education in the 2021-22 financial year. This was in addition to the £400 million awarded in the 2019 Spending Review. This allowed us to maintain the base rate of funding at £4,188 for all types of providers and to continue with the increased funding for high value and high cost subjects, including the High Value Courses Premium.

This year, the department has also made £83 million in capital funding available through the Post-16 Capacity Fund to support eligible post-16 providers to accommodate the upcoming increase in 16-19 year olds. Bids are currently being assessed and the outcome will be announced in due course.

## ■ Further Education: Qualifications

**Judith Cummins:**

[\[44490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what options are available to learners aged 19 and over for progression to L3 qualifications and to support further progression to higher education or employment following the removal of BTEC courses.

**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.

The department is streamlining and improving the quality of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below. We are strengthening the pathways to progression, creating clearly defined routes to further study, and/or skilled employment.

The call for evidence on qualifications and study at level 2 and below closed on 14 February. This asked for views on the range of options and types of support needed to support both 16 to 19 year olds and adults to progress to level 3 and above. We are considering feedback to the call for evidence and will consult on proposals later this year.

Our final plans setting out the groups of level 3 qualifications that will be available to adults in future were published on 14 July. This followed a consultation on level 3 qualifications that ran from 23 October 2020 to 31 January 2021.

It is intended that T Levels will be available for adults, and we believe these should exist alongside a range of other high-quality technical qualifications that are backed by employers. Adults will be able to study technical qualifications that allow entry to occupations, including those served by T Levels, and qualifications focusing on cross-sectoral skills that are transferrable across different occupations such as management, leadership and digital. Qualifications within safety critical industries will also be available for adults.

Adults progressing into further study will have access to the same range of academic qualifications as 16 to 19 year olds, as set out in the consultation response. We will also fund Access to HE Diplomas to support adults who do not have traditional qualifications to progress into higher education or to reskill.

## ■ Schools: Defibrillators

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[44421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make resources available to support the wide-scale roll-out of automated external defibrillators in schools across England.

**Vicky Ford:**

All new and refurbished state funded schools are required to have at least one defibrillator installed on their premises. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, discussed this important issue in the House of Commons this week and said: 'It was incredibly moving to speak to Mark King and listen to his tragic experience of losing his son, Oliver – he was joined by Jamie Carragher as well. It really does focus us on the need to do as much as possible to encourage schools to have defibrillators. That is why we will look at changing the regulations, which are underpinned by legislation, to ensure that all schools have defibrillators in the future and hopefully prevent such a tragedy visiting more families.'

Defibrillators are currently available for schools and other education providers in the UK to purchase through the NHS Supply Chain at a reduced cost. These arrangements are available to all UK schools, including academies and independent schools, sixth form colleges, further education institutions and early years settings, including holiday and out-of-school providers.

The department wants as many schools as possible to have this equipment and we are exploring all available options to see what more we can do.

## ■ **Special Educational Needs: Finance**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[44245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the Comprehensive Spending Review allows education, health and social care agencies to have the resources necessary to (a) meet the legal timescales for Education, Health and Care Plan assessments and (b) deliver the support for disabled children identified in those assessments.

**Vicky Ford:**

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

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

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

More broadly, The Department for Education is currently undertaking a review of the SEND system, which is making good progress in identifying the reforms needed to ensure that schools and colleges are able to deliver the support for disabled children identified through those assessments, with the appropriate interventions from health and social care agencies.

## ■ **Vocational Education: Qualifications**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[41659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students can continue to undertake BTEC qualifications.

**Mr Jonathan Lord:** [\[41861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of removing funding for most BTEC qualifications on students.

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[42094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that students can continue to study BTEC qualifications in the future.

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[42095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the change in the level of funding on BTEC qualifications.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[43588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students can continue to study BTEC qualifications in the future.

**Helen Hayes:** [\[43589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on students of his Department's decision to remove funding for BTEC qualifications.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[44234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that students can continue to study BTEC qualifications in the future.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[44235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of removing funding for 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 special educational needs and disabilities. 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) in order 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

### ■ Agriculture: Sustainable Development

**Gordon Henderson:**

**[40863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a response to the proposal by the National Farmers Union for a sustainable food and farming scheme.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We met the National Farmers' Union (NFU) to discuss their proposals at Ministerial and official level and the Secretary of State wrote to the NFU to thank them for their considered input into the development of our new policies. The Agricultural Transition Plan published in November sets out our plans for agricultural policies, including for the Sustainable Farming Incentive which we are currently piloting.

We have ongoing engagement with the NFU and meet regularly.

## ■ Amazon: Waste Disposal

**Theresa Villiers:** [\[40729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will have discussions with representatives of Amazon on the provisions of the Waste Regulations 2011.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Businesses that handle waste, including companies like Amazon, are obliged to follow the waste hierarchy, under the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, which requires action to prevent waste as the priority option. Ministers are in discussion with the Environment Agency, as the responsible enforcement body in England, about this. Failure to meet the legal obligation to take all reasonable steps to apply these steps can lead to enforcement action.

## ■ Animal Welfare: Farms

**Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[38335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that animal welfare standards are maintained on farms in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) England.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The welfare of farmed animals is protected by comprehensive and robust legislation across England, including West Yorkshire, alongside species-specific welfare codes which provide guidance on how to comply with the legislation.

This Government wants to continue to build on our strong track record for raising the bar when it comes to farm animal welfare. We are delivering a series of ambitious reforms, as outlined in the Action Plan for Animal Welfare which was published in May this year. We are also actively exploring options for improving the UK food system and this includes phasing out of cages.

As part of our plans for future farming, we are co-designing an Animal Health and Welfare Pathway with industry – to promote the production of healthier, higher-welfare animals at a level beyond compliance with current regulations – underpinning our high international reputation for health and welfare and future increases to regulatory standards.

## ■ Animal Welfare: Transport

**Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[38336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the wellbeing of animals during transportation in the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

At the end of last year we launched a consultation in England and Wales on banning the export of live animals for slaughter and fattening and other improvements to animal welfare in transport. We recently introduced into Parliament the Animal

Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill which includes measures to ban live animal exports for slaughter and fattening from Great Britain. The Government's response to the consultation was published on 18 August, outlining how we propose to take forward other improvements.

We will work closely with industry, NGOs and other stakeholders on our proposed policies to develop practical and workable solutions to improve animal welfare standards during transportation.

We already have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and these proposals aim to raise those standards even further.

■ **Beaches: Seaham**

**Grahame Morris:**

**[40854]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, on what dates water samples have been taken at (a) Seaham Beach and (b) Seaham Hall Beach for the Environment Agency Bathing Water Quality tests for the current bathing season.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency (EA) took water samples at Seaham Beach on the following dates of the current bathing season:

06/05/2021

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18/05/2021

24/05/2021

01/06/2021

07/06/2021

16/06/2021

22/06/2021

01/07/2021

08/07/2021

15/07/2021

23/07/2021

29/07/2021

03/08/2021

08/08/2021

16/08/2021

The EA took water samples at Seaham Hall Beach on the following dates of the current bathing season:

06/05/2021

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18/05/2021

24/05/2021

01/06/2021

07/06/2021

16/06/2021

22/06/2021

01/07/2021

08/07/2021

15/07/2021

23/07/2021

29/07/2021

03/08/2021

08/08/2021

16/08/2021

## ■ Beverage Containers: Recycling

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

**[44191]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to co-ordinate the introduction of a deposit return scheme and an extended producer responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We have consulted on implementing a deposit return scheme (DRS) alongside a consultation on the extended producer responsibility (EPR) reforms to the packaging producer responsibility system – we are currently analysing responses to these consultations. As we finalise policy in both areas, we will ensure that we consider how these reforms work together well so they are as effective as possible.



## ■ Birds of Prey: Conservation

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[41340]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to prevent the killing of (a) hen harriers, (b) golden eagles, (c) peregrines, (d) goshawks and (e) other birds of prey in the uplands and support the recovery of each species' populations.

**Rebecca Pow:**

All wild birds including birds of prey are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which provides a powerful framework for the conservation of wild birds, their eggs, nests and habitats. The Government is committed to ensuring the protection afforded to birds of prey is effectively enforced. There are strong penalties for offenders, including imprisonment.

To address concerns about the illegal killing of birds of prey, senior government and enforcement officers have identified raptor persecution as a national wildlife crime priority. Defra sits on the police-led Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group, which takes forward activities to raise awareness and facilitate intelligence and incident reporting, leading to increased prevention and enforcement activity. The group focuses on 'hotspot' areas of the country (which will include some upland areas) rather than specific species, although the golden eagle, goshawk, hen harrier, peregrine and white-tailed eagle have been identified as being of particular concern.

Additionally, the Hen Harrier Action Plan seeks to secure the long-term future of the hen harrier as a breeding bird in England. It includes measures to stop illegal persecution, and an action to reintroduce the hen harrier in the south of England. The long-term plan was published in January 2016 and we believe that it remains the best way to safeguard the hen harrier in England. This year has seen a further increase in the number of breeding hen harriers in England. 84 chicks fledged from nests across the uplands in County Durham, Cumbria, Lancashire, Northumberland and Yorkshire. These are the highest numbers for hen harrier breeding in England since the 1960s.

## ■ Bomb Disposal: Seas and Oceans

**Patrick Grady:**

**[37500]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the UK Government is taking to reduce the environmental impact of underwater munitions disposal.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra recognises the significant impact underwater noise from unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance by detonation can have on vulnerable marine species. Therefore, Defra's dedicated underwater noise team, as part of the Offshore Wind Enabling Actions Programme, is continuing to focus on reducing, monitoring and managing underwater noise to minimise harm to marine life.

In addition, the Government is working closely with scientists, industry, and regulators to investigate and collect the necessary evidence on the safety and efficacy of these alternative methods of UXO clearance in the marine environment. The very first at sea trials of alternative clearance methods are planned to begin in October. Further to this, Defra and BEIS officials are working together to expedite planning and creation of additional trials of historic UXO clearance using alternative methods in the North Sea

Once sufficient evidence is available, and on the advice of the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) (as the regulatory authority) will be able to make the strongest licensing decisions around the use of such low order techniques in England.

At present, UXO removal must be individually assessed by the MMO in accordance with the applicable marine licence, marine protected species licence and habitats regulation requirements and all forms of potential mitigation considered. For example, marine mammal specialists are deployed to ensure there are no marine mammals in the vicinity.

#### ■ **Bottles: Recycling**

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

[\[44190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy to set a maximum bottle size of 700ml in the event that a deposit return scheme is introduced; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Government undertook a second consultation on a deposit return scheme (DRS) earlier this year and we are currently analysing the responses to that consultation.

The government response to the second consultation will include a final decision on the container size to be included in the scheme.

#### ■ **Carbon Emissions and Environment Protection**

**Liz Twist:**

[\[38381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of mandating Ofwat to incentivise long-term outcomes on (a) net-zero and (b) the delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan through the forthcoming strategic policy statement.

**Liz Twist:**

[\[38383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling the use of catchment approaches and nature-based solutions by water companies in delivering their regulated obligations in the forthcoming Strategic Policy Statement to Ofwat.

**Liz Twist:**

[38384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to provide long-term investment certainty for water companies to assist them in playing a greater role in delivering on the Government's environmental objectives.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is consulting on a draft strategic policy statement for Ofwat. This will set priorities for the economic regulator in the following areas:

- Protecting and enhancing the environment – including supporting delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan, net zero, nature-based solutions and catchment approaches by water companies,
- Delivering a more resilient water sector; and
- Serving and protecting customers, including those who are vulnerable.

The consultation for the strategic policy statement can be accessed via the link here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/water-industry-governments-strategic-policy-statement-for-ofwat>

## ■ Chemicals: Regulation

**Geraint Davies:**

[44170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to publish a draft UK Chemicals Strategy and consult on it; and when he plans to publish a final Strategy.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan commits to publishing a Chemicals Strategy to tackle chemicals of concern and help ensure the levels of harmful chemicals entering the environment are significantly reduced. Work on the Chemicals Strategy is underway and we will set out our next steps in due course.

## ■ Conservation: Animals

**Fleur Anderson:**

[37611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to enhance ecological protections for (a) pine martens, (b) red squirrels, (c) adders, (d) water voles and (e) slow worms.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Pine martens, red squirrels, adders, water voles and slow worms are all protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

All of these species are also priority conservation species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which requires public authorities to have regard to these species when carrying out their day to day functions.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) recently commenced its seventh Quinquennial Review of protected species listed on schedules to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Following public consultation, the JNCC will make evidence-based recommendations for the Secretary of State later this year as to which species, in its view, warrant additional legal protections. We will then carefully consider these recommendations before making any decisions.

As part of the recently announced Green Paper, my department will begin a review of species legislation with a view to enhancing and modernising it. We intend to publish the Green Paper and seek views later this year.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: CCTV**

**Luke Pollard:** [41244]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Ministerial departmental office (a) has been and (b) is currently covered by CCTV cameras.

**Victoria Prentis:**

It is not Government policy to comment on security procedures in Government buildings.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Ethnic Groups**

**Ruth Jones:** [37586]

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

**Victoria Prentis:**

As at 30 July, the Defra Ministerial department had 660 staff who had declared they were from a Black or Ethnic Minority background. This equates to 14% of staff who had made a declaration.

Each year as at 31 March and in line with all departments, Defra contributes to the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey which covers key Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data. These statistics can be found here: [Annual Civil Service statistics 2021](#). This shows the Department had 600 staff who had declared they were from a Black or Ethnic Minority background.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Location**

**Alicia Kearns:** [38449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many of his Department's offices and offices of related agencies are located outside of London; and how many and what proportion of those are located in settlements that are classified as (a) D1, (b) D2, (c) E1, (d) E2, (f) F1 and (g) F2 according to the Rural Urban Classification system.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The number of offices located outside London is 126.

The proportion of those located in settlements D1, D2, E1, E2, F1 and F2 are as follows:

CLASSIFICATION	%
D1	5.6%
D2	2.4%
E1	7.1%
E2	0.0%
F1	6.3%
F2	0.0%

**■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Protective Clothing****Philip Davies:****[38202]**

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

**Victoria Prentis:**

Throughout the pandemic Defra, our Executive Agencies and Arms-Length Bodies have followed, and continue to follow, the latest Government guidance in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace, including any variations between the four nations of the UK.

In England, the BEIS 'Working Safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)' guidance provides sensible precautions employers can take to manage risk and support their staff. Guidance on face coverings is currently different for Wales and in Scotland so the respective guidance is followed for our workplaces located within those countries.

Our workplace risk assessments determine which mitigations are appropriate to adopt in light of the updated guidance. In line with the revised Government 'working safely' guidance it is expected and recommended that staff wear face coverings in our workplaces in specified areas and when using public transport for work-related travel. Additionally:

- a) Within core Defra, face coverings may be required where a risk assessment has identified the need to wear one for a particular work activity or working environment.
- b) Within Defra's departmental agencies, face coverings may be required where a risk assessment has identified the need to wear one for a particular work activity or working environment. Within science laboratories, there is currently a mandatory

requirement to wear a face covering within specified areas and for certain laboratory-based work activities.

c) Within Defra's non-departmental public bodies and other related bodies, face coverings may be required where a risk assessment has identified the need to wear one for a particular work activity or working environment.

Organisational policies reflect that some people are not able to wear face coverings, and that face coverings may make it harder to communicate with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions, and clear sound. We expect our employees to be mindful and respectful of such circumstances.

## ■ Export Health Certificates

**Gareth Thomas:**

[\[38134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with her counterparts in the EU to ensure that there is uniform acceptance of valid Export Health Certificates across all ports in the EU; and if she will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) has written to the European Commission on several occasions since January, raising technical issues relating to Export Health Certificates. These include issues arising from consistency of interpretation. We have received helpful clarifications from the Commission and these have been sent to all EU Member States, meaning there are fewer incidences of differing approaches. The EU Member State relations team have liaised directly with EU Member States where we have had issues with individual Border Control Posts. The CVO has also had many meetings on this issue.

## ■ Fisheries

**John Spellar:**

[\[40589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what support his Department is providing to countries affected by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK is committed to tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing globally. IUU fishing continues to be one of the most serious threats to ocean ecosystems, sustainable fisheries and the exploitation of protected and vulnerable marine species.

The UK has launched a £500 million Blue Planet Fund that will support developing countries to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty. The Fund is managed by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Financed from the UK Official Development Assistance Budget, the Fund will help eligible countries reduce poverty, protect and sustainably manage their marine resources and address human-

generated threats across four key themes: sustainable seafood, biodiversity, climate change, and marine pollution. Tackling IUU fishing has been identified as one of the priority outcomes of the Blue Planet Fund.

## ■ Flood Control: Shrewsbury

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[40792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the accumulated silt which blocks at least two of the arches under English bridge, Shrewsbury, will be removed; what steps he plans to take in relation to the two islets immediately below the English bridge which did not exist four years ago; whether temporary flood barriers of the type that has proven effective in Ironbridge and elsewhere will be provided for Coton Hill/Chester Street; what plans he is developing for a longer term solution to the flooding and whether plans similar to the Dee Regulation Scheme are part of those considerations; and whether the levels in the Vyrnwy and Clywedog dams will be lowered in the autumn period to allow additional capacity for storage of water in the winter period.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Severn Valley Flood Risk Management Scheme has been granted £10 million to formulate a long-term holistic plan for the management of the Upper Severn catchment. This work will consider sustainable approaches to the management of the catchment from a variety of perspectives, including flood risk, water resources and the natural environment.

In the short to medium term the Environment Agency (EA) will continue to investigate the potential for flood risk management schemes for areas of Shrewsbury that are impacted by flooding. Work is progressing on the next phase of developing options for further assessment. The EA continues to deliver its annual routine maintenance programme for the River Severn and its tributaries, helping to ensure the flood risk is being effectively managed.

Shropshire Council is responsible for maintaining the bridges in Shrewsbury and, in conjunction with the EA, uses its permissive powers to reduce vegetation and remove obstructions around the English Bridge to prevent obstruction to flood flows. Whilst it is not sustainable, cost effective or a benefit to flooding to remove all the silt from the arches on the English Bridge, this management technique loosens the silt around the bridges so it can be transported by the river. Work of this nature was undertaken in spring 2021 at English Bridge and further work will be completed before autumn to reduce vegetation.

Historically there have always been islands downstream of the English Bridge due to the nature and shape of the channel and flows within it. Flood modelling has shown that complete removal of these islands would not result in any significant reduction in flooding.

The EA works in partnership with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Hafren Dyfrdwy to manage the water level of Vyrnwy and Clywedog reservoirs, together with



United Utilities in the case of Lake Vyrnwy. Their primary function is public water supply. Their active management includes lowering of water levels from the autumn through to the spring to reduce the incidence of spill and provide some flood risk benefits downstream. The reservoirs are at the head of the catchment and play a very minor role in terms of mitigating flood risk to communities such as Shrewsbury and Ironbridge, with the vast majority of river flow originating from the catchments downstream of the reservoirs.

## ■ Fly-tipping: Rural Areas

**Bim Afolami:**

[\[41164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle the increase in fly-tipping in rural communities and (b) prosecute the perpetrators of fly-tipping.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is committed to tackling fly-tipping wherever it takes place, including in rural communities.

Defra chairs the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG), through which we work with a wide range of interested parties such as the National Farmers Union, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Countryside Alliance and the Country Land and business Association, to promote and disseminate good practice with regards to preventing fly-tipping, including on private land.

In April 2021 we commissioned a research project considering the drivers, deterrents and impacts of fly-tipping tipping, which will include consideration of rural areas. This research project is due to be completed before the end of this year and will support informed policy making. We are exploring additional funding opportunities, including supporting digital solutions.

Fly-tipping investigation and enforcement is the responsibility of local authorities, and the Environment Agency in certain circumstances. We expect enforcing authorities to investigate all incidents of fly-tipping and make use of the enforcement powers available to them where there is sufficient evidence; such as by issuing a fixed penalty notice or prosecuting fly-tippers and recovering investigation, enforcement and clearance costs where possible. We also encourage councils and others to publicise their enforcement activity.

Through the Environment Bill we are seeking powers to introduce an electronic waste tracking system. A comprehensive digital waste tracking system will help regulators detect when waste doesn't reach the next stage, which may indicate illegal activity. This, along with other measures being introduced as part of the Bill (for example amendments to the section 108 powers of entry) will help to tackle waste crime, including fly-tipping.

We are working with the NFTPG to develop a fly-tipping toolkit which will help local authorities, landowners and others work in partnership to tackle this crime. The toolkit



will cover, among other things, how to present robust cases to the courts to support suitable sentences.

## ■ Food Resilience Industry Forum

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[37484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits to re-establishing the Food Resilience Industry Forum.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Food Resilience Industry Forum continues to meet on a quarterly basis, with the next meeting scheduled for 16 September.

Defra also continues to have a broad range of engagement mechanisms through which stakeholders can raise and address impacts affecting the food chain. Defra intends to continue to use focused task and finish groups as a means of bringing together representatives of the sector, and the relevant expertise from across the Government, to tackle specific issues.

## ■ Food Supply

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[41269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the UK food supply chain.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We have a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption.

The UK's high degree of food security is built on access to a range of sources, including robust supply chains domestically, and from other countries. Defra has well established ways of working with the industry and across Government to ensure that we maintain close ties internationally and monitor any risks that may arise.

## ■ Food: Coronavirus

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

[\[38350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the logistical security of the UK's food industry during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The food industry is very resilient and well equipped to respond to disruption. The industry sectors have highly resilient supply chains, as we have seen throughout the Covid-19 response. The Government has well established ways of working with the food industry to support their preparedness for potential disruptions to the supply

chain. We have continued to work closely with stakeholders and industry during this time.

We have worked across Government to introduce measures to make sure businesses can continue to keep essential supplies flowing. These include extending delivery hours to supermarkets and flexing rules on drivers' hours to allow a higher frequency of deliveries to stores.

We recognise the impact that absence rates as a result of Covid-19 have had on some businesses carrying out critical work across the food industry this summer. To enable those who would otherwise not have been able to work to safely do so, the Government introduced Workplace Daily Contact Testing.

As of 16 August 2021, those who are fully vaccinated, participants of approved vaccine trials or those unable to have the vaccine for medical reasons are exempt from self-isolation if they are a close contact of a positive case, though they continue to be advised to take a PCR test. Following these changes, the Workplace Daily Contact Testing scheme continues to provide benefits for contacts who have not yet been fully vaccinated, and those sites wishing to maintain a site continue to be supported.

#### ■ **Furs: Import Controls**

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[37603]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans the Government has to ban imports of fur from (a) foxes, (b) minks and (c) coyotes.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000, and 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Whilst there are existing import restrictions on seal, cat and dog fur, we still import other fur from abroad and fur from foxes, minks and coyotes is legal to import. Now the transition period has finished, the Government is considering further steps it could take in relation to the fur trade.

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

#### ■ **JBS**

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

**[38153]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the letter from a group of cross-party hon. Members to the Federal Deputy for Rio de Janeiro requesting that the Brazilian congress halt the continued illegal deforestation of the Amazon.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

**[38154]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the research by Chain Reaction Research published on 31 August 2020, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings in that report that 20,296 hectares have been deforested in a sample of JBS' direct supply chain and 56,421 hectares have been deforested in the indirect supply chain of that company since 2008.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

**[38155]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to investigate the practices of JBS in the UK in the context of the public concern in respect of deforestation and that company's policy on that matter.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is committed to tackling deforestation and greening supply chains. We maintain a regular dialogue with the Brazilian government and legislators on the progress of legislation in Brazil that affects rates of deforestation. The Government will continue to support action by businesses, civil society, and members of Parliament to help reduce deforestation globally. We are committed to maintaining constructive dialogue, working to protect nature and biodiversity and support global climate objectives.

In line with recent calls to halt illegal deforestation including in the Amazon, we are introducing world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Bill to help address illegal deforestation across UK supply chains. Close to 90% of deforestation in some of the world's most important forests is illegal.

We do not currently have plans to investigate the practices of JBS in the UK. However, our due diligence law will make it illegal for larger businesses operating in the UK to use key forest risk commodities produced on land illegally occupied or used. Businesses in scope will also be required to undertake a due diligence exercise on their supply chains, and to report on this exercise annually. To ensure transparency, information about businesses' due diligence exercises will be published. Businesses in scope that do not comply with these requirements may be subject to fines and other civil sanctions.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

**[38156]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that JBS complies with UK environmental and welfare standards.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Great Britain maintains its own imports regime to protect public, animal and plant life, health, welfare and the environment.

Countries that are approved to import animal products to the UK are required to ensure that their exporting establishments meet UK import requirements, as set out in legislation including Retained Regulations 2019/625, 853/2004 and 1099/2009.

Within Great Britain, compliance with animal welfare regulations is monitored and enforced in approved slaughterhouses by official veterinarians from the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

[\[40624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the welfare standards of the Brazilian company JBS in the context of the appropriateness of the UK accepting imports from that company into the UK; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Our existing legal requirements for imports include a ban on animal products which were produced using artificial growth hormones, and a legal requirement that imported poultry carcasses can only be washed in potable water.

In addition, imports of animal products are legally required to have been subject to humane slaughter methods.

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

#### ■ Livestock: Auctions

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

[\[38337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the welfare of animals at livestock auctions.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990 covers the care of animals whilst at livestock auctions. In addition, all animals being transported for a commercial purpose to, and from, a livestock market are covered under regulations on the protection of animals during transport.

We launched a consultation in England and Wales in 2020 on improvements to the animal welfare in transport regime. We published our response on 18 August, outlining how we propose to take improvements forward.

We will work closely with industry, NGOs and other stakeholders on our proposed policies to develop practical and workable solutions to improve animal welfare standards.

#### ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[38189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the letter of 4 June 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on regulation of pet crematoria, reference ZA53694.

**Rebecca Pow:**

I replied to the hon. Member on 28 July. I apologise for the delay in responding.

■ **Nappies**

**Jerome Mayhew:**

[\[41271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to support the roll out of a national reusable nappy incentive scheme.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In line with the 25 Year Environment Plan and our Resources and Waste Strategy, we are considering the best approach to minimise the environmental impact of a range of products, including nappies, taking on board the environmental and social impacts of the options available.

Potential additional policy measures include standards, consumer information and encouraging voluntary action by business which could include a national reusable nappy incentive scheme.

We are funding an environmental assessment of disposable and washable absorbent hygiene products with the primary focus on nappies, and we need to wait for the outcome of that work before considering possible future action by the Government and industry. The assessment is looking at the waste and energy impacts of washable and disposable products, disposal to landfill or incineration, and recycling options. The research will be published later this year, following peer review.

■ **Nappies: Waste Disposal**

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[38363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department's life cycle assessment of disposable and washable absorbent hygiene products will take account of the results of the YouGov survey finding that the average age for potty training has increased from 2.5 to 3.5 years old.

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[38364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the increase in the average age at which children potty train from 2.5 to 3.5 years on the (a) volume of plastic waste generated from more single-use nappies being used and (b) burden on local authorities tasked with dealing with those nappies through landfill or incineration.

**Chris Elmore:**

[\[38365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the change in the average age of potty training on the consumption of single-use nappies.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The independent analysts carrying out the environmental assessment of disposable and reusable absorbent hygiene products have taken into consideration the recent YouGov survey to establish current ages for potty training. The sources of the information used in the study, as well as an explanation of the methodology and assumptions made, will be included in the final report which will be published later this year following peer review.

**■ National Food Strategy Review****Stuart Anderson:**[\[37598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps are being taken to consult communities on recommendations from Henry Dimbleby's independent review of the food system.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We would like to thank Henry Dimbleby and his team for their work on this independent review examining our food system and the vital role it plays in all our lives. We will consider the review carefully, and respond with a White Paper in the next six months, which will set out the Government's ambition and priorities for the food system.

As we develop the White Paper we are committed to listening to opinions from stakeholders across the food system, and will engage in dialogues with a wide range of interested parties.

As was the case following the first report from this review, we will also work collaboratively across Government, through regular inter-Departmental meetings of officials and Ministers that will draw upon the input from external engagement.

**■ Nature Conservation: Reptiles and Amphibians****Fleur Anderson:**[\[37612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the health of (a) reptile and (b) amphibian populations in the UK.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Natural England recently worked with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation charity to undertake an assessment of the extinction risk of all native amphibians and reptiles in Great Britain. The report was published in August 2021 and found that of the 13 species assessed, 7 were classified as 'Least Concern', meaning no imminent risk of extinction from Great Britain. The common toad and adder were classified as 'Near Threatened', the smooth snake, natterjack toad and sand lizard as 'Endangered' and the northern pool frog as 'Critically Endangered'.

## ■ Plastics: Waste

**Beth Winter:**

**[38459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to reduce plastic waste.

**Rebecca Pow:**

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

In October 2020, we introduced measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers, and plastic-stemmed cotton buds. The single-use carrier bag charge, which has led to a 95% reduction in the use of single-use carrier bags by the main supermarkets, has been increased to 10p and extended to all retailers to encourage customers to bring their own bags to carry shopping and reduce the volumes of single-use plastic being used.

We are also currently in the process of preparing a public consultation on banning single-use plastic plates, cutlery, balloon sticks and expanded polystyrene food and drinks containers, and we will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/ or materials to take a systematic approach to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products. Moreover, at Budget 2020 the Chancellor announced the tax on plastic packaging of £200 per tonne for plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content, effective from April 2022.

Our Environment Bill will enable us to significantly change the way that we manage our waste and take forward a number of the proposals from the Resources and Waste Strategy. The Bill will include powers to create Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes; introduce Deposit Return Schemes (DRS); establish greater consistency in the recycling system; better control the export of plastic waste; and give us the power to set new charges for other single-use plastic items. Our consultations on an EPR scheme for packaging and a DRS for drinks containers closed on 4 June and our consultation on our proposals for consistency in the recycling system in England closed on 4 July. More details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/environment/waste-and-recycling>.

The Government has put together a package of nearly £100 million for research and innovation to tackle the issues that arise from plastic waste. £38 million was set aside through the Plastics Research and Innovation Fund, the last funding competition of which opened in June 2020. The Resource Action Fund included £10 million specifically to pioneer innovative approaches to boosting recycling and reducing litter. The Government has also announced £60 million of funding through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, alongside a £150 million investment from industry, towards the development of smart, sustainable plastic packaging (SSPP), which will aim to make the UK a world leader in sustainable packaging for consumer products. Two



SSPP funding opportunities have been open for bids in 2021: the SSPP Demonstrator Round 2 and the SSPP business-led research and development competition.

Science estimates that the annual plastic flow into the ocean will triple between 2016 and 2040. Due to the scale of the marine litter challenge the UK believes it is time to start negotiating a new global agreement on marine plastic litter and microplastics at the United Nations Environment Assembly. A new global agreement would build upon the important work we are doing to tackle marine litter both domestically and internationally and support our commitments to eliminate plastic entering the ocean.

## ■ Rivers: Standards

**Julian Sturdy:**

**[40871]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the investigative documentary entitled *Rivercide*, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of the evidence presented in that documentary on the state of rivers and the enforcement of river standards; and what steps the Government is taking to (a) protect and (b) improve rivers.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra, the Welsh Government, the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural Resources Wales are working together to deal with pollution in the stretch of the river Wye which was the subject of this programme. There is significant pollution in this area from chicken farming in the upper catchments.

We are working with farmers across a range of schemes designed to incentivise improvements in agricultural practices that tackle water pollution. Catchment Sensitive Farming and Countryside Stewardship Schemes seek to improve information sharing and incentivise farmers to manage their land and farm in way that protects the water environment. The Farming Rules for Water standardises good farm practices and encourages reasonable precautions to prevent diffuse pollution, including the managed use of fertilisers. We are also providing additional funding to the EA to increase their farm inspection regime nationwide over the next 18 months. In 2021/22 this includes an expectation of a fourfold increase in farm inspections undertaken nationally with plans to scale up further in 2022/23.

In addition, the storm overflows task force, comprising the Government and water companies, will help address the problem of sewage discharge from storm overflows and our new chemicals strategy will build on an already robust statutory regime to ensure chemicals are managed and handled safely.

Through our 25 Year Environment Plan, this government set out its commitment to clean and plentiful water, which has also been supported by the landmark Environment Bill, and we know there is more to do to meet this commitment.



## ■ Seas and Oceans

**Dr Luke Evans:**

**[41315]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department is making on the preparations for an update to the Marine strategy part three.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Defra and the Devolved Administrations have carried out a comprehensive review of existing and new measures that will contribute to the achievement and maintenance of Good Environment Status. This review has been synthesised into a proposed update to the UK Marine Strategy Part Three, and we intend to launch a consultation for the Part Three Programme of Measures during September. The consultation period will last 12 weeks and will allow stakeholders the opportunity to review our proposals and shape the development of the Programme of Measures. We will carefully consider stakeholder feedback to guide the final iteration of the updated UK Marine Strategy Part Three.

## ■ Seas and Oceans: Sewage

**Grahame Morris:**

**[40853]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will introduce a statutory duty for water companies to display pollution alerts near bathing waters for at least 48 hours after a sewage discharge event.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We currently have no plans to introduce such a statutory duty. Local authorities are required to display signage providing the classification of all designated bathing waters. Throughout the bathing season, the Environment Agency will issue warnings of any forecasted pollution risk on its [Swimfo](#) website, covering over 170 sites. Signs are also put up at these swimming spots to inform bathers about a possible dip in quality as a result of factors like rainfall, wind and high tides. Members of the public can also access real time information on water quality using data on storm overflow spills direct from water companies using the Safer Seas app, a collaboration between Surfers Against Sewage and the Environment Agency.

## ■ Shellfish: Animal Welfare

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[37551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect the welfare of decapod crustaceans in the forthcoming Animal (Welfare) Sentience Bill.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Animal (Welfare) Sentience Bill applies to vertebrates. It gives the Secretary of State a power to extend the recognition of sentience to particular invertebrates in future

Defra has commissioned an independent review of the available scientific evidence on the sentience of decapod crustaceans such as crabs and lobsters, as well as on the sentience of some other invertebrates. Its findings will be published before the Bill reaches Report stage in the House of Lords. We will consider its findings carefully as part of our ongoing work to protect the welfare needs of animals.

## ■ Trapping

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[41063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the use of glue traps in pest control.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In our [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#), published in May this year, we announced that we would look to restrict the use of glue traps as a means of pest control.

Accordingly, we are supporting the hon. Member for Wolverhampton North East's Glue Traps (Offences) Private Members Bill, which proposes to ban the use of glue traps for catching rodents. The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 16 June, and we will work closely with her over the coming months as the Bill progresses through Parliament.

## ■ Waste Disposal: Exports

**Beth Winter:**

[\[38460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what quantity of waste was exported by the UK in each of the last five years; and what the cost was of exporting that waste.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The total volume and value of waste exported from the UK in the past five years for which there is currently complete data<sup>[1]</sup> is presented in the table below. Defra does not hold information on the costs associated with exporting waste.

The vast majority of waste exported from the UK is sent for recycling or energy recovery. Exports of waste from the UK for disposal are generally prohibited, apart from in exceptional circumstances where the UK does not have the specialist disposal facilities needed.

UK Waste Exports (tonnes)

YEAR	EXPORTS FOR RECYCLING (HMRC TRADE DATA)	RDF/SRF [2] EXPORTS (BASEL CONVENTION NATIONAL REPORTING)	EXPORTS FOR DISPOSAL (BASEL CONVENTION NATIONAL REPORTING)		TOTAL QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (£)
2019	11,373,916	2,490,693	3,609		13,868,218	5,995,868,342

YEAR	EXPORTS FOR RECYCLING (HMRC TRADE DATA)	RDF/SRF [2] EXPORTS (BASEL CONVENTION NATIONAL REPORTING)	EXPORTS FOR DISPOSAL (BASEL CONVENTION NATIONAL REPORTING)	TOTAL QUANTITY (TONNES)	VALUE (£)
2018	15,843,470	3,365,815	4,281	19,213,566	6,417,928,617
2017	16,431,888	3,470,729	2,117	19,904,734	6,336,497,335
2016	16,265,212	3,543,692	9,446	19,818,350	5,135,146,164
2015	15,294,976	3,354,858	4,260	18,654,094	4,732,206,009

Sources: [HMRC trade data](#) and [Basel Convention National Reporting](#)

[1] Defra does not have complete data on UK waste exports for 2020 as the Basel Convention National Report is collated at the end of each year for the previous calendar year.

[2] Refuse Derived Fuel / Solid Recovered Fuel

## ■ Water Supply

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[37572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of mandating the display of the Unified Water Label at the point of sale of terminal water fittings.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government published a Written Ministerial Statement on Reducing Demand for Water on 1 July 2021, which announced plans to introduce a mandatory water efficiency label to inform consumers and encourage the purchase of more water efficient products for both domestic and business use. We are currently exploring options for the label, including the potential to achieve energy savings, as well as further water savings.

## ■ Water Supply: Standards

**Lee Anderson:**

[\[38421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department takes to (a) ensure (i) Severn Trent and (ii) other water companies operate to an adequate standard and (b) protect consumers from persistent issues with the water supply system.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Ofwat, the independent economic regulator for water and wastewater services in England and Wales, holds all water companies to account for the delivery of secure and resilient water services.

Through its price review process, Ofwat has set improvement targets for all companies to reduce main bursts by 12% and supply interruptions by 41% between 2020 and 2025. Companies must publish their performance annually against key targets.

Customers of water and sewerage companies are entitled to guaranteed minimum standards of service under the guaranteed standards scheme. Where a company fails to meet any of these standards of service then it is required to make a specified payment to the affected customer.

**Wildlife: Nature Conservation****Fleur Anderson:**[\[37613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing protections granted to wildlife classified in schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 already provides strong legal protection for all bird species and those animals and plants listed. The Act provides a comprehensive suite of protections against killing, injuring or taking of a protected species as well as disturbing or damaging places they use for shelter.

It is important to ensure that our wider legislative framework for species protection supports our ambitions for nature recovery, including a requirement under the Environment Bill to set a target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030. That is why, as part of the recently announced Nature Recovery Green Paper, my department will begin a review of species legislation with a view to enhancing and modernising it. We intend to publish the Green Paper and seek views later this year.

**Wines: Imports****Neil Coyle:**[\[40920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release entitled Red tape cut for wine imports to save British wine lovers £130m a year, published on 25 July, what his timescale is for implementing the removal the requirement for VI-1 certificates on all imports of wine into Great Britain.

**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[40935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the Government's planned timetable is for bringing forward legislative proposals to remove the requirement for VI-1 certificates on wine imports.

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

**[44188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will remove the requirement for imported wines to carry VI-1 certificates; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

On 25 July, the Government announced its intention to remove the requirement of VI-1 certification for all wine imports entering Great Britain. The removal of this barrier will cut unnecessary red tape for importers from both the EU and Rest of the World. This is great news for businesses and consumers, who will now see a significant trade burden lifted, which will ultimately lead to a reduction in the cost of wine. Industry analysis suggests that on average VI-1 certificates add 10p to every bottle of imported wine; British wine consumers can expect to save up to £130 million each year.

We are taking the necessary steps to begin the implementation process. On 9 September, we launched the consultation process for the removal for businesses who are directly impacted by the change. Once we have completed the consultation, we will then look to ensure that the necessary legislation is put in place as soon as possible.

■ **Wines: Northern Ireland**

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

**[44189]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that all wines sent from Great Britain to Northern Ireland are (a) treated as not at risk, (b) exempt from VI-1 certificates, (c) exempt from EU and Northern Ireland labelling requirements and (d) exempt from import declarations; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government set out in our 21 July Command Paper *The Northern Ireland Protocol – the way forward*, proposals to find a new balance in the operation of the Protocol. To provide space for potential further discussions, and to give certainty and stability to businesses while any such discussions proceed, my Rt Hon Friend the Northern Ireland Secretary said in his most recent Statement that the Government had announced the previous day that we would continue to operate the Protocol on the current basis.

For the time being, this means that movements of wine from Great Britain to Northern Ireland must be accompanied by a simplified VI-1 certificate as outlined in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement and meet the labelling standards required by the EU. Wine that is moved within the UK is not subject to tariffs.

**FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE****■ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission**

**Stephen Farry:** [\[41395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of requests to urgently relocate members of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have already evacuated the overwhelming majority of those who to whom we have a direct obligation in an unprecedented effort from our military and Civil Servants. We are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK can secure safe passage. On 6 September, the Prime Minister provided further information on the Afghan Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). Under the ACRS we will resettle up to 20,000 Afghans over 5 years, including those who have been standing up for human rights in Afghanistan.

**■ Afghanistan National Institute of Music**

**Stephen Farry:** [\[41394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of requests to urgently relocate members of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music

**Nigel Adams:**

We have already evacuated the overwhelming majority of those who to whom we have a direct obligation in an unprecedented effort from our military and Civil Servants. We are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK can secure safe passage. On 6 September, the Prime Minister provided further information on the Afghan Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). Under the ACRS we will resettle up to 20,000 Afghans over 5 years, including those who have been standing up for human rights in Afghanistan.

**■ Afghanistan: Aid Workers**

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[41336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with NGOs and aid charities who continue to operate in Afghanistan on ensuring the protection of their staff.

**Nigel Adams:**

To ensure aid reaches the people that need it most, the FCDO are in daily contact with partners in Afghanistan and will continue to engage with them directly as the situation develops. Last week in London we hosted a round table with NGOs to better understand how we can support their life-saving work. On 20 August, the FCDO

convened a meeting with 30 NGOs working in the areas of development, humanitarian support, human rights and media freedom, to listen to the issues they are currently facing in country. A further meeting took place on 26 August, with 30 organisations to discuss continued humanitarian access and the longer-term development needs.

■ **Afghanistan: Armed Forces**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 2404, whether the UK Government continues to provide assistance to the ANDSF; and how the UK Government has helped increase the capabilities of the ANDSF since 17 May 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are proud of the work British and allied forces have done in the last two decades alongside the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, equipping them and developing their capability. We will no longer provide funding to Afghan security institutions, redirecting this to humanitarian efforts which benefit the Afghan people. We will now use every diplomatic and humanitarian lever at our disposal to restore stability to Afghanistan.

■ **Afghanistan: BBC World Service**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing to the BBC World Service to continue its work in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

The FCDO strongly supports the BBC's mission to bring trusted, impartial news to over 468 million people worldwide each week. The BBC World Service broadcasts to audiences in Afghanistan through its Dari and Pashto language services, which are funded through the BBC licence fee.

■ **Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad**

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[41092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) recent estimate his Department has made of the number of British citizens currently in Afghanistan (b) steps he plans to take to provide those people with consular and other support upon the closure of the UK Embassy in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have worked tirelessly to safely evacuate the overwhelming majority of British Nationals and Afghans who worked for us. We have asked all British nationals who remain in Afghanistan to register their presence with us and are working to verify those who have responded. That process is ongoing. We continue to look at all



possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to. The situation is very fluid and numbers are changing all the time and so it is hard to give an exact figure on how many are left

Rapid Deployment Teams have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan. Teams have also deployed to Qatar and UAE to assist our operations there and we are providing consular support to British nationals who were evacuated by other allies, including via US airbases in Europe

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[41338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information his Department holds on the number of people currently stranded in Afghanistan from (a) Wandsworth Borough and (b) Putney constituency.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have worked tirelessly to safely evacuate the overwhelming majority of British Nationals and Afghans who worked for us. We have asked all British nationals who remain in Afghanistan to register their presence with us to give us a detailed picture of those remaining, and an additional means, beyond our publicly-available Travel Advice, for us to be able to send regular updates and advice on what they should do next. That process is ongoing. We continue to look at all possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[44430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the timeframe is for the Government to ensure the safe return to the UK of British nationals remaining in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have worked tirelessly to safely evacuate the overwhelming majority of British Nationals and Afghans who worked for us. We have asked all British nationals who remain in Afghanistan to register their presence with us and are working to verify those who have responded. That process is ongoing. We continue to look at all possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to.

## ■ Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme

**John McDonnell:**

[\[40586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will fulfil its commitment to the 2021 Afghan Chevening scholars; and what provisions have been made to enable those scholars to travel to the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

We successfully evacuated the majority of Afghan Chevening scholars in this year's cohort and we will continue to uphold our commitment to support all of our Chevening scholars from Afghanistan.



## ■ Afghanistan: Christianity

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[40723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support Christians in Afghanistan who are at risk of persecution as a result of their faith.

**Nigel Adams:**

Minister for Human Rights Lord (Tariq) Ahmad addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people, including Christians and others at risk of persecution, and holding the Taliban to account. The UK is formally launching a separate resettlement programme, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, providing a safe and legal route for up to 20,000 Afghans in the region over the coming years, with 5,000 in the first year. This scheme will include Afghans 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: Diplomatic Service

**Alan Brown:**

[\[41002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the (a) days and (b) times he spoke to the UK Ambassador in Kabul during the period 12 to 16 August 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary drew regularly on advice from HMA Kabul and many other Ambassadors in the region during that period.

## ■ Afghanistan: Females

**Sarah Owen:**

[\[44454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on protecting the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are committed to prioritising women and girls in the UK's response to the situation in Afghanistan. Minister for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August. He underscored the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people, including women and girls, and holding the Taliban to account. As the Prime Minister said earlier this week, we will also include in resettlement schemes 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. All who come to our country through this safe and legal route will receive not a five-year visa, but indefinite leave to remain.

**■ Afghanistan: Foreign Relations****Lisa Nandy:** [\[44333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last spoke to (a) the Afghan Foreign Minister or (b) other senior Afghan officials prior to Taliban forces taking control of Kabul on 15 August.

**Nigel Adams:**

FCDO Ministers are in frequent contact with Ministers and senior officials in the Afghan Government. Ministers, including the Foreign Secretary and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, were also in close contact with regional and international partners on emerging events in Afghanistan.

**■ Afghanistan: Home Country Nationals****Patrick Grady:** [\[40967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to secure the safe transport to the UK of people working for British animal welfare charities (a) Nowzad and (b) the Mayhew in Kabul.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have already evacuated the overwhelming majority of those who to whom we have a direct obligation in an unprecedented effort from our military and Civil Servants. We are in contact with British nationals and others who are eligible for resettlement in the UK, and are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans have options for safe passage. We have been clear that the Taliban must allow safe passage for those who want to leave

Mr Pen Farthing and the animals in his charity's care were airlifted from Kabul on 29 August on a privately chartered flight, facilitated by the Ministry of Defence

We are now urgently working on how we can further support Afghan nationals in country, through the Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Programme (ARAP) and Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme (ACRS).

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[41146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the Government did not take steps earlier to bring Afghan nationals who directly supported the UK military during operations in Afghanistan to the UK; and whether he has made an assessment of the effect of that timetable on the reputational standing of the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

We started welcoming Afghans who have worked for us under our Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy from April and facilitated the return of almost 2000 between April and August. We also estimate that 500 followed our advice in April and left by commercial means.

## ■ Afghanistan: Human Rights

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's decision to withdraw military personnel from Afghanistan on the human rights of (a) women and girls and (b) other people in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

We remain concerned about the human rights situation under a Taliban Government and are clear that any relationship with a future Taliban Government would need to be calibrated according to their respect for fundamental rights, including for women and girls. As the Prime Minister agreed with G7 partners on 24 August, and I have repeated during my visits to Qatar and Pakistan, the international community needs to stand together in order to make clear to the Taliban our expectations, and achieve our counter-terrorism, humanitarian, regional stability and human rights objectives. A number of senior Taliban figures have made assurances that they will respect human rights – we will now judge them by their actions. We continue to galvanise the international community and bring together the widest possible group of influential countries to exercise the maximum moderating influence on the Taliban that we possibly can.

## ■ Afghanistan: Humanitarian Situation

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[41261\]](#)

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

**Nigel Adams:**

We remain very concerned about the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan with the UN reporting nearly half of Afghanistan's population are in need of humanitarian assistance. This is why we have doubled our aid commitment to the people of Afghanistan to £286 million this financial year. This includes up to £30 million announced by the Foreign Secretary on 3 September to provide life-saving assistance to Afghan refugees in the region.

## ■ Afghanistan: International Cooperation

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[44405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Prime Minister's Oral Statement of 7 September 2021, Official Report, column 31, which states that are not ordinarily classified as friends of the UK the Government plans to engage with on Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government will engage with all countries, either bilaterally or through the multilateral system, where there is a shared interest in Afghanistan.

**■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid**

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[41125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish an impact assessment of the reduction in aid to Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Prime Minister announced on 19 August, UK aid to Afghanistan will double to £286 million this financial year.

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[41126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of reductions in Official Development Assistance to Afghanistan on reducing threats to the UK from violence and extremism.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK has doubled its aid to Afghanistan to £286 million this financial year. This means the UK's total aid contribution to the country since 2001 is now around £3.5 billion.

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[41127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction of the crisis reserve fund from £500 million to £30 million on the UK's ability to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

In line with our commitment to responding to unanticipated events and fund bilateral and multilateral programmes in humanitarian hot spots, the UK is doubling its aid to Afghanistan to rapidly respond to the crisis, increasing support to £286 million this financial year. This includes £30 million for responding to the needs of Afghan refugees in the region, of which, £10 million has been made available immediately to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, to enable essential supplies such as shelters to be despatched to the Afghan borders as well as setting up sanitation and hygiene facilities.

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[41128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the ability for existing UK funded projects in Afghanistan to continue; and what steps he is taking to protect local staff working with British INGOs.

**Nigel Adams:**

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been, and will remain, vital partners for delivering essential assistance in Afghanistan. We are working closely with them to respond to the changing situation on the ground and continue to support UN OCHA and the Afghanistan NGO coordination forum in their work on staff safety, security and duty of care. We also fund the International NGO Safety Organisation to

carry out essential information gathering on security to support UN Agencies and NGOs to operate in Afghanistan.

**Paula Barker:**

[\[41383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) viability of supporting Afghan citizens through aid channelled through NGOs and (b) potential merits of increasing the funding allocated to those NGOs.

**Nigel Adams:**

NGOs have been, and remain, vital partners for our work in Afghanistan. We are working closely with them to respond to the changing situation on the ground & consider how best we can respond collectively to the increasing humanitarian needs in the country. To ensure aid reaches the people that need it most, the FCDO are in daily contact with our partners in Afghanistan. We will continue to engage with them directly as the situation develops. Last week, in London, we hosted a round table with NGOs to better understand how we can support their life-saving work. On 20 August we met 30 NGOs working in the areas of development, humanitarian support, human rights and media freedom to understand the issues they are currently facing in country. There was a further meeting on 26 August, with 30 organisations, focussed on continued humanitarian access and the longer-term development needs. Ministers are also in close touch with bilateral and multilateral partners, including the UN, on these issues.

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[44284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department conducted an impact assessment for the reduction in aid spending from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent with specific consideration to the impacts on Afghanistan including on (a) refugees, (b) democratic collapse, (c) gender equality and (d) NGO staff, workplaces, and programmes.

**Nigel Adams:**

The temporary reduction in the aid budget has not affected programmes in Afghanistan. The UK will double its aid to Afghanistan, which will provide urgent life-saving assistance to millions of people suffering from the conflict, drought and COVID-19.

Total UK aid to Afghanistan this year will be £286 million. The UK's total aid contribution to the country since 2001 is now around £3.5 billion.

## ■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2021 to Question 1179, what input and decision making role the UK Government had when the US and Taliban agreed a timetable for the

withdrawal of all international troops to leave Afghanistan; and whether the UK Government approved that timetable prior to its agreement.

**Nigel Adams:**

Throughout our 20 year engagement in Afghanistan the UK has worked closely with the US, and wider international community. When the previous US administration concluded a deal with the Taliban, this set our withdrawal in motion. As we've said, there was never going to be a military solution in Afghanistan. We will now use every diplomatic and humanitarian lever at our disposal to restore stability to Afghanistan, and the Prime Minister has been clear that will require a concerted and coordinated effort from the international community.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2021 to Question 3110, what further discussions the Government has had with the US administration on its decision to withdraw its armed forces from Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary has spoken with Secretary of State Blinken on nine further occasions on Afghanistan since the previous Question in May, and they have spoken at numerous multilateral meetings during this time. Most recently on the 30th of August the Foreign Secretary joined a meeting with counterparts from the US, Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, NATO, Qatar and Turkey about the situation in Afghanistan.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government's decision to withdraw UK military from Afghanistan supports the Government's plan for Global Britain.

**Nigel Adams:**

We stand with the people of Afghanistan to support a more stable, peaceful future for the country. The UK will continue to exert all diplomatic and other efforts to achieve this and to establish an inclusive political process in Afghanistan to create a country that works for all its people.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 July 2021 to Question 34012, what further assessment he has made of the effect of the withdrawal of UK and NATO military personnel from Afghanistan on the political stability of that nation; and what changes have taken place since 21 July 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, the central assessment had been that there would be a gradual deterioration after NATO forces withdrew and the Prime Minister has made clear that events and collapse unfolded faster than even the

Taliban themselves predicted 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 have announced the formation of a new government. The international community is adjusting, and must adjust, to the new reality in Afghanistan and is recalibrating its approach. The UK is playing a leading role in that.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[41157]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the (a) benefits and (b) costs to the UK's (i) national security, (ii) level of asylum seekers, (iii) economy, (iv) public purse, (v) international reputation, (vi) geostrategic interests of the Government's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are watching the impacts of 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 have announced the formation of a new government. The international community is adjusting, and must adjust, to the new reality in Afghanistan and is recalibrating its approach. This includes undertaking detailed work on the impact on national security, migration, and wider strategic interests As the Prime Minister has said, we continue to galvanise the international community, and bring together the widest possible group of influential countries, to deliver on those strategic priorities and exercise the maximum moderating influence on the Taliban that we possibly can.

**Lisa Nandy:**

**[44334]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last discussed the implications of UK troop withdrawal from Afghanistan with the Foreign Minister or other senior officials of (a) Pakistan, (b) Iran, (c) Tajikistan, (d) Turkmenistan and (e) Uzbekistan prior to Taliban forces taking control of Kabul on 15 August 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary is in regular contact with counterparts in the region. As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on September 6th, he visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The Foreign Secretary also had telephone conversations with the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September, the Tajik Foreign Minister on 2 September, and with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 15, 25 and 27 August. Lord Ahmad additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, on 3 September, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on the same day. They held discussions with counterparts on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.



**Navendu Mishra:**

[\[44459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the total cost is of the UK's involvement in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

The total cost of British military operations in Afghanistan since 2001 (up to and including financial year 2019-20) was £22.7 billion. The UK's total aid contribution to Afghanistan since 2001 is around £3.5 billion. This financial year, the UK is doubling its aid to Afghanistan to £286 million to respond rapidly to the crisis. This includes £30 million for responding to the needs of Afghan refugees in the region, of which, £10 million has been made available immediately to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, to enable essential supplies such as shelters to be despatched to the Afghan borders as well as setting up sanitation and hygiene facilities.

## ■ **Afghanistan: Politics and Government**

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[40919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish (a) advice and (b) briefings from the UK mission in Afghanistan to the UK Government in each of the last six months.

**Nigel Adams:**

As a matter of course, we do not publish advice or briefings.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[41144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to Answer of 17 May 2021 to Question 2404, whether the Government (a) remains committed to supporting Afghanistan on its path to a more peaceful and positive future, (b) maintains the position that only a negotiated and inclusive settlement will bring sustainable peace and (c) is continuing to make clear to all sides that any political settlement must protect the progress made in that country, including the protection of rights for women and minority groups.

**Nigel Adams:**

We stand with the people of Afghanistan to support a more stable, peaceful future for the country. The UK will continue to exert all diplomatic and other efforts to achieve this. Our goal is to establish an inclusive political process in Afghanistan to create a country that works for all its people. The Prime Minister and G7 leaders are working to ensure that the international community is working together to ensure a stable future for Afghanistan. The UK led work on the recent UN Security Council resolution, demonstrating our commitment to holding the Taliban to account on human rights, humanitarian access, safe passage and preventing terrorism.

## ■ Afghanistan: Refugees

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[41124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what meetings he has had with counterparts in countries neighboring Afghanistan on the needs of Afghan refugees in those countries and the support his Department could provide; and when those meetings took place.

**Nigel Adams:**

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on September 6th, he visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The Foreign Secretary has also had telephone conversations with the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September, the Tajik Foreign Minister, on 2 September, and with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 27 and 25 August. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, on 3 September, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on the same day. They held discussions with counterparts on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.

**Dan Carden:**

[\[41187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to work with countries neighbouring Afghanistan on keeping their borders open and resettling refugees that flee by land.

**Nigel Adams:**

On 3 September we announced £30m of life-saving aid to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries to help those who choose to leave Afghanistan as part of the Government's efforts to support regional stability.

**Ms Harriet Harman:**

[\[44167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many requests he has received from hon. Members on behalf of Afghan citizens who wish to come to the UK since 15 August 2021 as at the date of answering.

**Nigel Adams:**

Responding to cases and correspondence from Hon. Members is a fundamental priority for this Government. The Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth wrote to 435 MPs and 17 Peers who sent the FCDO cases on 5 September, outlining the actions we are taking to progress cases that have been sent to us, as well as the relevant contact routes now that the evacuation phase is over.

**Yasmin Qureshi:**

[\[44285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to extend further support to refugees in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK is doubling its aid to Afghanistan to rapidly respond to the crisis, increasing support to £286 million this financial year. This includes £30 million for responding to the needs of Afghan refugees in the region, of which, £10 million has been made available immediately to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, to enable essential supplies such as shelters to be despatched to the Afghan borders as well as setting up sanitation and hygiene facilities.

**Lisa Nandy:**[\[44331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will (a) publish the eligibility criteria for people to qualify as special cases under the Government's resettlement programme for non-British nationals wishing to leave Afghanistan, (b) provide details of how people can apply to be considered as special cases under that programme and (c) outline what support his Department is providing to people that qualify as special cases under that programme.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be led by the Home Office, who are developing the eligibility criteria.

**■ Afghanistan: Taliban****Alan Brown:**[\[41003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the international counterparts he has discussed the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan with, including the dates and times of those discussions, during the period 12 to 16 August 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Foreign Secretary made clear in Parliament on September 6th, Ministers and senior officials have undertaken sustained engagement with international partners throughout the crisis. Amongst a range of other activity, the Foreign Secretary visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The Foreign Secretary has also had telephone conversations with the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September, the Tajik Foreign Minister, on 2 September, and with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 27 and 25 August. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, on 3 September, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on the same day. They held discussions with counterparts on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.

**Alan Brown:**[\[41004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the NGOs he discussed the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan with, and the dates and times of those discussions, during the period 12 to 16 August 2021.

**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.

**Alan Brown:**[\[41005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will list the dates and times of internal departmental meetings he convened to discuss the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan in the period 12 to 16 August 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been, and remain, vital partners for our work in Afghanistan. We are working closely with them to respond to the changing situation on the ground & consider how best we can respond collectively to the increasing humanitarian needs in the country.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[41081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date the Foreign Office's rapid deployment team arrived in Kabul; and on what date the Ministry of Defence began the evacuation of Kabul.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Rapid Deployment Team arrived in the early hours on 18 August, while the evacuation began on 15 August

**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[41089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what preventative steps his Department is taking to protect British citizens in Afghanistan or those associated with British institutions from the risks of (a) torture, (b) hostage taking and (b) extra-judicial killings at the hands of the Taliban following recent developments in that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have asked all British nationals who remain in Afghanistan to register their presence with us to give us a detailed picture of those remaining, and an additional means, beyond our publicly-available Travel Advice, for us to be able to send regular updates and advice on what they should do next. We are working as a priority to verify those who have responded. That process is ongoing. We continue to look at all possible avenues to ensure that any British Nationals are able to leave safely if they wish to. A number of senior Taliban figures have made assurances that they will respect human rights – we will now judge them by their actions. We continue to galvanise the international community and bring together the widest possible group of influential countries to exercise the maximum moderating influence on the Taliban that we possibly can.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[41154]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the NATO withdrawal on the collapse of the Afghan National Army and Afghan Government; and when the Government first assessed that outcome as the most likely outcome.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, the central assessment had been that there would be a gradual deterioration after NATO forces withdrew and the Prime Minister has made clear that events and the collapse unfolded faster than even the Taliban themselves predicted. With regards to Afghanistan's political stability now, or what has changed, it is clear that Taliban now exert de-facto control over much, if not all of Afghanistan. They have announced the formation of a new government. The international community must rapidly adjust to the new reality in Afghanistan and is recalibrating its approach. The UK is playing a leading role in that.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[41159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the reasons why intelligence agencies failed to predict the pace of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, the central assessment had been that there would be a gradual deterioration after NATO forces withdrew and the Prime Minister has made clear that events and collapse unfolded faster than even the Taliban themselves predicted.

**Ruth Jones:**

**[41259]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Pakistan on the situation in Afghanistan.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary visited Pakistan last week and met with Prime Minister Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi amongst other government representatives. Prior to the visit, the Foreign Secretary was in regular contact with Foreign Minister Qureshi, and spoke to him most recently on 27 August. The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Khan on 17 August. Officials are also in regular contact with the Government of Pakistan, frequently discussing Afghanistan.

**Paula Barker:**

**[41379]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government plans to take to hold the new Taliban Government in Afghanistan accountable to their promises of a peaceful Afghanistan; and what assessment his Department has made of the impact of economic sanctions on (a) the Afghan economy and (b) potential stability of the new Government.

**Nigel Adams:**

As the Prime Minister has agreed with G7 partners, the international community needs to stand together in order to make clear to the Taliban our expectations, and achieve our counter-terrorism, humanitarian, regional stability and human rights objectives.

**Africa: Animal Welfare****Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[38338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support the prevention of animal abuse in Africa.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[38339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support the prevention of animal abuse in Asia.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[38340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support the prevention of animal abuse in (a) South and (b) Central America.

**Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[38341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure animal welfare in the British Overseas Territories.

**James Duddridge:**

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare was published on 12 May 2021 and sets out the Government's plans, aims and ambitions across animal welfare.

Our exit from the EU affords us the opportunity to raise our already high domestic animal welfare standards, to act as a dynamic leader on the world stage, and to introduce measures and protections which are right in principle.

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare demonstrates this Government's commitment to a brighter future for animals both at home and abroad, and also provides a foundation for conversations on how we can continue to improve animal welfare and conservation in the future.

**Armed Conflict: Children****Feryal Clark:**[\[41359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the UN Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict; and what steps the Government has taken to hold perpetrators of grave violations against children to account.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK is an active member of the United Nations Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) which leads the international response to the use of child soldiers and child protection. This includes pressing those parties to conflict listed in the UN Secretary-General's annual report on CAAC, to enter into concrete action plans with the UN to verify and release any child soldiers associated with armed groups and forces and to prevent re-recruitment. We apply diplomatic pressure to listed governments and armed groups, and fund projects to help protect and rehabilitate vulnerable children.

■ **Bahrain: Human Rights****Dr Kieran Mullan:**[\[37620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support the human rights of people in Bahrain.

**James Cleverly:**

Bahrain is a Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office human rights priority country. The UK provides technical and practical assistance to the Government of Bahrain, helping to underpin human rights and other reforms in the Kingdom. Any training provided by or on behalf of the UK government complies with our domestic and international human rights obligations and is kept under regular review. We regularly raise human rights issues and individual cases with senior members of the Government of Bahrain, and continue to raise specific cases with senior interlocutors, as well as with the independent human rights oversight bodies.

■ **Caribbean and Latin America: Forests****Catherine West:**[\[44417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is planning to take to help safeguard the future of forests in (a) Latin America and (b) the Caribbean.

**Wendy Morton:**

We continue to be concerned by the rising rates of deforestation in the Amazon and in forests across Latin America. We have a long-established partnership with Brazil and other forest nations in Latin America. We have also committed to double our International Climate Finance across the globe to £11.6 billion over the next five years - and to invest at least £3bn of that in solutions that protect and restore nature.

In addition, through the FACT dialogue, we are bringing together the biggest producers and consumers of the commodities that drive deforestation: cocoa, cattle, soy and palm oil. In this dialogue we will be agreeing actions to protect forests and other carbon-rich ecosystems like the Amazon, while promoting trade and development.

We are also introducing world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Bill to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains. This is one part of



a wider package of measures to improve the sustainability of our supply chains and will contribute to global efforts to protect forests and other ecosystems.

As part of our COP26 nature campaign heads of UK missions and other diplomats regularly engage countries across the Caribbean region on the importance of protecting forests. We are encouraging Caribbean countries to join the Leader's Pledge for Nature which includes commitments on mainstreaming biodiversity, improving sustainable forest management and tackling deforestation. So far 7 Caribbean countries have done so. The UK also co-hosted a nature based solutions event with CARICOM on 25 May 2021 which was attended by Lord Goldsmith and Ministers from across the Caribbean. The Forest, Governance, Markets and Climate Programme, which is providing £2m of support in Guyana, aims to achieve stakeholder consensus on forest governance reforms, including on regulation, legal frameworks and to secure the rights of indigenous communities.

We will use our role as host of COP26 to increase the international community's focus on further action to safeguard the future of forests in Latin America, the Caribbean and around the world.

#### ■ **Conflict, Stability and Security Fund**

**Dame Diana Johnson:**

[\[44248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the scheduled reductions to the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund will impact programmes supported by his Department in the West Bank.

**James Cleverly:**

Conflict Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) allocations are decided on an evidence-based assessment of impact of programmes as well as their strategic fit with HMG objectives. The CSSF-funded Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) programme is continuing in Financial Year 2021/2022 and includes projects which provide support in the West Bank. As CSSF spend shifts in-year to meet evolving needs, exact programme spend is not yet available.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Patrick Grady:**

[\[37503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Government's decision to provide surplus UK vaccines to the COVAX programme on the Government's decision to spend 0.5 per cent of GNI on Official Development Assistance in 2021.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK is leading the international response to COVID-19. We have made available new public commitments worth up to £1.3 billion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to counter the health, economic, and humanitarian impacts of COVID-19 and to support the global effort to distribute vaccines equitably.

The cost of donating the UK's surplus vaccine doses to developing countries will be classified as ODA. This will be in addition to the £10 billion already committed in aid this year. Final 2021 UK ODA spend will be published as usual in FCDO's Statistics on International Development report in 2022, which will also include COVID-19 related donations and support which is ongoing.

## ■ Egypt: Human Rights

**Rushanara Ali:** [38265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Egyptian counterpart on the arrests, travel bans and the freezing of assets of human rights advocates in that country.

**Rushanara Ali:** [38266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Egyptian counterpart on the case of Karim Ennarah, a human rights activist who faces terrorism charges, travel restrictions and an asset freeze.

**James Cleverly:**

We are concerned that human rights defenders in Egypt are being subjected to arrests, travel bans and asset freezes. The Foreign Secretary has raised concerns about human rights defenders with his Egyptian counterpart directly. Senior officials in London and Cairo underlined these concerns with the Egyptian authorities; the Prime Minister raised human rights when he spoke to President Sisi in March 2021 and Minister Cleverly has also recently raised our serious concerns at a senior level. Human rights defenders make a vital contribution to society, and we continue to call on the Egyptian authorities to allow these people to be able to conduct their work and live their lives unimpeded, fully benefiting from their rights under the Egyptian Constitution.

## ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Ethnic Groups

**Ruth Jones:** [37588]

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

**Nigel Adams:**

In the FCDO, "management positions" might apply to staff in any grade. As of 31 March 2021, 80% of UK Based staff in the FCDO declared their ethnicity and 17% self-identified as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. The cross civil service BAME average is 14.3%. This data is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2021>, [Table 37](#). We do not currently have the data for our Country Based Staff.

## ■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Listed Buildings

**Tim Loughton:**

[44163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Nigel Adams:**

The FCDO is advised on the management of designated heritage assets in its portfolio by Historic England's Government Historic Estate Unit. Further details can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/advice-for-government-historic-estates/>. The FCDO does not collect or collate data on the value (property value) or income data for these assets.

## ■ Gaza: Health Services

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[44361]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) local availability of cancer services in Gaza and (b) access to treatment outside Gaza for cancer patients.

**James Cleverly:**

We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including the significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure, hospitals and clinics. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare, including critical health services, with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 1 June. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. The long-lasting movement restrictions and the serious constraints imposed by the occupation can impact the provision of medical care. The wounded and critically ill in Gaza should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

## ■ Hamas

**Scott Benton:**

[38446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of whether Hamas is meeting the Quartet Principles.

**James Cleverly:**

The Quartet Principles call on parties to renounce violence as a means of achieving their goals. Hamas continues to embrace violence. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001 and the UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

## ■ Horn of Africa: Politics and Government

**Neil Coyle:** [\[38278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the level of threat posed by the tripartite relationship between Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia to destabilising the Horn of Africa.

**James Duddridge:**

We welcome cordial relations between sovereign states, and also the important role that regional bodies such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union play in security in the Horn. The continued presence of Eritrean forces in Tigray, in Ethiopia, fuels insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to end fighting and seek a political solution.

## ■ Humanitarian Aid

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[44426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence set out in the Government's 2017 Humanitarian Reform Policy are the guiding principles of his Department's humanitarian work.

**James Cleverly:**

The Government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy sets out the UK's continued commitment to principled humanitarian action and championing International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian access. The UK will maintain its role as a force for good at times of crisis, focusing on those countries where the need is greatest, for example, those most affected by risk of famine, and responding rapidly to unanticipated events.

## ■ Immigration: Afghanistan

**Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[45187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what process she is establishing for evacuating from Afghanistan people who have Family Reunion Visas to join relatives with leave to remain in the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

We stand by our commitment to help all remaining British nationals, and those Afghans eligible to come to the UK to travel by whatever routes are available. We are clear that the Taliban must ensure safe passage for these people out of Afghanistan and any engagement with them will emphasise this first and foremost. We have been in frequent contact with neighbouring countries and Rapid Deployment Teams (RDT) have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan. An RDT also deployed to Doha to help those in transit via Qatar. The Home Office are currently working to develop the eligibility

criteria for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will be announced in due course.

## ■ Iran: Hamas

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[37436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's (a) financial, (b) material and (c) military support for Hamas.

**James Cleverly:**

We have long been clear about our concern over Iran's continued destabilising activity throughout the region including its political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups. We regularly raise Iran's destabilising role in the region at the UN Security Council.

Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001. Hamas' ongoing decision to embrace violence lies at the heart of the Gazan tragedy. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. The UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

## ■ Iran: Nuclear Fuels

**Scott Benton:**

[\[38445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's uranium enrichment capabilities.

**James Cleverly:**

On 19 August, the UK issued a joint statement with France and Germany underlining our grave concern at the latest reports of the IAEA. These reports confirm that Iran has produced uranium metal enriched up to 20% for the first time, and has significantly increased its production capacity of uranium enriched up to 60%.

60% enrichment constitutes an important step towards developing a nuclear weapon. No State without nuclear weapons has ever before produced Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU). We urge Iran to halt all activities in violation of the JCPoA and return to the negotiations in Vienna as soon as possible with a view to bringing them to a swift, successful conclusion.

## ■ Iran: Nuclear Power

**Robert Largan:**

[\[38472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress he has made in ongoing talks on the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

**James Cleverly:**

On 19 August, the UK issued a joint statement with France and Germany underlining our grave concern at the latest reports of the IAEA. These reports confirm that Iran has produced uranium metal enriched up to 20% for the first time, and has significantly increased its production capacity of uranium enriched up to 60%.

60% enrichment constitutes an important step towards developing a nuclear weapon. No State without nuclear weapons has ever before produced Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU). We urge Iran to halt all activities in violation of the JCPoA and return to the negotiations in Vienna as soon as possible with a view to bringing them to a swift, successful conclusion.

**Robert Halfon:**[\[40855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to prevent Iran's further non-compliance with the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal.

**James Cleverly:**

We have been engaged in intensive discussions in Vienna with other Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) participants and the US, which are aimed at returning the US to the JCPoA, bringing Iran back into full compliance with its commitments and restoring the benefits of the deal for all. We began those negotiations in Vienna on 6 April 2021. We negotiated in good faith for six rounds of talks over 10 weeks until Iran paused talks on 20 June. Iran urgently needs to return to negotiations. We stand ready to return to Vienna as soon as possible for a swift conclusion of the deal on the table.

■ **Israel: Hamas****Nicola Richards:**[\[41396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for regional security of alleged remarks by Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar that God has decreed that we must attack Tel Aviv.

**James Cleverly:**

Hamas' ongoing decision to embrace violence lies at the heart of the Gazan tragedy. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001 and the UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

■ **Israel: Palestinians****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[44247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 20 July 2021 to Question 36520 on Israel: Palestinians, if he

will provide the cross-border peacebuilding projects that the UK supports in Israel and the Palestinian Territories; and how much UK funding each of those projects receives.

**James Cleverly:**

The Cabinet Office publishes Conflict Security and Stability Fund annual programme summaries on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/conflict-stability-and-security-fund-programme-summaries>. They outline the annual budget, a short summary of the programmes, and a breakdown of the projects in the programme. The cross-border peacebuilding projects Constituencies for Peace and Support for Israeli NGOs continue to be funded in Financial Year 2021/2022 though exact spend figures are not yet available.

■ **Jamal Khashoggi**

**Kenny MacAskill:**

[\[44453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Saudi individuals connected to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi by the UK sanctions list, what assessment he has made of whether those individuals had any form of contact with Government (a) members and (b) officials prior to October 2018.

**James Cleverly:**

Those sanctioned by the UK held formal roles within the Saudi government. Several had roles that entailed international engagement and they met a range of international interlocutors prior to October 2018.

■ **Latin America: Business**

**Catherine West:**

[\[44416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is planning to take to further support British businesses operating in Latin America.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government has a network of embassies and consulates in the Latin America that provide support for British companies in market. We have a number of existing trade agreements and ministerial dialogues in Latin America, which we will continue to use in resolving market access barriers, and improve business conditions for UK companies.

Over the next year, we will also begin negotiations for accession into the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and for a new Free Trade Agreement with Mexico, which will further enhance opportunities for UK businesses in the region.



## ■ Latin America: Diplomatic Relations

**Catherine West:**

[\[44415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) assess the effectiveness of and (b) increase the UK's diplomatic presence in Latin America.

**Wendy Morton:**

Latin America is an important partner region for the UK. Many countries in the region have values and priorities that align closely with the UK's. Our relationships are based on democratic values, sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic growth, and the championing of free trade. We also have strong people-to-people links and effective cooperation on innovation, health and climate change. We now have embassies in almost all countries in the region.

## ■ Lebanon: Coronavirus

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[37486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the economic crisis in Lebanon on its covid-19 response and vaccination roll-out.

**James Cleverly:**

The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the economic crisis in Lebanon. The economic crisis in turn has impacted Lebanon's response to the pandemic and wider healthcare provision. The UK is at the forefront of support to Lebanon's response to coronavirus and has contributed nearly £4.5m for medical supplies via the World Health Organisation and support through the British Red Cross as well as funding 10 Covid-19 isolation centres.

## ■ Lebanon: Palestinians

**Andy Slaughter:**

[\[37399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of the economic crisis in Lebanon on (a) poverty rates, and (b) access to healthcare for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

**James Cleverly:**

Lebanon faces a severe economic and political crisis, a result of the failure of Lebanon's political elites to form a government and deliver much-needed and long-promised reforms, exacerbated by the public health crisis caused by COVID-19 and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion of August 2020. This crisis has had a severe impact on healthcare provision and poverty rates in the country, for both Lebanese citizens and the most vulnerable refugee populations. The UK and members of the International Support Group for Lebanon are clear that Lebanon's leaders need to form a capable government and implement a credible reform process as the only sustainable way to address this crisis.

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[37487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department will take to support the provision of (a) health and (b) education services for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK is one of the leading donors in supporting Lebanon in hosting both Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Since 2011, the UK has allocated over £780 million in humanitarian and development funding to Lebanon. Our humanitarian assistance will continue to promote access to education and provide those most in need with timely, flexible assistance and protection services to cover their basic survival needs and reduce gender-based violence, saving lives and reducing suffering.

#### ■ **Malta: Corruption and Press Freedom**

**Catherine West:**

[\[44418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Maltese counterpart on anti-corruption measures and freedom of the press in that country.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office engages closely with the Maltese Government on a range of issues, including anti-corruption measures and the freedom of the press. Through regular discussions, both at Ministerial and official level, HM Government continues to provide assistance and support as Malta implements a range of important reforms.

#### ■ **Malta: Travel**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[44198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Maltese authorities were informed of UK Government approval of the Northern Ireland covid-19 vaccine certificate for those travelling to Malta.

**Wendy Morton:**

Healthcare - including the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and vaccine certification - is a devolved competency. As such, Her Majesty's Government did not approve the Northern Ireland COVID-19 vaccine certification for international travel. Once the Department of Health in Northern Ireland had finalised its vaccine certification, officials communicated this to Malta who had included vaccine status in their entry requirements. Entry to Malta is a sovereign issue so it would be for the Maltese government to decide whether the certification met their requirements.

**■ Members: Correspondence****Rosie Cooper:** [\[38185\]](#)

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 21 May 2021 on the Israel-Palestine conflict, reference ZA56540.

**James Cleverly:**

This letter was responded to on the 3rd August 2021.

**Rosie Cooper:** [\[38191\]](#)

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 arms exports to Israel, reference ZA56721.

**James Cleverly:**

This letter was responded to on the 25th June 2021.

**■ Military Aid****Emily Thornberry:** [\[44253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments logged with his Department in relation to overseas requests for capacity-building assistance have been (a) approved and (b) rejected by the recipient Department or agency in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Nigel Adams:**

In accordance with the publicly available guidance on Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA), approval for activity underpinned by OSJA assessments is made at different levels of authority, in line with the level of risk.

An estimate of the number of OSJAs completed each year is published in the Annual Human Rights Report.

**■ Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe****Tulip Siddiq:** [\[41088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish any response he has had from the Iranian Government following the request that it investigate credible allegations of torture in the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; and whether the Iranian authorities have agreed to conduct an independent investigation of torture claims.

**James Cleverly:**

We take all allegations of torture and mistreatment very seriously. The Iranian government has deliberately put Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe through a terrible ordeal. Iran's treatment of her is intolerable and she must be allowed to return permanently to her family in the UK. The Foreign Secretary continues to raise Iran's practice of

detaining foreign and dual nationals with his Iranian counterpart. Our Ambassadors in Tehran have regularly raised our detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[41090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will formally acknowledge Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe to be a hostage under the terms of the 1982 Taking of Hostages Act in response to recent public statements to that effect by Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister.

**James Cleverly:**

We do not accept our nationals being used as diplomatic leverage and have repeatedly made this clear to Iran. We remain committed to securing the immediate and permanent release of arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran, including Nazanin. We will continue take any action we judge will help secure her permanent release, keeping under review what we judge to be in her best interests. They must be able to return to their families in the UK. We call on President Raisi's administration to start to set a new course for Iran by releasing them.

## ■ **Occupied Territories: War Crimes**

**Layla Moran:**

**[R]** [\[41193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on the determination by the International Criminal Court that it has jurisdiction to investigate war crimes in the occupied Palestinian Territories.

**James Cleverly:**

We do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction in this instance as the UK does not currently recognise Palestinian statehood.

## ■ **Palestinians: Coronavirus**

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

[\[44362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial capacity of the Palestinian Ministry of Health to respond to ongoing needs during the covid-19 pandemic.

**James Cleverly:**

We welcome the steps that the Israeli and Palestinian authorities have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage further dialogue in this regard. The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. The Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) were among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with its first delivery of vaccines on 17 March 2021. Since that initial shipment, we are pleased that several further deliveries have arrived in the OPTs, including most recently on 25 August 2021.

**■ Palestinians: Israel**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[37522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received any representations on the reported use of internationally prohibited ammunition by the Israeli Defence Force in Beita.

**Louise Haigh:** [\[37523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received any representations on the recent protests in Beita.

**James Cleverly:**

According to UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), since the beginning of May, seven Palestinians, including two children, have been killed around Beita as a result of live fire from Israeli Security Forces. On 5 August the British Consul General and Heads of Mission and representatives from a number of likeminded countries visited Beita.

In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we urge the Government of Israel to conduct swift and transparent investigations. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

**■ Refugees: Afghanistan**

**Ian Blackford:** [\[41893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office what steps he is taking to ensure people in Afghanistan with refugee reunion visas are able to travel to the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

We stand by our commitment to help all Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK, including those who hold refugee reunion visas, to travel by whatever routes are available. We are clear that the Taliban must ensure safe passage for these people out of Afghanistan, and any engagement with them will emphasise this first and foremost. We are also in frequent contact with neighbouring countries, and wider partners, to help secure safe routes.

**■ Saudi Arabia: Political Prisoners**

**Mohammad Yasin:** [\[38375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the legality of the continued detention of Saudi political detainees, including Prince Turki Bin Abdullah.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK assessment is clear. All political detainees should be released. We publicly supported a statement at the September 2020 UN Human Rights Council, which reiterated this point and raised concerns about the use of arbitrary detention.

**■ South America: Hezbollah****Chris Green:**[\[37488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Hezbollah's potential involvement in the narcotics trade in South America.

**James Cleverly:**

Illegal drugs are a global threat. The UK works with partners around the world to coordinate action and combat organised crime groups operating across borders. The UK proscribes Hizballah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation and has an asset freeze in place against the entire organisation.

**■ Tigray: Armed Conflict****Neil Coyle:**[\[38277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the presence of Somali troops fighting alongside Eritrean forces in Tigray, Ethiopia; and if he will make a statement.

**James Duddridge:**

We have not received corroboration of reports of Somali troops being present in Tigray. The continued presence of Eritrean forces fuels insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately. The UK has consistently urged for an end to the conflict in Tigray. There can be no military solution. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

**■ Tigray: Famine****Wera Hobhouse:**[\[43626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help alleviate famine in the Tigray.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK has to date provided £47.7 million in humanitarian support to respond to the conflict in Tigray for healthcare, sanitation and nutrition.

The humanitarian situation in north east Ethiopia continues to deteriorate. Access to Tigray for aid agencies is negligible owing to bureaucratic impediments to delivery imposed by the government and more than 400,000 people are assessed to be in famine-like conditions. Tigray is the most serious food crisis since famine was declared in Somalia in 2011. Conflict in neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions is now impacting an additional 1.7 million people. The UK's Special Envoy for Famine

Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer visited Tigray in May and concluded that a region-wide famine in Tigray is likely if conflict intensifies and impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid continue. Regrettably the operating context has become more fraught and the risks to civilians have increased. The UK reiterates its call for the protection of civilians and unfettered humanitarian access.

The Foreign Secretary raised concerns on the humanitarian situation and the need for a political dialogue to bring a lasting peace to Tigray directly with Prime Minister Abiy on 5 August. I also raised these issues with the Ethiopian Minister of Peace, Muferihat Kamil Ahmed, on 15 July. The UK Ambassador to Ethiopia has also raised our concerns on multiple occasions to the Government. We have consistently pressed these points in bilateral meetings, in multilateral fora such as the UN Security Council, the Human Rights Council and G7 and worked concertedly with international partners to raise our concerns. At the UN Security Council, I set out on 2 July our concerns at the continued lack of progress in delivering humanitarian access to Tigray.

■ **Travel: Canada**

**John McNally:**

[\[37490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to correspondence from the hon. Member for Falkirk on 14 July 2021, ref RHB 3027965, if he will take diplomatic steps to support the case of British national Archibald Robertson seeking a travel allowance from the Canadian High Commission.

**Wendy Morton:**

We continue to discuss border issues with the Canadian government, and appreciate the personal impact this has on many people. As I am sure you will understand, Canadian border restrictions, and any associated exemptions, including temporary passes, are a matter for Canadian authorities alone.

On 7 September, the Canadian government eased restrictions, allowing double-vaccinated travellers to enter for non-essential reasons. Enquires related to travel exemptions and timelines on Mr Robertson's application can be sent to the Canadian High Commission in London at [LDNImmigration@international.gc.ca](mailto:LDNImmigration@international.gc.ca).

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[44197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when approval was given for the Northern Ireland covid-19 vaccine certificate to make it acceptable for international travel from UK airports during the summer of 2021.

**Wendy Morton:**

Healthcare - including the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and vaccine certification - is a devolved competency. As such, Her Majesty's Government did not approve the Northern Ireland COVID-19 vaccine certification for international travel. Once the Department of Health in Northern Ireland had finalised its vaccine certification, FCDO



officials communicated this to host governments who had included vaccine status as part of their entry requirements. Entry to a particular country is a sovereign issue so it would be for the host government to decide whether the certification met their requirements.

#### ■ **Tunisia: Coronavirus**

**Damien Moore:**

[R] [\[41200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what bilateral assistance his Department is providing Tunisia to help the respond to the covid-19 outbreak in that country.

**James Cleverly:**

Following a request from the Tunisian Government, a team from the UK's Emergency Medical Team, supported by the UK-Public Health Rapid Support Team was deployed to Tunisia on 13 August to assist with the Covid-19 response in country. The British Embassy in Tunis has also enabled a scientific exchange between the Public Health England New Variant Assessment Platform (PHE NVAP) and the Tunisian Institut Pasteur in order to provide the Tunisian health authorities with sequencing and sample analysis support.

#### ■ **Tunisia: Politics and Government**

**David Linden:**

[\[41167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of Tunisian President Saied's (a) dismissal of the prime minister and (b) freezing of parliamentary activity.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK is closely monitoring the situation in Tunisia. We believe that the solution to Tunisia's challenges can only be achieved through the principles of democracy, transparency, human rights, and free speech. We call on all parties to uphold Tunisia's reputation as a tolerant and open society and to protect the democratic gains of the 2011 revolution.

**Damien Moore:**

[R] [\[41201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Tunisian counterpart following the decision by President Kais Saied to dismiss prime minister Mechichi and suspend parliament.

**Damien Moore:**

[R] [\[41202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make a statement on the civil unrest in Tunisia.

**Damien Moore:** [R] [\[41214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the continued suspension of the Tunisian Parliament by President Saied.

**Damien Moore:** [R] [\[41215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the protection of parliamentary democracy and safeguarding of human rights in Tunisia.

**Damien Moore:** [R] [\[41216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on securing Tunisian parliamentary democracy in the context of regional stability and security across the North African region.

**Damien Moore:** [R] [\[41217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the Tunisian Parliament is restored by the end of the current emergency period on 24 August 2021.

**James Cleverly:**

We believe that the solution to Tunisia's challenges can only be achieved through the principles of democracy, transparency, human rights, and free speech. We call on all parties to uphold Tunisia's reputation as a tolerant and open society and to protect the democratic gains of the 2011 revolution.

I spoke with Tunisian Foreign Minister Jerandi about the situation in Tunisia on 11 August.

I also co-chaired the inaugural UK-Tunisia Association Council in Tunisia on 7-9 June with the Tunisian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Ali Nafti. Bolstering trade, furthering good governance, and supporting Tunisia to develop its economy are all key aspects of our engagement that will enhance Tunisia's resilience and stability.

## ■ Turkey: Kurds

**John McDonnell:** [\[40583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent reports of Turkish military activity in the Kurdish region of Northern Syria; and if he will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:**

We assess that the ceasefire in north east Syria is broadly holding, but we are not complacent and will continue to call for all actors to meet their obligations under international law. We are aware of the recent reports of increased violence in the region and I called for de-escalation on the 1st September.

## ■ UN Climate Conference 2021: British Overseas Territories

**Henry Smith:**

[\[40846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in British overseas territories on their contribution to the COP 26 Conference in the context of those countries having generally low carbon emissions but often being affected by climate change.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK Government is working closely with the Overseas Territories to ensure that their valuable contribution to address the environmental issues they face is featured appropriately during the COP26 conference. While the Overseas Territories make a minimal contribution to global emissions, they are on the frontline of climate change and work in the Overseas Territories contributes to global understanding of climate science. COP26 provides an opportunity for the Overseas Territories to showcase their unique biodiversity, environments and marine protected areas and highlight the importance of adaptation.

At the UK-Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council in 2020, each Overseas Territories government committed to endeavour to communicate a territory-led plan for climate change adaptation and mitigation, which contributes towards global carbon emission reductions, by the time of the COP26 Summit. The Minister for the Overseas Territories discussed the territory-led plans for climate change and COP26 with Overseas Territories Environment Ministers in June 2021.

## ■ Venezuela: Politics and Government

**Catherine West:**

[\[44414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support regional attempts to resolve the ongoing political crisis in Venezuela.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK Government remains deeply concerned about the situation in Venezuela, where multiple crises are afflicting its people. Venezuela needs a peaceful democratic transition with free and fair legislative and presidential elections. We welcome the start of Norwegian-facilitated talks between the opposition and the Maduro regime. We are engaging closely with international partners, including partners in the region, and stand ready to support the process. Restoration of a system of democratically-elected government in Venezuela is essential for the future well-being of the country and its people.

## ■ Zambia: Politics and Government

**Ruth Jones:**

[\[41260\]](#)

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

**James Duddridge:**

The UK is encouraged by developments following presidential elections in Zambia in August. Despite our deep concern regarding restrictions during the campaign period and reports of some violent incidents, we welcome the broadly peaceful conduct on the day and subsequent democratic nature of the transition. The Prime Minister and I [Minister Duddridge] have congratulated the new President, Hakainde Hichilema, and commended the role of civil society and Zambian institutions in supporting the democratic electoral process. I [Minister Duddridge] was delighted to attend and speak at President Hichilema's inauguration on 24 August, I [Minister Duddridge] also met the President bilaterally and underlined the UK's commitment to a strong partnership. The UK looks forward to working with President Hichilema and his government on our shared goals including mutual prosperity, global health security and tackling climate change.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Antimicrobials: Drug Resistance****Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[42153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to convene the high-level Joint Government Working Group with Industry on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to oversee collaboration on the UK five-year AMR Strategy.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* The Government will re-launch the Joint Government/Industry Working Group on antimicrobial resistance later this year.

**■ Asthma: Coronavirus****Yvonne Fovargue:**[\[44323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timescale is for patients with severe asthma who are shielding during the covid-19 outbreak and who have been taught to self-administer their medication at home to return to clinical supervision.

**Jo Churchill:**

People with severe asthma are not currently being asked to shield. The decision to continue self-administration of home biologics will be made between the person with severe asthma and their specialist centre on how best to manage their condition.

**■ Asthma: Medical Equipment****Paul Blomfield:**[\[41849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including inhalers in medical kits.

**Jo Churchill:**

No such assessment has been made.

■ **Asthma: Medical Treatments**

**Yvonne Fovargue:**

[\[44321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what help is available for asthma sufferers to enable them to continue to self-administer their medication due to the pressures on the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

Specialist respiratory services for severe asthma, along with urgent and emergency treatment for other serious complaints, have continued throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. In most cases people with severe asthma have been able to receive their medication at home instead of having to attend hospital.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence COVID-19 rapid guideline on severe asthma promoted the use of home delivery for biologic treatments to maintain access and reduce the risks to patients of COVID-19 exposure. The NHS England severe asthma 'Accelerated Access Collaborative' will continue to focus on the area of home administration.

■ **Autism and Learning Disability: Supported Housing**

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[38358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to address gaps in the regulation of supported housing for adults with autism and/or learning difficulties, with particular reference to the quality of provision and the rights of residents and their families to seek remedy and redress in the event of poor care or safety breaches.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2021]:* The Care Quality Commission (CQC) are currently reviewing their existing methodology for the regulation of supported housing services. The Department and the CQC are discussing potential changes to the regulations as part of post-implementation review of the CQC's regulated activities to widen its scope to users of supported housing services.

■ **Cancer: Coronavirus**

**Sir John Hayes:**

[\[41636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the long-term impact of the covid-19 outbreak on cancer survival rates as the result of cancelled treatment and reduction in diagnoses.

**Jo Churchill:**

The National Health Service has closely monitored cancer activity including referrals, treatments and waiting times, to understand the impact of the pandemic on cancer

services and patients. However, it is too soon to assess the long-term impact of the pandemic on survival rates.

The majority of cancer services have been maintained throughout the pandemic, with 381,500 people starting cancer treatment between March 2020 and June 2021 - 95% of whom started treatment within 31 days. In June, the third highest number of patients were referred in a single month.

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[41637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether specific forms of cancer have been particularly impacted by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

The diagnosis of all cancers was impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[41638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to tackle the backlog in cancer treatments as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

The 2021/22 Priorities and Operational Planning Guidance sets out the priorities for the National Health Service, including the recovery aims for cancer: to find, diagnose and treat all those who have not started treatment during the pandemic; and reduce return the number of people waiting longer than 62 days to February 2020 levels.

Diagnostic capacity is being increased, particularly in endoscopy, computerised tomography and targeted lung health checks. Rapid diagnostic centres are opening across the country to bring together diagnostic equipment and expertise and support diagnostic capacity. The NHS is continuing to make the most of innovative treatments adopted during the pandemic, including new radiotherapy methods to deliver targeted treatment in fewer hospital visits.

We have made an additional £1 billion Elective Recovery Fund (ERF) for 2021/22 available to allow systems to increase activity levels above set thresholds, including in cancer treatment.

**Sir John Hayes:** [\[41639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to encourage people to present for cancer diagnosis and treatment who may have avoided coming forward during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

In October 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement and Public Health England launched the 'Help us help you' campaign, to encourage people to come forward with symptoms. The latest phase of the campaign launched on 16 August 2021 and raises awareness of abdominal and urological symptoms, and lung cancer symptoms, urging people to see their general practitioner if they have such symptoms. This is the fourth phase of the campaign. The first phase which raised awareness of generic

cancer symptoms, ran in autumn 2020, followed by abdominal symptoms in November and December 2020, then lung cancer symptoms between February and May 2021.

Cancer referrals have been at record high numbers since March 2021, with the third highest number of patients referred in June 2021.

### ■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

**Sarah Olney:** [\[44423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the policy that staff at CQC-registered care homes must have received both covid-19 doses from 11 November 2021 on staffing levels in those homes.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Department has published an impact statement detailing the expected effect of the vaccination as a condition of deployment policy on care homes. The department will publish a full impact assessment in due course. We continue to monitor the impact of the policy on care homes as we approach 11 November.

### ■ Care Homes: Human Rights

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[37336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with recent assessment he has made of the effect of his Department's Guidance on care home visiting, updated on 16 July 2021, on the human rights of care home residents.

**Helen Whately:**

In developing the updated visiting guidance, the Department considered the impact of the remaining restrictions. We determined that the approach is proportionate to ensure that everyone in care home settings is protected as far as possible from infection of COVID-19.

### ■ Care Homes: Visits

**Dan Carden:** [\[41184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ensure the rights of care home residents to have safe family visits and end blanket visit bans during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2021]:* The Government does not have plans to legislate to enable visiting. Where there are limits on visiting in individual care homes, this could be because of available space, the layout of rooms or because the home has had an outbreak.

If a resident or their family think the care home is not following visiting guidance appropriately then they should raise it with the home in the first instance. They can also contact the Care Quality Commission who will investigate complaints.



**■ Carers: Pay****Rachael Maskell:** [\[37506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when care staff are planned to receive a pay award.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2021]:* The vast majority of care workers are employed by private sector providers who ultimately set their pay, independent of central Government. Local authorities work with care providers to determine a fair rate of pay based on local market conditions.

**■ Coronavirus: Screening****Theresa Villiers:** [\[41743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will remove Atruchecks from the list of covid-19 PCR test providers on the Government's website.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* We have no current plans to do so.

**■ Coronavirus: Vaccination****Helen Hayes:** [\[38356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the analysis in the Statement of impact – The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2021 updated on 19 July 2021, stating that potentially 40,000 staff will leave both their jobs and the sector in the next 16 weeks, what steps the Government plans to take to encourage the recruitment of new care and support workers into the care sector.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2021]:* We are working with Skills for Care to ensure that resources are available to support providers and local authorities with capacity, workforce planning, recruitment, and well-being.

We ran a national recruitment campaign across broadcast, digital and social media, highlighting the vital work care workers do. We are also working with the Department for Work and Pensions to promote adult social care careers to jobseekers. We are continuing to work closely with the sector to understand how we can further support recruitment to the sector.

**Julian Sturdy:** [\[41854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether coeliac disease is an eligible condition for children to receive the covid-19 vaccination; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that children's eligibility for that vaccination is decided consistently across GP practices.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advises that asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen constitutes a risk group for the purpose of COVID-19 vaccination of children. Hyposplenism or reduced spleen function in coeliac disease is uncommon in children and the prevalence correlates with the duration of exposure to gluten. Therefore, children diagnosed with coeliac disease early in life whose condition is well managed are unlikely to require vaccination.

Clinical judgment should be applied in identifying these children on a case by case basis.

**Emma Hardy:**[\[43644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what evidence his Department holds on the potential benefits of immunisation against covid-19 for people who have previously tested positive for that virus.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

It is not known how long antibodies made in response to natural COVID-19 infection persist, and whether immunisation could offer more protection. However, it is expected the COVID-19 vaccine would boost any pre-existing antibodies from previous infection. There is no evidence of any safety concerns from vaccinating individuals with a history of COVID-19 infection or with detectable antibodies to COVID-19. Therefore, people who have had COVID-19 disease – whether confirmed or suspected – should still receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Alex Sobel:**[\[43653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccines have been disposed of that were (a) out of date (b) unused to date.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The information requested is not currently centrally held. Work is ongoing across the vaccination programme to standardise and increase the information available for management purposes.

We have put in place robust mitigations throughout the vaccination programme to reduce wastage, manage expiry dates, and avoid vaccine destruction.

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[44364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has for a covid-19 vaccine booster campaign in autumn 2021.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published interim advice on a potential Covid-19 booster vaccination programme on 30th June 2021, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jcvi-interim-advice-on-a-potential-coronavirus-covid-19-booster-vaccine-programme-for-winter-2021-to-2022>

The JCVI's interim advice is that COVID-19 boosters should first be offered to the most vulnerable. The JCVI advises a two staged approach, with individuals in Stage 1 offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine, and flu vaccine, as soon as possible from September, and individuals in Stage 2 offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine as soon as practicable after Stage 1, with equal emphasis on deployment of the flu vaccine where eligible.

Final decisions on the timing and scope and cohort eligibility, including the groups listed above, of any COVID-19 vaccine booster programme will be confirmed once the JCVI have provided their final advice, alongside considerations related to COVID-19 vaccine supply and approvals by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

**Dr Philippa Whitford:**

**[44365]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure long term monitoring of immunity in people who have received different covid-19 vaccines for each dose.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The National Institute for Health Research has commissioned the National Immunisation Schedule Evaluation Consortium to undertake the Com-CoV trial. This trial is gathering data on the long-term immune response of using different COVID-19 vaccines for the first and second dose.

Public Health England has also undertaken follow up on people given mixed schedules as part of routine care to monitor self-reported side effects and antibody response. The antibody results will be published in due course.

## ■ **Dementia: Health Services and Research**

**Helen Hayes:**

**[41057]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to (a) research into dementia treatment and (b) dementia care.

**Helen Whately:**

There has not been a recent assessment of funding allocated to research into dementia or dementia care. The Government remains strongly committed to supporting research into dementia and we are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia at all stages on the translation pathway. The Department funds research on health and social care through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The usual practice of NIHR is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health including dementia.

Services for dementia are the responsibility of local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). However, NHS England would expect CCGs to commission services based

on local population needs and taking account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines.

## ■ Dementia: Research

**Helen Hayes:**

**[41056]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to invest in and encourage research into new treatment for dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

**Helen Whately:**

United Kingdom (UK) researchers are at the forefront of global efforts to find a cure or a disease-modifying treatment by 2025. The 2020 Dementia Challenge commitment to spend £300 million on dementia research over five years, was delivered a year early with £344 million spent by 2019. Further research includes the £190 million UK Dementia Research Institute with a focus on basic science, the £43 million Dementias Platform UK supporting experimental medicine studies and the National Institute for Health Research's (NIHR) Dementia Translational Research Collaboration, which brings together industry, academia and charities to deliver research.

The Department is a founding partner of the international Dementia Discovery Fund, backing commercial ventures trying innovative new approaches to dementia. In March 2021, the NIHR launched a highlight notice on dementia which invited proposals for research, including meeting the needs of underserved communities.

## ■ Dental Services

**Rachael Maskell:**

**[44400]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 24254 on Dental Services, what discussions he has had with Health Education England on the provision of NHS dentists and dental training places in areas where residents are unable to access NHS dental services.

**Jo Churchill:**

Health Education England are working with system partners, including NHS England and Improvement, to address regional shortages of dentists by ensuring that postgraduate training place numbers are better aligned with the needs of local populations.

The Government has also temporarily adjusted the cap on the number of dental school places, meaning that more students will have the opportunity to study dentistry this year.

Working with Health Education England and partners, we continue to monitor current arrangements for the provision of National Health Service dentists and dental training places to support workforce planning.

**■ Disability: Children****Barbara Keeley:**[\[36603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support NHS trusts to meet their legal referral targets for disabled children's health services.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2021]:* There are no legal referral targets for disabled children's health services. The NHS Constitution for England provides that patients have the right to access certain services, which may include some disabled children's health services, within maximum waiting times, or for the National Health Service (NHS) to offer suitable alternatives if this is not possible.

As part of COVID-19 recovery planning we are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement as well as the Department for Education to improve the provision of health services to disabled children. We have invested £6.6 billion from March to September 2021 to help NHS recovery and an additional £1 billion to reduce waiting times for patients, including disabled children, to access NHS services.

**Dan Carden:**[\[41188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for dedicated health and care catch-up policies for disabled children and their families.

**Helen Whately:**

This specific assessment has not been made, however as part of COVID-19 recovery planning the Department are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to look at how we can improve the provision of health and care services to disabled children. The Government has given over £6 billion in un-ringfenced funding directly to councils in the period of 2020-21 and 2021-22 to support them with the impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including for children's social care.

**Dan Carden:**[\[41189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on adequately funding disabled children's health and care services in the long-term.

**Helen Whately:**

No meetings have taken place between the Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer specifically to discuss this issue, however the Department is in discussion with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement about how the provision of health and care services to disabled children can be improved. We have provided over £6 billion in un-ringfenced funding directly to councils in the period of 2020-21 and 2021-22 to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including for children's

social care. Since 2019-2020, the Government has provided additional funding for the social care grant and is allocating £1.7 billion in 2021-2022.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[41235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to ensure that every family with a disabled child can access the therapies and respite care they have missed out on during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to look at how we can improve the provision of health and care services for disabled children.

The Government has given over £6 billion in un-ringfenced funding directly to councils in the period of 2020-21 and 2021-22 to support them with the impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including for children's social care. Since 2019-2020, the Government has provided additional funding for the social care grant and is giving £1.7 billion in 2021-2022. Additionally, we have invested £6.6 billion from March to September 2021 to help National Health Service (NHS) recovery and an additional £1 billion in funding to the NHS in 2021-22 to reduce waiting times for patients, including disabled children, to access NHS services.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[41238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of funding dedicated health and care catch-up policies for disabled children and their families.

**Helen Whately:**

This specific assessment has not been made, however, as part of COVID-19 recovery planning we are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to look at how we can improve the provision of health and care services for disabled children.

## ■ Disability: Finance

**Mary Kelly Foy:**

[\[43668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing additional funding for disabled children's health services at the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review to support access to appropriate disability services and equipment.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2021]:* Further details on the next Spending Review will be set out in due course. As part of COVID-19 recovery planning we are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve the provision of health services to disabled children.

**■ General Practitioners**

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[41073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to encourage GP practices in England to sign up to the Safe Surgeries initiative.

**Jo Churchill:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement encourage all general practitioner (GP) practices and primary care providers to become Safe Surgeries; to implement inclusive and accessible patient registration policies; and to provide equitable healthcare. Most recently this included NHS England and NHS Improvement's registration drive launched in February 2021 to encourage GP registration of inclusion health populations.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[41737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of GP appointments have been in-person since 19 July 2021.

**Jo Churchill:**

From 19 July to 31 July inclusive there were 11,341,119 appointments in general practice. Of these, 6,527,418 were face to face appointments, representing 58% of all appointments that took place during that period. NHS Digital will publish appointment data for August at the end of September.

**■ Irritable Bowel Syndrome: Health Services**

**Sir Greg Knight:** [\[33126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he (a) is taking to improve the treatment of irritable bowel disease and (b) plans to take to speed up diagnosis of that disease to enable faster access to specialist treatment; and if he will make a statement.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 July 2021]:* The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) best practice guidance on irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and the corresponding quality standard sets out recommendations for clinicians on the diagnosis and care for patients. Clinicians should take this guidance into account, when making treatment decisions for patients suffering with IBS. NICE also maintains surveillance of new evidence will review this guidance if required.

**■ Lung Cancer: Health Services**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[44342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make a statement on the recovery of lung cancer referrals following the covid-19 restrictions.



**Jo Churchill:**

The 'Help us help you' campaign encourages people to come forward with symptoms and reassure them that the National Health Service is open. The latest phase of the campaign, which began in August 2021, includes a focus on lung cancer symptoms. The NHS has also launched targeted lung health check projects in 23 locations.

**Members: Correspondence****Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[41047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford of 16 April 2021 on metabolic malodour conditions.

**Edward Argar:**

I replied to the hon. Member on 24 August 2021.

**NHS: Coronavirus and Long Covid****Sir Alan Campbell:**[\[40618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason healthcare staff and nurses who are subcontracted to the NHS are not entitled to the same employment protections during periods of covid and long covid infection as staff employed by the NHS and under the agenda for change system.

**Helen Whately:**

Subcontracted healthcare workers and nurses are not employed by the National Health Service and are therefore subject to their employer's terms, conditions and entitlements, including sick pay. The Government has made it clear that agencies are required to pay Statutory Sick Pay to their workers where they cannot work due to COVID-19.

**NHS: Long Covid****Sir Alan Campbell:**[\[40619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to ensure that healthcare staff and nurses who have long covid get the same employment protections and financial help for the duration of their illness as people subject to the NHS agenda for change.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department does not plan to bring forward legislative proposals specific to one group of staff. Statutory employment protections and statutory financial support applies to all eligible individuals.

The majority of healthcare staff and nurses are employed on national Terms and Conditions, including Agenda for Change which contains sick pay and additional contractual provisions regarding the management of long-term sickness. Employers

should develop local policies and procedures regarding long-term sickness, in line with Annex 26 of the national Terms and Conditions.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[41221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support is available to frontline healthcare workers suffering with long covid who have had difficulties returning to work in the NHS.

**Helen Whately:**

National Health Service (NHS) staff on national terms and conditions receive sick pay support which provides up to six months full sick pay, followed by up to six months half pay depending on length of service. In addition, in March 2020 the Department introduced temporary COVID-19 full sick pay for NHS staff, subject to regular review, providing an additional level of support.

Staff experiencing the symptoms of long COVID will also be supported through NHS England and NHS Improvement's plan for long COVID, which provides support for patients experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19.

NHS England and NHS Improvement intend to review terms and conditions for staff in September 2021.

## ■ NHS: Training

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[41822\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Health Education England (a) audits the amount of money made available to NHS Trusts for training purposes and (b) assesses whether NHS Trusts are investing the money to meet the objectives of the NHS Long Term Plan for enhanced professional skills development within the cancer workforce.

**Jo Churchill:**

Health Education England (HEE) provides activity-based education funding to National Health Service trusts which supports continuing professional development, workforce development and the development of the future workforce. Where this funding is provided by HEE, it is managed through the NHS Education Contract. HEE monitors the delivery of education programmes funded by HEE, including those related to the cancer workforce, to ensure delivery of the funding objectives.

NHS trusts have other sources of training income and are responsible for how they invest this money and train their staff. It is the responsibility of individual NHS organisations who invest this funding to undertake relevant assurance processes to ensure outcomes are being met.

## ■ **Pregnancy: Coronavirus**

**Helen Hayes:**

**[44411]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the risk covid-19 poses to unvaccinated pregnant women; and what steps he is taking to ensure pregnant women receive both doses of the vaccine before their third trimester.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Although the overall risk from COVID-19 in pregnant women is low, in later pregnancy some women may become seriously unwell and need hospital treatment. Pregnant women with COVID-19 have a higher risk of intensive care admission than women of the same age who are not pregnant. Women with COVID-19 disease are also 2-3 times more likely to have their babies early than women without COVID-19. Pregnant women with underlying clinical conditions are at even higher risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19.

Currently, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends an interval of 8 weeks between doses of all the available COVID-19 vaccines; this includes pregnant women. It is important to note that current evidence shows that a longer dose interval produces a better immune response. The JCVI regularly reviews its advice in relation to COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, taking into account new data and evidence on the effectiveness of the programme and epidemiological situation.

We are working hard to drive uptake in pregnant women, to ensure that as many pregnant women take up the offer of vaccination as soon as possible so that they are protected throughout their pregnancy. It is understood that pregnant women may prefer to wait to be vaccinated until after they have given birth. It is important for pregnant women to discuss their offer of vaccination with a healthcare professional in relation to the risks and benefits of the vaccine.

## ■ **Prostate Cancer: Diagnosis**

**Bob Blackman:**

**[41824]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the National Disease Registration Service's Rapid Cancer Registration and Treatment Data, what recent assessment he has made of the trend in the level of prostate cancer diagnoses up to the end of April 2021; and what steps he is taking to improve the diagnosis of prostate cancer.

**Jo Churchill:**

The number of people coming forward with symptoms and being referred with suspected cancer recovered throughout 2020. Urological cancers, including prostate cancer, referrals were almost at pre-pandemic levels by June 2021.

The latest phase of the 'Help us help you' campaign raises awareness of abdominal symptoms of cancer, including for urological cancers. Awareness of prostate cancer risk and symptoms is also being raised through media and charities. Those

presenting to their general practitioner with symptoms which could be prostate cancer will be assessed and referred in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance, which states that they should be referred on a suspected cancer pathway for an appointment within two weeks. This guidance has remained in place throughout the pandemic.

## ■ Prostate Cancer: Nurses

**Bob Blackman:** [\[41820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many grants were awarded by Health Education England to enable existing and aspiring nurses to train as non-medical practitioners to support the prostate cancer workforce in each of the last five years.

**Jo Churchill:**

The NHS People Plan published in July 2020 committed to offering training grants to 250 nurses in 2020/21 to enable them to become cancer nurse specialists. In order to maximise training opportunities, Health Education England awarded 1,238 training grants in 2020/21 to existing and aspiring cancer nurse specialists. This offer was further extended in 2021/22 with a further 250 training grants made available. Uptake data for the current financial year is not yet available.

## ■ Public Expenditure: Disability

**Grahame Morris:** [\[41817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Disabled Children's Partnerships Left Behind report, published on 16 July 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of funding specific covid-19 recovery policies for disabled children, young people and families to help them recover from the covid-19 outbreak in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 8 September 2021]:* As part of COVID-19 recovery planning we are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve the provision of health and care services to disabled children. The Government has allocated over £6 billion directly to councils in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to support the impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including for children's social care.

## ■ Social Services: Emergencies

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[37510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take in the event that social care systems are placed in Operational Pressures Escalation Levels (a) 3 and (b) 4.

**Helen Whately:**

Operational Pressures Escalation Levels (OPEL) is a method used by the NHS to measure the stress, demand, and pressure a hospital is under. OPEL is not used to measure the stress, demand, and/or pressure a social care system is under.

Local authorities are responsible for meeting eligible social care needs for people in their local area. The Department's regional assurance team works with local authorities to assess and anticipate risks in local areas. If a Trust is raised to OPEL 3 or 4, the Department will provide support to ensure that the local social care system will work effectively with the Trust to manage demand. We also monitor pressures in the adult social care sector through the Capacity Tracker which collects data on workforce, PPE status, and vaccine uptake for COVID-19 and flu. The Department shares data via its dashboard to ensure that systems are prepared if pressures on services become high. If a Trust is raised to OPEL 3 or 4, any potential resulting pressures on social care could be reflected in these monitoring systems.

**■ Speech and Language Therapy: Children and Young People****Saqib Bhatti:**[\[41355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists's report, Building back better: Speech and language therapy services after covid-19, published 16 March 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that speech and language therapy services in the most deprived areas are adequately resourced to support children and young people who have developed a higher level of need as a result of delays in identification and reduced support during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:**

As part of COVID-19 recovery plan we are looking carefully at how we can support disabled children and their families, including those with speech and language needs, across the country, including in the most deprived areas. We are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to improve the provision of health and care services to disabled children.

**■ Travel: Coronavirus****Catherine West:**[\[41111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to subsidise the cost of a private covid-19 PCR test for people on low incomes who are travelling overseas and are required to take a test.

**Jo Churchill:**

We have no plans to do so. Since the requirements were introduced for international travel testing, the costs have fallen significantly. We are committed to working with the travel industry and private providers to reduce these costs and we have made NHS Test and Trace tests available around the market mid-point to ensure testing is available at an appropriate cost.

Anyone facing significant financial hardship as a result of the requirement to take a day two or day eight test on return from travelling overseas can apply for hardship arrangements, including deferred payment plans. In exceptional circumstances reductions and waivers may be granted.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

**Charlotte Nichols:**

[\[41347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to allow people who have a medical exemption from being vaccinated against the covid-19 virus to be eligible for exemptions from traveller quarantine measures in line with the covid-19 travel rules that apply to double-vaccinated travellers.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department are working to ensure those who cannot have a vaccine or be tested for medical reasons are not disadvantaged. For the United Kingdom's inbound travel policy, the Government is exploring future policy options on travel for vaccinated UK residents, including making allowances for people exempt from vaccination and will set this information out in due course.

■ **Urology: Nurses**

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[41821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Health Education England has plans to improve reporting on the number of clinical nurse specialists working in (a) urology and (b) prostate cancer as part of its review into the long-term strategic trends in the health and social care workforce.

**Jo Churchill:**

The National Health Service Electronic Staff Record does not enable the identification of cancer nurse specialists.

## HOME OFFICE

■ **Antisocial Behaviour: Students**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[41196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what strategies the police are deploying to (a) tackle antisocial behaviour by students in residential areas and (b) encourage those students to change their behaviour.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government introduced a range of flexible tools and powers for local agencies, including police forces, local authorities and landlords, to tackle anti-social behaviour through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act').

These powers are deliberately local in nature. The strategies police deploy is an operational decision that depends on the local context and the circumstances in each

case. Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners can decide how they use the powers within the 2014 Act and how best to work with each other, and other agencies, in responding to anti-social behaviour priorities.

Home Office [statutory guidance](#), which was updated this year, supports all local agencies to take the multi-agency approach that is needed to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour, including in residential cases, in a way that takes account of the needs of the victim and the community.

The [Beating Crime Plan](#) published on 27 July laid out the Government's commitment to working with local agencies and partners to drive down anti-social behaviour using the full range of powers and tools in the 2014 Act.

## ■ Asylum: Afghanistan

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[41140]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many requests for asylum from Afghan nationals have been (a) made to her Department, (b) rejected by her Department and (c) approved by her Department in the last 12 months.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes data on asylum and resettlement in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. Data on the number of asylum applications lodged in the UK and the initial decisions on asylum applications are published in tables Asy\_D01 and Asy\_D02 of the '[Asylum & Resettlement detailed datasets](#)'; available breakdowns include nationality of the applicant and year and quarter of application or initial decision

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relate to Q1 2021. Data for Q2 2021 will be published on 26 August with [Immigration statistics, year ending June 2021](#).

Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the '[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](#)'.

**Tim Farron:**

**[41787]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to expedite and review the cases of Afghan asylum seekers currently pending in the asylum system.

**Kevin Foster:**

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations. All asylum claims are considered on a case by case basis and in line with published policy.



We are currently reviewing the country situation and will issue updated country policy and information notes shortly for Afghanistan, which reflect revised assessments of risk of persecution. We have therefore temporarily paused asylum decision making for Afghan nationals to ensure our decision makers are only considering claimants' protection needs in the light of relevant and up-to-date country information.

All asylum appeals from Afghan nationals will be reviewed ahead of any hearing to look at the individual claim in light of the changed country situation, current guidance and any further information submitted by the claimant, to assess whether the decision to refuse is still appropriate.

No one who is found to be at risk of persecution or serious harm in Afghanistan will be expected to return there, and enforced returns of those who have been refused asylum and have exhausted all rights of appeal are currently paused.

**Alan Brown:**

**[41980]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan applicants for asylum have received (a) a notice of intent that their claim is being considered for inadmissibility and (b) have had their claim deemed inadmissible since 1 July 2021.

**Chris Philp:**

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail inadmissibility decisions made and can be found online at:

[How many people do we grant asylum or protection to? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to)

A breakdown of these figures into nationality is not currently available.

## ■ Asylum: Applications

**Neil Coyle:**

**[40923]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what percentage of people seeking asylum issued with a Notice of Intent since 1st January 2021 stating their claim would be considered under the inadmissibility process, and for whom the long-stop period of six months has passed, have subsequently been accepted into the substantive asylum process to have their claim considered and decided in the UK.

**Neil Coyle:**

**[40924]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people seeking asylum who have been issued with a Notice of Intent since 1 January 2021 stating their asylum claim would be considered under the Government's guidance on inadmissibility have subsequently been removed from the UK.

**Neil Coyle:**

**[40925]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who have been issued with a Notice of Intent since 1 January 2021 have been moved into the substantive asylum process to have their claim considered and decided in the UK before the end of the six month long-stop period set out in the inadmissibility guidance.

**Chris Philp:**

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail inadmissibility decisions made as well as the number of returns. These can be found online at:

[How many people do we grant asylum or protection to? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to)

Quarterly statistics relating to the period between June and September 2021 are due to be published on 25 November. We are working to bring data in respect of the six month long-stop in line with current reporting and hope to publish that information in the same timeframe.

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

**David Linden:****[41168]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of asylum claimants are being advised of timescales as to when decisions will be taken on their cases.

**David Linden:****[41169]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department will be able to offer timescales on decisions to all asylum claimants.

**David Linden:****[41170]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the average timescale for her Department to make a decision on an asylum application in 2019.

**David Linden:****[41171]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the average timescale for her Department to make a decision on an asylum application in 2021 to date.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office is unable to state what proportion, offer timescales currently or provide average timescales to make an decisions on asylum application in 2019 and 2021 as this information is not published.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration, for main applicants only. This data can be found at Asy\_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2021/list-of-tables>.

The Home Office are pursuing a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives that will speed up decision making, reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision. This includes almost doubling decision makers number to c.1,000 by March 2022 and providing improved training and career progression opportunities to aid

retention of staff. We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements such as digital interviewing and move away from a paper-based system.

We have three key areas of focus in the short to medium term to reduce the number of outstanding asylum cases by improving efficiency and productivity, reducing the number of outstanding claims and building high performing teams. We are streamlining and digitalising the case working process to enable more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making.

## ■ Asylum: Detainees

**Neil Coyle:**

**[38279]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the suitability of hotel detention for people seeking asylum.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office are not detaining asylum seekers in hotels; we are accommodating them. Our accommodation providers do not have enforcement powers and those we are accommodating are free to come and go as they please. All sites have security staff, and the numbers vary depending upon the size of the sites. Some sites will have additional measures including fencing installed to reduce access and unmanned access points to sites. Our accommodation providers work with local police forces, and generally our sites are added to Police “red” lists should a call out be needed because someone is trying to access the site.

Increased asylum intake, alongside measures taken to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, has meant the Home Office has had to deal with growing demand for asylum support and accommodation services.

Throughout the pandemic we have taken decisive action to ensure those seeking asylum in the UK have the support they need. We have provided accommodation for everyone in asylum, including those whose applications have been rejected and new applicants claiming asylum.

Given the challenges in the property market during lockdown, we have had to move at pace to support a growing population, ensuring we meet our legal obligation to house destitute asylum seekers. We have therefore had to source hotel accommodation across the United Kingdom. We must be clear hotels are only ever a contingency option and we do not view them as a long-term solution.

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

**[41080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of asylum-seeking women held in detention in the UK have received treatment for their mental health in 2021.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office does not hold this information centrally. Healthcare services in all immigration removal centres (IRCs) in England are commissioned by NHS England.

At Dungavel IRC in Scotland, and Larne House Short Term Holding Facility in Northern Ireland, healthcare is commissioned by the service providers.

We take the health and welfare of those detained in our care very seriously, and all individuals who are detained have access to medical care, whether they are seeking asylum or not. All detained individuals entering an IRC receive a healthcare screening within two hours of their arrival, which identifies any immediate or long-term healthcare risks. Unless they decline, individuals in IRCs are given an appointment with a doctor within 24 hours. Clinical pathways into other healthcare services are initiated at this point depending on the outcomes of the reception screen, including into mental health services. Furthermore, all centres have mental health in-reach services available.

Additionally, all IRC staff employed by our commercial suppliers are trained to recognise vulnerability, including mental health issues.

### ■ Asylum: Employment

**Janet Daby:**

[\[37573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing refugees and asylum seekers to gain employment whilst waiting for their asylum decisions.

**Chris Philp:**

Asylum seekers are allowed to work in the UK if their claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own. Those permitted to work are restricted to jobs on the Shortage Occupation List, which is based on expert advice from the independent Migration Advisory Committee. Those with refugee status have immediate and unrestricted access to the labour market.

### ■ Asylum: Finance

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[\[41957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will set support for asylum seekers at 70 per cent of universal credit entitlement in line with the representations made by the Safe Passage campaign.

**Chris Philp:**

Asylum seekers and their dependants who would otherwise be destitute are supported under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. The package of support provided usually consists of free furnished accommodation with utility bills and council tax paid. Individuals are able to access free NHS healthcare and free education for children. They are also provided with a cash allowance to cover other essential living needs.

The level of the allowance is currently set at £39.63 per week for each person in the household. There are no plans to adjust the amount so that it is set at 70% of the rate of Universal Credit or align it with other mainstream benefits.

**■ Asylum: Poverty****Tommy Sheppard:****[41954]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of people who are seeking asylum and in receipt of Section 95 support are estimated to be below the (a) 60 per cent of median income relative and (b) absolute poverty lines.

**Chris Philp:**

The package of support provided to asylum seekers and their dependants supported under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 because they would otherwise be destitute usually consists of free furnished accommodation with utility bills and council tax paid. Individuals are also able to access free NHS healthcare and free education for children. They are also provided with a cash allowance to cover their other “essential living needs” (the statutory test set out in the 1999 Act). The level of the cash allowance is currently set at £39.63 per week for each individual in the household, as this is the level assessed as necessary to meet the statutory test.

The income available to asylum seekers in receipt of section 95 support is lower than a figure based on 60% of the median income of UK households (approximately £17,000 per year) and lower than other measures of poverty levels. However, the level of cash allowance is regularly reviewed using a methodology endorsed by the Court of Appeal and Inner Court of Session.

**■ Asylum: Temporary Accommodation****Paula Barker:****[41382]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the standard of temporary asylum accommodation in the UK; and what plans she has to increase the amount of available accommodation as part of the New Plan for Immigration.

**Kevin Foster:**

We expect appropriate standards from our providers, who are expected to conduct regular checks across the accommodation estate. Throughout the pandemic, the ability to inspect accommodation in the usual way has faced some understandable logistical challenges, however we have robust systems in place to monitor and ensure continued accordance with the standards of service we and those we accommodate expect.

Service users can also raise specific issues or concerns about their accommodation through the 24/7 Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service operated by Migrant Help. The Home Office and our providers receive feedback on complaints raised through our regular dialogue with Migrant Help, which enables attention to be focussed on any areas of concern.

All Asylum Accommodation and Support Services contracts (AASC) must adhere the Asylum Accommodation and Support Schedule Statement of Requirements. The

standards of accommodation and service are set within the AASC contract and represent a higher standard of quality than the preceding COMPASS contracts.

The new contracts have resulted in significant investment in the accommodation estate and its itinerary – improved facilities in Initial Accommodation, clear requirements on room sharing and greater inventory in Dispersal Accommodation. The new AIRE contract also introduces more independent and transparent oversight of standards through clearer complaints mechanisms for service users and supporting data which allows more intelligent targeting of performance improvement.

We are working closely with local authorities across the UK to secure additional accommodation and ensure service users can move through and ‘move-on’ from the support system. We urge local authorities to work with us to identify new accommodation.

Procurement of properties is being conducted at pace, but in all cases is subject to the consultation process set out within the Asylum Accommodation Support Contracts (AASC), whereby Local Authorities are able to raise objections to procurement of each specific property being proposed for use.

The Home Office is committed to working closely with communities and stakeholders to ensure destitute asylum seekers are housed in safe, secure and suitable accommodation, and they are treated with dignity while their asylum claim is considered.

## ■ **British Nationality: Fees and Charges**

**Fleur Anderson:**

[38441]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to reduce the cost of applying for UK citizenship.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office keeps fees for immigration and nationality applications under review and ensures they are within the parameters agreed with HM Treasury and Parliament.

UK fees are set taking account of the charging powers provided by Section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014, which include the ability to set fees based on: the cost of processing the application, the benefits and entitlements provided by a successful application and the wider cost of the migration and borders system. Full details of which can be reviewed via the following link -

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/68>.

## ■ **Community Policing**

**Stuart Anderson:**

[38419]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps are being taken to enhance community trust engagement with local policing teams.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The police's ability to fulfil their duties is dependent on their capacity to secure and maintain public trust and support for their actions, as part of the model of policing by consent.

That is why the Government is committed to giving police the resources they need to support local communities, including the recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers by March 2023. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the police have now recruited an extra 9,814 officers, 49% of the 20,000-officer target. (as at 30 June 2021), and have therefore exceeded the first target of 6,000 additional officers by March 2021.

The first round of the Safer Street Fund was launched on 26 January 2020, providing £25m to support areas in England and Wales disproportionately affected by neighbourhood and acquisitive crimes, such as burglary and theft. This money has been invested in well evidenced crime prevention measures, including improved street lighting and home security. A second one-year, £20m round of the Safer Streets Fund was launched on the 28 January 2021, to support even more local areas disproportionately affected by neighbourhood crimes. 50 successful projects across England and Wales were announced on 3 June.

On 15 March 2021, an additional £25m was announced to run a further round of the Safer Streets Fund, bringing total investment into the Safer Streets Fund to £45m over the 2021/22 financial year. For round three of the Fund, there is a shift of focus to championing creative and innovative methods to improve public safety in local areas, with a particular focus on women and girls' safety and feelings of safety, as well as funding more traditional crime prevention interventions such as improved streetlighting and CCTV.

The Government has put in place measures to ensure that policing is subject to appropriate levels of transparency and accountability. This includes regular inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), publication of data on the use of police powers and strengthening the police complaints and discipline systems.

The Government will also be looking carefully at strengthening the system of local community scrutiny and the value and use of body-worn video.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Catherine West:****[41110]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with representatives of the Metropolitan Police on the comments reportedly made by Kate Shemrani at an anti-lockdown protest at Trafalgar Square on 24 July 2021; and if she will make a statement.



**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Secretary and I hold regular meetings with representatives of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), covering a wide range of subject areas including protest activity.

However, the policing of protests is an operational matter for the police who have comprehensive powers to deal with activities that spread hate or deliberately raise tensions through violence or public disorder.

In this case, it is for the MPS to decide whether any law has been broken and in conjunction with the Crown Prosecution Service, determine whether an action warrants possible criminal proceedings.

**Crimes of Violence: Coronavirus****Paula Barker:**[\[41381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of verbal and/or physical attacks on workers during the covid-19 outbreak, by sector of the economy.

**Kit Malthouse:**

There are no official figures for the number of verbal or physical attacks on workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

The Home Office collects data relating to assaults and threats made against staff in different business sectors via the Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS). However, the latest estimates are from the 2018 CVS, available in the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/crime-against-businesses-findings-from-the-2018-commercial-victimisation-survey>.

Survey results for the year ending March 2021 will be available in March 2022 and will cover only the wholesale and retail sector.

**Domestic Abuse: Bank Services****Carolyn Harris:**[\[41030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to safeguard domestic abuse victims against financial abuse in the event that they have a joint bank account with a perpetrator.

**Carolyn Harris:**[\[41031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help support victims of domestic abuse who are unable to pay their mortgage due to the perpetrator emptying a joint bank account.

**Carolyn Harris:**[\[41033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what provisions are in place to help victims of domestic abuse transfer funds from a joint bank account held with a perpetrator to their own personal bank account.

**Victoria Atkins:**

All forms of domestic abuse are unacceptable, and no one should have to suffer financially at the hands of their perpetrator.

The landmark Domestic Abuse Act became law in April 2021, and created for the first-time a general purpose legal definition of domestic abuse which incorporates a range of abuses beyond physical violence, including economic abuse. This recognition will improve understanding among frontline professionals, law enforcement officers and prosecutors so that victims can be better supported.

The Home Office supports and funds organisations that raise awareness of economic abuse and support victims. This includes providing £567k of funding between 2018-2022 to the charity Surviving Economic Abuse, which provides emotional and practical support targeted at victims of economic abuse.

In recognition of the role that financial services have to play in responding to domestic abuse, in 2018 UK Finance and the Building Societies Association introduced a Financial Abuse Code of Practice. The voluntary Code of Practice sets out how participating banks and building societies should support customers who are victims of domestic and financial or economic abuse. We are building on this by working to encourage banks and the wider financial services sector to improve the support provided to victims of domestic abuse accessing their services; help victims move forward to escape debt, joint accounts, and mortgages.

We will continue to work alongside financial institutions and frontline agencies to raise awareness and improve support for victims of economic abuse.

**Carolyn Harris:****[41032]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help support victims of domestic abuse who are unable to pay their utility bills due to the perpetrator emptying a joint bank account.

**Victoria Atkins:**

All forms of domestic abuse are unacceptable, and no one should have to suffer financially at the hands of their perpetrator.

The landmark Domestic Abuse Act became law in April 2021, and created for the first-time a general purpose legal definition of domestic abuse which incorporates a range of abuses beyond physical violence, including economic abuse. This recognition will improve understanding among frontline professionals, law enforcement officers and prosecutors so that victims can be better supported.

The Home Office supports and funds organisations that raise awareness of economic abuse and support victims. This includes providing £567k of funding between 2018-2022 to the charity Surviving Economic Abuse, which provides emotional and practical support targeted at victims of economic abuse.

In recognition of the role that financial services have to play in responding to domestic abuse, in 2018 UK Finance and the Building Societies Association introduced a Financial Abuse Code of Practice. The voluntary Code of Practice sets

out how participating banks and building societies should support customers who are victims of domestic and financial or economic abuse. We are building on this by working to encourage banks and the wider financial services sector to improve the support provided to victims of domestic abuse accessing their services; help victims move forward to escape debt, joint accounts, and mortgages.

We will continue to work alongside financial institutions and frontline agencies to raise awareness and improve support for victims of economic abuse.

## ■ Hamas

**Brendan Clarke-Smith:**

[\[41286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of whether Hamas is conducting any financial activities in the UK.

**Damian Hinds:**

The Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters.

Hamas is subject to an asset freeze under the Counter-Terrorism (International Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations, 2019.

## ■ Hate Crime

**Alex Cunningham:**

[\[44339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to support the appointment of a hate crime commissioner.

**Kit Malthouse:**

There are currently no plans to appoint a hate crime commissioner.

The Law Commission is examining the pros and cons of such a role as part of their review of hate crime laws. We will consider the Law Commission's recommendations and respond to their report when it is complete.

## ■ Hezbollah: Drugs

**Chris Green:**

[\[37489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of Hezbollah's potential involvement in the illegal drug trade in the UK.

**Damian Hinds:**

Investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations are an operational matter for the police and intelligence agencies. It would not be appropriate to comment further.

**■ Home Office: Food****Philip Dunne:** [\[40781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to encourage procurement of British produce within meals available for (a) staff of her Department and (b) people in her Department's care since 1 January 2021.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The provision of catering for both Home Office staff and people in our care is outsourced to a number of contractors. None of these contracts require the suppliers to use British produce in the meals that they provide.

**■ Home Office: Listed Buildings****Tim Loughton:** [\[44162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by her Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office does not have any properties that are classified as heritage assets.

**■ Home Office: Protective Clothing****Philip Davies:** [\[38208\]](#)

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

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Home Office policy will follow the government's guidance published by BEIS on 14 July 2021 which states that face coverings are no longer required by law. Based on a risk assessment there may be some indoor settings such as crowded, enclosed spaces where employees will be strongly encouraged to wear face coverings. Some operational settings that include higher risk activities may require PPE to be worn as a control for specific activities. Employees will be able to choose if they wish to wear a face covering in a work environment.

In respect of departmental agencies and related bodies they will be implementing local restrictions as required following the government's guidance set out above.

**■ Human Trafficking: Organised Crime****Gareth Thomas:** [\[37349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people-smuggling gangs operating to smuggle people into UK in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) threat to the UK is exceptionally complex, spanning multiple countries, nationalities and criminal methodologies. The Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) behind this crime range from large, sophisticated, poly-criminality networks to individuals in a single area who provide smuggling services as an extension to an otherwise legitimate business. There is therefore no comprehensive estimate of the total number of gangs involved in people smuggling to the UK over the last five years.

The Government and law enforcement agencies work tirelessly to tackle the criminal networks who facilitate people smuggling from source countries to Europe and then the UK, knowingly putting people in life-threatening situations. The National Crime Agency alone has around 50 ongoing investigations into networks or individuals involved in the highest harm of OIC or human trafficking; and is supporting partner agencies in more than 40 other cases.

Since the inception of the multi-agency UK OIC Taskforce in 2015, the UK government's multi-agency response to tackling people smuggling, it has been involved in more than 1000 arrests, both in the UK and overseas, with suspects convicted sentenced to more than 720 years in prison. It takes a whole of route approach, deploying over 150 officers to operate in 17 countries, with Crown Prosecution Service prosecutors placed in key source and transit countries to disrupt OCGs profiting from people smuggling.

In March 2021, the Government published the New Plan for Immigration containing provisions to establish legislation to deter illegal entry into the UK, thereby breaking the business model of criminal people smuggling networks and protecting the lives of those they endanger. In July 2021, the Government introduced this legislation through the Nationality and Borders Bill.

**■ Immigration: EU Nationals****John Penrose:****[40810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on how many occasions the online verification service for the EU Settlement Scheme has been out of service since it was launched; and for how long it was out of service on each of those occasions.

**Kevin Foster:**

The online 'View and Prove your immigration status' service has been operational since the EU Settlement Scheme was launched. Between October 2019 and March 2021 the service has seen over 3.9m profile views by individuals, and over 330,000 views by organisations checking immigration status.

Our digital services are designed to be highly resilient, and undergo rigorous testing and quality assurance. Service outages are rare, and where they do occur, teams work to resolve these as quickly as possible. Data on service outages is not routinely collated or published.

Our dedicated Resolution Centre is able to assist users who may experience technical issues, and where necessary, enable individuals' immigration status to be verified through alternative means.

### ■ Locks and Keys: Regulation

**Mark Pawsey:**

[\[37463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will meet with the Master Locksmiths Association to discuss the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to regulate the locksmith industry.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government currently has no plans to regulate the locksmith industry.

All locksmiths approved by the Master Locksmith Association (MLA) undergo strict vetting including a criminal record check; are regularly inspected to ensure they conform to legal requirements and customer charters; and must pass the MLA's qualifications to demonstrate competence.

### ■ Maira Shahbaz

**Martin Vickers:**

[\[38237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on the case of Maira Shahbaz.

**Chris Philp:**

The tragic case of Maira Shahbaz has attracted significant interest, including the petition by Christian NGO Aid to the Church in Need. I am deeply troubled by Maira's tragic circumstances and have asked my officials to keep me updated on this case.

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. Our concerns about such cases, as well as Freedom of Religion or Belief, women and girls' rights and gender equality more broadly, are regularly raised with the Government of Pakistan.

However, I am not able to provide specific information with regards to Maira Shahbaz's case as it is a longstanding Government policy not to comment on individual cases. Departing from this policy may put individuals and their family members in danger.

The UK has a proud record of providing protection for people who need it, in accordance with our obligations under the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights.

### ■ Migrant Workers: Agriculture and Large Goods Vehicle Drivers

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[40837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the level of demand for migrant workers in the (a) farming and agriculture sector and (b) logistics industry.

**Dr Dan Poulter:**

[\[40838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to improve the access of migrant workers to jobs in the farming and agriculture sector.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office works closely with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to monitor the labour needs of the farming and Agricultural sector and will continue to monitor the labour needs of the economy more generally.

We have no plans to improve access for employers to recruit migrant workers into jobs in the farming and agricultural sector beyond those which qualify for our Skilled Worker Visa and the already expanded Seasonal Workers Pilot, which went from 10,000 to 30,000 places for 2021.

The Government wants employers to focus on training and investing in our domestic workforce rather than relying on labour from abroad. Employers should engage with the Department for Work and Pensions in the first instance, as they are best placed to help companies with recruitment issues.

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

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[41392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of adding HGV drivers to the shortage occupation list.

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[41393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of revising the points-based immigration system to allow firms to recruit HGV drivers from outside the UK.

**Kevin Foster:**

I refer the honourable member to the response given to the honourable member for Bristol East on 15 July [\[UIN: 31344\]](#)

#### ■ **Migrant Workers: Social Services**

**Janet Daby:**

[\[41246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a non-sponsored route similar to the Frontier Worker scheme to include new employed and self-employed social care workers who are not resident in the UK.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Citizens' Rights Agreements protect those EEA or Swiss citizens who were frontier workers in the UK by the end of the transition period at 11pm on 31 December 2020 and who continue to be so. The UK's frontier worker permit scheme, which has been open to applications since 10 December 2020, allows those



protected frontier workers to obtain a permit, free of charge, as evidence of their right to continue entering the UK as a frontier worker after 30 June 2021.

There is no deadline by which protected frontier workers must apply for a permit, though it is mandatory for non-Irish frontier workers to hold a frontier worker permit to enter the UK for work from 1 July 2021.

Where an overseas worker is not protected by the Citizens' Rights Agreements, the new points-based immigration system provides routes for skilled workers. There are no plans to make available a route for those who do not meet the skills threshold of the Skilled Worker route. Nursing auxiliaries and Social Care workers including health care support workers, senior carers, senior support workers and nursing home team leaders do meet the skills threshold but would need to be sponsored by a licenced sponsor.

The introduction of the Health and Care visa last August made it quicker and cheaper for regulated health and care professionals – including Senior Care Workers - and their dependants to secure their visa. We have commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to look further at the issues surrounding the ending of free movement on the social care sector and we look forward to receiving their report by the end of April 2022.

#### ■ Migrants: Afghanistan

**Tim Farron:** [\[41788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals are currently in immigration detention.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes data on people in immigration detention in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. The number of people in detention on the last day of each quarter are published in table Det\_D02 of the [Detention detailed datasets](#). The data can be broken down by nationality of detainee, and place of detention.

The latest data relate to the number of people in detention at the end of June 2021.

#### ■ Overseas Aid

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[43449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many overseas requests for security and justice training and other capacity building assistance to be provided on location in the requesting country were (a) approved and (b) declined by her Department in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[44249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many overseas requests for security and justice training and other capacity building assistance to be provided in the

UK have been (a) approved and (b) declined by her Department in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20, and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[44250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments have been completed by her Department in relation to (a) requests for capacity-building support and (b) case-specific assistance in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20, and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[44251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by her Department in relation to requests for capacity-building support have concluded that the requests should be deemed (a) low risk, (b) medium risk or (c) high risk in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[44252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by her Department in relation to requests for capacity-building support have been the subject of consultation with Ministers in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[44254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many overseas requests for case-specific security and justice assistance have been (a) approved and (b) declined by her Department in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[44255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by her Department in relation to requests for case-specific assistance have concluded that the requests should be considered (a) low risk, (b) medium risk or (c) high risk in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[44256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments completed by her Department in relation to requests for case-specific assistance have been the subject of consultation with Ministers in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

**Kit Malthouse:**

A central record is not kept of the details of Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) assessments completed, or the consideration of requests for capacity building or case-specific assistance.

However, the overall number of OSJA assessments completed each year has been recorded for inclusion in the totals published in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report since 2017-18.

The Home Office completed 319 OSJA assessments in 2017-18, 681 in 2018-19, 311 in 2019-20, and 255 in 2020-21.

## ■ Passports: Dual Nationality

**Paul Blomfield:**

[\[41846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on how dual UK and EU citizens travelling on EU member states' passports to the UK should prove their UK citizenship.

**Kevin Foster:**

British citizens, including those with dual citizenship, have a right of abode in the UK and do not require leave to enter.

Where the passenger presents a non-British passport and claims to be British, but does not hold any evidence of their citizenship, the officer will conduct all relevant checks to satisfy themselves the passenger is British

Dual nationals, including those who are EU citizens, who are eligible to use e-gates, will be able to enter via the e-gates without being routinely examined by an immigration officer.

We recommend all dual nationals, including EU citizens, travel on their British passport or with evidence of their British citizenship to minimise any potential delay at the border or when commencing their journey

## ■ Passports: Educational Visits

**Layla Moran:**

[\[37570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of European ID cards not being accepted for entry into the UK on the number of school groups that will visit the UK as a result of children who are (a) refugees and (b) asylum seekers not having passports.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government's plans to phase out the use of most EU, other EEA and Swiss national identity cards as a valid travel document for entry to the UK from 1 October 2021 will have no impact on refugee and asylum seeker children seeking to visit the UK as part of a school group as they do not hold such documents.

The Government has decided to end the List of Travellers scheme (which allows a non-EEA pupil legally resident in an EU Member State to visit or transit another EU Member State without a passport and/or visa-free as part of an organised school group) on 1 October.

This means all pupils based in the EU, EEA and Switzerland, no matter their nationality, will need a passport or other travel document issued under the refugee conventions - and visa if required - to visit the UK on an organised school trip with effect from the same date.

The change brings their treatment in line with asylum seeking and refugee children who reside in other parts of the world.

## ■ **Passports: EU Nationals**

**Dr Rupa Huq:**

[\[41075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that collective passports can be taken up by other countries that are signatories to the 1961 Council of Europe treaty.

**Kevin Foster:**

The UK is a signatory to the 1961 Council of Europe treaty which provides for collective passports for young people. Continued acceptance of these passports from those who have ratified the treaty is current practice. The UK has not left the Council of Europe.

Decisions whether to issue collective passports under the treaty, or not, are a matter for the individual signatory countries. Several countries have declined to continue accepting UK-issued Collective Passports this year, including Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden.

It is for each nation to decide what documents they require for travel, just as the UK can determine our own requirements now we have left the EU.

## ■ **Rape: Criminal Investigation**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[38221\]](#)

To ask the Home Department, with reference to page 53 of the 2020-21 annual Victims Commissioner Report published on 21 July 2021, how she plans to ensure that rape victims are protected from excessive intrusion into their privacy during the investigation process.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[38222\]](#)

To ask the Home Department, with reference to page 53 of the 2020-21 annual Victims Commissioner Report published on 21 July 2021, how she plans to create confidence and trust in the Criminal Justice System for rape victims who are considering reporting an offence.

**Kit Malthouse:**

In the recently published end-to-end rape review the Government set out its position that victims of rape should feel confident that only data that is relevant to their investigation will be taken from their digital devices.

We will enable this by providing strong protections for victims' most sensitive personal information in law, enabled by the appropriate technology.

The information extraction clauses under Chapter 3 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill will ensure that only information that is necessary and proportionate for an investigation is asked for from a victim.

The Code of Practice that will accompany the PCSC Bill provides detailed guidance on when and how these powers should be used. The code makes clear that device users have the right to refuse, and it also contains specific guidance on the use of the powers with victims who may be vulnerable due to the trauma they may have experienced and who may need more support.

However, legislation is only part of the solution. Whilst there are some promising new technologies, existing data extraction technology does not always provide the ability to limit appropriately what is being taken from a digital device.

To directly tackle this challenge, we will be bringing the Criminal Justice System and industry together through a joint Ministerial led technology summit to develop rapid, innovative, technological solutions. With digital evidence increasing in volume and prevalence, it is vital that we harness technology to find solutions to challenges in capacity and in our capability to effectively extract, analyse and review only relevant data from digital devices in a way which is fast and not intrusive for the victim,

Using the Summit to identify innovative solutions, we will work with the policing sector to trial technologies through via Operation Soteria to identify where innovations can be scaled up at pace to make a difference for victims. The Summit will also build valuable, sustainable partnerships to ensure we continue to innovate, at pace, as threats and challenges evolve.

## ■ Refugees: Afghanistan

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[41342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will provide specific funding to local authorities to take in refugees under (a) the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy programme and (b) the Government's announcement on taking in 20,000 refugees from Afghanistan over the next five years.

**Victoria Atkins:**

The Government has worked at pace to develop and launch a new and bespoke resettlement scheme, announced on 18 August, which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable people in its first year, rising to up to 20,000 over the coming years – 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 offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK.

Work is underway across government departments, and with charities and local authorities, to ensure people are properly supported so they can rebuild their lives.

Further detail on the support we provide to those we bring to the UK through both schemes, including levels of funding, will be made available in due course.

**Alan Brown:**

**[41978]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to allow Afghan refugees in the UK who have naturalised to be eligible to sponsor relatives under the refugee family reunion rules.

**Chris Philp:**

The refugee family reunion rules allow a partner and children under 18 of those granted protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. This route is available until the sponsor chooses to become a British citizen.

A person who wishes to settle in the UK as the spouse, partner, child dependant, parent or adult dependent relative of a British citizen or settled person must apply for leave to enter or remain under Appendix FM to the Immigration Rules and meet the relevant evidential requirements as set out in Appendix FM-SE to the Immigration Rules.

## ■ Repatriation

**Stuart C McDonald:**

**[40942]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 149254, how many and what proportion of the UK Government's return and readmission agreements have provisions for receipt by states of third country nationals, including those considered inadmissible under the UK's asylum procedure.

**Chris Philp:**

We have returns and readmissions agreements with many countries across the world. These agreements provide a formal operational process for effecting returns and readmissions. Though the nature of these agreements varies, several of these agreements have provisions for returning and readmitting third country nationals.

Treaties that have been signed and ratified are in the public domain and the provisions of these are accessible to all. However, some agreements are not published so as to preserve good international relations or for operational reasons.

Whether an agreement contains provisions for third country nationals will depend on the particular agreement.

## ■ Security Guards: Coronavirus

**Patrick Grady:**

**[40960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with representatives of the security sector on the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on the (a) recruitment levels and (b) deployment of licensed security guards.

**Patrick Grady:**

**[40961]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of licensed security guards to enable the (a) hospitality, (b) nightlife and (c) events sectors to reopen safely after the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kit Malthouse:**

As required by the Private Security Industry Act 2001, the Security Industry Authority (SIA) regulates the private security industry and issues licences for certain roles in the sector.

Both the Home Office and the SIA recognise the impact the pandemic has had on licence-holders and the private security industry, particularly in the hospitality sector and night-time economy.

The SIA confirms that the number of active SIA Door Supervisor licence-holders is currently higher than it has ever been. As of 2 August 2021, there were 286,571 Door Supervisor licence-holders compared with 270,307 at the end of the 2019/20 financial year.

The number of Door Supervisor applications received by the SIA in the FY 2020/21 was also higher than previous years, standing at 118,458, compared with 114,340 in 2019/2020. -----This trend has continued so far this financial year, with 45,056 applications received in the period April-July 2021 compared with 33,074 in the same period last year.

Given these encouraging numbers following the changes to training in April 2021, and the work that the SIA has done with training providers' awarding bodies to ensure that training can be delivered through a mixture of self-study, virtual classrooms, and face-to-face training in Covid-19 secure environments, the SIA is confident that there is, and will continue to be, a strong pool of licence holders that security companies and buyers of security can draw on.

The SIA has engaged with the UK Door Security Association, the Night Time Industries Association, and the sector to consider concerns and keep capacity issues regarding active licences under review.

## ■ Undocumented Migrants: Amnesties

**Zarah Sultana:**

**[41322]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to take steps to grant urgent amnesty to undocumented migrants residing in the UK.

**Chris Philp:**

The Government remains committed to an immigration policy which welcomes and celebrates people to the UK through safe and legal routes but deters illegal immigration, partially from safe countries like France



The Immigration Rules already provide routes for undocumented migrants, who have not broken the law except for remaining here without lawful immigration status, to obtain permission to stay.

These Rules help to ensure public confidence in the immigration system. Whilst the Rules are kept under continuous review, there are no current plans to introduce an amnesty for undocumented migrants in the UK.

## ■ **Undocumented Migrants: Medical Examinations**

**Stuart C McDonald:**

**[44370]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to introduce dental x-rays to help to determine the age of undocumented migrants; and if she will make a statement.

**Chris Philp:**

Assessing someone's age is an extremely challenging task and it is only right we explore how the current system can be improved by harnessing scientific evidence alongside existing methods. We will be guided by the research and evidence on which scientific methods to use.

The UK is one of the only countries in Europe not to use scientific age assessment methods to help determine a person's age when they arrive into the country. Various scientific methods are used to assess age in, among others, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

We should not underestimate the significant safeguarding risks there are if an adult were to successfully pass themselves off as a child and be placed in young people's accommodation or schools. It also reduces the resources available to help genuine asylum-seeking children.

We have already laid marker clauses in the Nationality and Borders Bill on the use of scientific methods of age assessment will shortly bring forward amendments with the full clauses at the committee stage in October

## ■ **Visas: Ahmadiyya**

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[38434]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of number of UK Spouse Visas (a) issued and (b) rejected using a marriage certificate issued by Nazart Islah-o-Irshad Rishta Nata of Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyy in Rabwah, the managing body of Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan, in each of the last five years.

**Kevin Foster:**

Home Office Migration Statistics do not capture the number of UK Spouse Visas (a) issued and (b) rejected using a marriage certificate issued by Nazart Islah-o-Irshad Rishta Nata of Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyy in Rabwah, the managing body of Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan, in each of the last five years.

To capture numbers would require a manual trawl of data and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Visas: Children**

**Emma Hardy:** [41178]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has plans to review the cost of a visa application for children.

**Kevin Foster:**

Fees are set taking account of the charging powers provided by Section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014, which include the ability to set fees based on: the cost of processing the application, the benefits and entitlements provided by a successful application and the wider cost of the migration and borders system. Full details of which can be reviewed via the following link -

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/22/section/68>

The Home Office keeps fees for immigration and nationality applications under review and ensures they are within the parameters agreed with HM Treasury and Parliament.

■ **Visas: Turkey**

**Layla Moran:** [38407]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the impact on communities of the new retrospective changes to Turkish business visas.

**Layla Moran:** [38408]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of people who will be affected by the retrospective changes to Turkish business visas.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Immigration Rules and guidance for Turkish business person visas remain unchanged for all applications submitted by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020.

The global points-based immigration system introduced from 1 January 2021 prioritises what a person has to offer the UK, rather than their nationality. It provides Turkish nationals the same opportunities to live and work in the UK as nationals of any other country, including those seeking to establish themselves in business in the UK.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Countryside Rangers****Steve Reed:**[\[44357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the number of Countryside Rangers employed by local authorities in each of the last ten years.

**Luke Hall:**

The Department does not hold the information requested.

**■ Homelessness: Veterans****Dan Jarvis:**[\[44353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the level of funding provided to housing providers for homeless veterans.

**Eddie Hughes:**

Our veterans play a vital role in keeping our country safe and we are committed to ensuring that they are provided with all the support they need to successfully adjust back into civilian life.

The Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) is the government's £433 million programme to provide 6,000 move-on homes, available as long-term assets, and accompanying support services to those who are rough sleeping or who have a history of sleeping rough.

On 29 October 2020, the government allocated more than £150 million for move-on accommodation for rough sleepers through the first year of the programme, as well as investing in high-quality support over the next three years. On 18 March 2021, we made available the remaining portion of the £433 million funding announced last year.

This funding is available over the remainder of the programme to deliver over 2,700 additional move-on homes and support services for rough sleepers, including veterans, as part of the government's ambitious target of delivering 6,000 homes by the end of this Parliament.

**■ Land: Burial****Fiona Bruce:**[\[38248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure local authorities make sufficient land available for burials to take place locally.

**Luke Hall:**

Decisions on local burial space are for local authorities as they are best placed to understand what is required for their local area. Government would not consider

intervening at scale unless evidence suggested burial space became a national issue. In the event of a specific request for intervention from a local authority the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government would work with the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for burial law, to support the local authority as appropriate.

## ■ Local Government Finance: Luton

**Bim Afolami:**

[41163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) financial and (b) other support has been provided to Luton Borough Council since March 2020.

**Luke Hall:**

In this year's Settlement, the Government made available an increase in Core Spending Power in England from £49 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22, a 4.6% increase in cash terms. This recognises the resources councils need to meet their pressures and maintain current service levels.

This saw Luton Borough Councils Core Spending Power increase from £154.7 million in 20/21 to £161.78 million in 21/22, a 4.5% increase.

The Government also allocated more than £12 billion directly to councils since the start of the pandemic, with more than £6 billion of this un-ringfenced, recognising that councils are best placed to deal with local issues.

Luton Borough Council received £19.4 million in additional Covid funding in 20/21 and saw this figure increase to £26.3 million in 21/22.

We have recently published figures for emergency funding for local government in 2020-21 and additional support in 2021-22 online and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-emergency-funding-for-local-government>.

To further support Luton Borough Council, the Secretary of State agreed to provide additional financial support, on an exceptional basis. This support takes the form of a flexibility to use capital resources to fund the revenue budget, equating to additional support of up to £35 million in 2020/21.

The Secretary of State is also minded to give permission for the flexibility to be applied to a total not exceeding £14 million in 2021/22, subject to the outcome of an external assurance review.

## ■ Local Government: Reorganisation

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

[38157]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the number of people who voted for (a) Stronger Somerset and (b) One Somerset in the consultation on proposals for locally-led reorganisation of local government in

Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset; and if he will publish a breakdown of the number of people who voted in that consultation for proposals for reorganisation in (i) Cumbria and (ii) Yorkshire.

**Luke Hall:**

The summary document that we published on 22 July 2021, available [here](#), sets out the number of people who responded to the consultation, broken down into categories of respondent, and how each category responded to the different questions, specifying the percentage that responded in each way.

## ■ **Members: Correspondence**

**Rosie Cooper:**

**[38183]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he intends to respond to the letter from the hon. member for West Lancashire, dated 30 April 2021, regarding a constituent's concerns about West Lancashire Borough Council and the Local Government Act, reference ZA55945.

**Luke Hall:**

A response to this letter was sent on 26 July.

## ■ **Parking**

**Steve Reed:**

**[44356]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the number of local authority operated car parks that have been in operation in each year since 2010.

**Luke Hall:**

The Department does not collect this information. Whilst the Department is responsible for off street parking policy, the operation and management of local authority car parks is ultimately a responsibility of local authorities. This responsibility includes annual reporting that covers the financial, statistical and other data (including any parking or civil parking enforcement targets) set out in [Annex A](#) of the Government's guidance for local authorities on enforcing parking restrictions.

The Government believes that, in principle, all data held and managed by local authorities should be made available to local people unless there are specific sensitivities to doing so (for example, protecting vulnerable people).

## ■ **Travellers: Local Plans**

**Navendu Mishra:**

**[44458]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities have included provision for sites for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in their local plan.

**Christopher Pincher:**

*[Holding answer 10 September 2021]:* This Department does not keep a record on how many local authorities have included provision for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in their local plan. This information is held by each individual local authority

The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites asks local planning authorities to assess the need for gypsy and traveller sites in their area, and then plan to meet that need, in the same way that they plan for all forms of housing.

Plans are robustly tested at examination by an independently appointed Inspector before they can be adopted. The examination of the plan will consider whether adequate site provision has been made for gypsies and travellers based on assessed needs.

**■ UK Community Renewal Fund****Alan Brown:**[\[40996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many bids were received for funding from the Community Renewal Fund from (a) Scotland, (b) Wales, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) England.

**Alan Brown:**[\[40997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the total value is of bids submitted to the Community Renewal Fund from (a) Scotland, (b) Wales, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) England.

**Alan Brown:**[\[40998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when successful applicants to the Community Renewal Fund will be notified.

**Luke Hall:**

Applications were submitted to UK Government for assessment by lead authorities in Great Britain, and by local applicants in Northern Ireland. We expect to support a range of projects by theme and size, but applicants were encouraged to maximise impact and deliverability through larger projects (£500,000+) where possible. Successful UK Community Renewal Fund bids will be for 2021/22 only and should be scaled accordingly.

There has been significant interest in the Community Renewal Fund across the four investment priorities and bids are being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes will be announced in due course and bidders informed. We will provide further guidance on Community Renewal Fund as soon as possible, to enable bidders to plan for delivery once decisions have been announced.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Arms Trade: Trade Fairs

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[44287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which countries and territories UK Defence and Security Exports has invited to attend the Defence and Security Equipment International exhibition in London on 14 to 17 September 2021.

**Graham Stuart:**

The following countries have received official invitations to the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) 2021 from the Department for International Trade UK Defence and Security Exports Team:

Angola

Australia

Austria

Bahrain

Bangladesh

Belgium

Botswana

Brazil

Brunei

Bulgaria

Canada

Chile

Colombia

Czech Republic

Denmark

Egypt

Estonia

Finland

France

Germany

Greece

Hungary

India

Indonesia



Iraq  
Italy  
Japan  
Kenya  
Kuwait  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Malaysia  
Mexico  
Morocco  
Mozambique  
NATO  
Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Nigeria  
Norway  
Oman  
Peru  
Philippines  
Poland  
Portugal  
Qatar  
Romania  
Saudi Arabia  
Singapore  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
South Africa  
South Korea  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland

Taiwan  
Thailand  
Turkey  
Ukraine  
USA  
Vietnam

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[44288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what support the Government is providing to the Defence and Security Equipment International exhibition being held in London from 14 to 17 September 2021; and if she will make a statement.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Government provides a range of support to Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), including the provision of military assets and engagement by Government Ministers. The Department for International Trade's (DIT) UK Defence and Security Exports Team invites a number of international delegates on behalf of Her Majesty's Government including overseas ministers, senior Government officials and military staff. All invitations to overseas delegations follow a stringent process of scrutiny and approval involving both DIT and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[44289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which Government Ministers will visit the Defence and Security Equipment International exhibition being in London between 14 and 17 September 2021.

**Graham Stuart:**

It is expected that Ministers from the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Trade will attend Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) 2021. Last minute diary changes may supersede any arrangements made. Details of the Ministers who attended will be available after 17 September 2021.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Asylum: Afghanistan

**Mr David Lammy:**

[\[44172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of asylum cases from applicants from Afghanistan (a) in progress and (b) awaiting trial in the First-Tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum).

**Chris Philp:**

The information that would allow this question to be answered accurately is not held centrally. HMCTS is working to clear the outstanding caseload caused by the

pandemic and will ensure that there is capacity to manage any additional appeals that may flow from the state of affairs in Afghanistan.

## ■ Coroners

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[37444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what departmental oversight is in place to monitor the performance of coroners.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[37445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of coroners' activities within the legal system.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[37446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of medical coroners.

### **Alex Chalk:**

Coroners are independent judicial office holders. A system of appraisal for assistant coroners which was launched by the previous Chief Coroner in April 2019 is now well-established and a system of appraisal for area and senior coroners is now being developed by the current Chief Coroner following a recently completed pilot scheme.

Coroners carry out their role in line with their statutory powers and duties set out in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and the Rules and Regulations which underpin the Act. The Chief Coroner provides leadership, guidance and support to coroners to assist them in their role and Justice Ministers meet the Chief Coroner on a regular basis. On 27 July the Justice Committee published the report of its inquiry into the coroner service. The Government has responded to the Committee's report and the Committee is expected to publish the response on its website in due course.

Since July 2013 when the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 came into force, to be eligible for appointment as a senior, area or assistant coroner, a person has to have a legal qualification. Coroners in post at that time who only had a medical qualification could, however, continue in that role but they would not be eligible for another coroner appointment. Individuals who are both legally and medically qualified remain eligible for appointment.

## ■ Courts: Closures

**Mr David Lammy:** [\[44176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, which courts that have been closed since 2010 have yet to be sold; and what the cost to the Government has been of each of those court premises since they were closed.

**Chris Philp:**

The table below provides a list of former court buildings which are closed and unsold. Three of these buildings are currently being used as Nightingale courts as a temporary measure as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

COURT	NOTES	HOLDING COSTS SINCE CLOSURE
Chichester Magistrates' Court and Combined Court	Operating as a temporary Nightingale court since 6 April 2021.	£556,242
Chorley Magistrates Court		£275,984
Exeter Magistrates Court		£91,784
Fleetwood Magistrates Court	Operating as a temporary Nightingale court since 24 August 2020.	£123,041
Harlow Magistrates Court		£153,362
Hartlepool Magistrates Court	We expect these costs to reduce by c.£200,000 due to a service charge rebate.	£476,193
Maidenhead Magistrates Court		£391,241
Scunthorpe Magistrates and County Court		£432,597
Telford County Court	Operating as a temporary Nightingale court since 17 July 2020.	£252,115

Holding costs include utilities, rates, maintenance and security, and with the exception of the Nightingale courts, are from the closure of the court until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021. For the Nightingale courts, holding costs are calculated until their date of temporary reopening.

We assessed all unsold former court buildings as potential Nightingale courts, but due to condition issues and operational limitations, only the three buildings noted were suitable.

The decision to close any court is not taken lightly. It only happens following full public consultation and only when effective access to justice can be maintained. Courts that have closed were either underused, dilapidated or too close to another court.

## ■ Courts: Coronavirus

**Philip Davies:**

**[38195]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the consequences are for a (a) witness, (b) defendant, (c) complainant, (d) juror, (e) judicial office holder, (f) court employee and (g) visiting member of the public who does not wear a face mask in accordance with the mandatory covid-19 face covering policy in place from 19 July 2021.

**Chris Philp:**

The relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions across respective parts of Great Britain this summer has allowed courts and tribunals to operate more flexibly, and so increasingly efficiently. But notwithstanding the success of the Government's vaccine rollout, some safety measures must continue to remain in place.

There has never been a legal requirement to wear face coverings in a court or tribunal building. Regulations on the wearing of face coverings in place before 19 July in England, imposing criminal sanctions backed by appropriate enforcement powers, applied only in prescribed sectors like retail and transport. However, Public Health guidance has for some time made clear the benefits associated with face coverings, which other sectors have been encouraged to follow. Face coverings can help to minimise exposure to the virus, and therefore reduce the risk of transmission. Accordingly, and alongside a range of other measures embedded to manage Covid risks, in July 2020 HM Courts and Tribunals Service introduced a policy asking that face coverings be worn (unless exempt) across its estate, for the reasons set out in its [Organisational Risk Assessment](#).

Given the lack of any prescribed legal requirement to wear face coverings in court and tribunal buildings, the compliance and enforcement options open to HMCTS before the 19th July are essentially the same as those after 19<sup>th</sup> July. In determining its policy, HMCTS has considered a range of factors, including the clear balance to be struck between ensuring reasonable compliance of the policy on face coverings, and not damaging the efficacy of proceedings before the court (for example, allowing those who are legally compelled to attend court to avoid that appearance by refusing to wear a covering).

Insofar as members of staff are concerned, HMCTS employees will continue to be required to wear face coverings in court and tribunal buildings, unless exemptions apply. All HMCTS employees have an obligation to follow HR policies. The consequences of non-compliance would be dealt with, as appropriate, under usual personnel management procedures. Members of the judiciary are similarly asked to wear face coverings in certain areas of court and tribunal buildings (not including, for example, whilst presiding in hearing rooms). Any compliance issues would be a matter for the leadership judiciary, not HMCTS.

For court and tribunal users including parties, witnesses, jurors, and members of the public, Court and Tribunal Security Officers (CTSOs) will ask that face coverings are worn upon entry into the buildings and will provide free face coverings if needed. Signage around the buildings make clear where face coverings are to be worn.

Ultimately, under the Courts Act 2003 section 53, CTSOs have the power to exclude or remove any person from a building for the purposes of securing the safety of those in the building – which includes for these purposes considering non-compliance with reasonable requests in respect of face coverings introduced and maintained in line with prevailing Public Health guidance. In assessing the need for (and proportionality of) deploying those exclusion/removal powers, CTSOs (acting in consultation with HMCTS managers and the judiciary as necessary) will have regard to the balance between furthering public safety, and ensuring the ongoing efficacy of proceedings, as described above.

## ■ Employment Tribunals Service: Discrimination and Flexible Working

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[\[37552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of employment tribunals related to (a) flexible working and (b) gender discrimination in each year from 2014 to 2021.

**Chris Philp:**

The latest information on how many and what proportion of Employment Tribunals complaints related to flexible working is provided in the table below. Data in respect of gender discrimination is not held but is included in the 'Sex Discrimination' jurisdiction, this relates to the protected characteristic 'Sex', 'Marriage and Civil Partnership' and 'Gender reassignment'.

	FINANCIAL YEAR	TYPE OF JURISDICTION COMPLAINT			
Total Jurisdictional complaints	Sex discrimination <sup>2</sup>	Flexible Working <sup>3</sup>			
2013/14	198,586	13,722	7%	232	0.1 %
2014/15	129,966	4,471	3%	103	0.1 %
2015/16	178,079	5,380	3%	94	0.1 %
2016/17	143,946	8,841	6%	103	0.1 %
2017/18	172,731	5,522	3%	112	0.1 %
2018/19	198,715	9,427	5%	174	0.1

	FINANCIAL YEAR			TYPE OF JURISDICTION COMPLAINT
				%
2019/20	175,389	6,260	4%	1760.1 %
2020/21	186,788	5,172	3%	1330.1 %

The data has been taken from case management system and may differ slightly to that of the published stats as this data was run on a different date.

### Notes

- 1) A claim may be brought under more than one jurisdiction or subsequently amended or clarified in the course of proceedings but will be counted only once.
- 2) The 'Sex Discrimination' jurisdiction includes complaints made in relation to the protected characteristics 'Sex', 'Marriage and Civil Partnership' and 'Gender reassignment'.
- 3) Suffer a detriment and/or dismissal for claiming under the flexible working regulations or be subject to a breach of procedure.

The number of claims received by the Employment Tribunals is published by the Ministry of Justice (quarterly) and can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2020).

## ■ Family Courts

**Philip Davies:**

**[40789]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance is in place for family courts to ensure meaningful contact for children and parents.

**Chris Philp:**

Section 1 of the Children Act 1989 sets out that the welfare of the child is the court's paramount consideration. This fundamental principle applies when the court is making a decision with respect to contact arrangements for children.

Section 1 also provides that in such cases, the court is to presume that involvement of each parent in the life of the child will further the child's welfare, unless there is evidence to suggest that involvement of a parent would put the child at risk of suffering harm. Involvement can be direct or indirect. The Government is currently



undertaking a review of the courts' application of this presumption and its exception, and its impact on children.

Judges are also guided in their decision-making by the 'Welfare Checklist' set out in the Children Act 1989. This guidance is not exhaustive but requires the court to consider factors such as the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child (considered in light of the age and understanding of the child), the range of powers available to the court, risk of harm, and the likely effect on the child of any change in their circumstances.

'Contact' can mean direct or indirect contact between a child and a parent. The court will determine appropriate contact arrangements in the light of all of these provisions and in all the circumstances of the individual case.

Family Procedure Rules (FPR) and Practice Directions (PDs) also provide supplementary rules and direction to courts in their determination of contact questions between children and parents.

**Gareth Davies:**

**[41391]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government has plans to consult on the use of expert reports in the family court system.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Government does not have any plans to consult on the use of expert reports in the family court system. There is already legislation in this area which emphasises the independence of experts and the key role of judicial discretion in determining when expert evidence should be put before the court.

Section 13 of the Children and Families Act 2014 makes provision in relation to the control of expert evidence, and of assessments, in children's proceedings. This legislation is underpinned by detailed rules of court practice and procedure set out in the Family Procedure Rules 2010 and supporting Practice Directions. The Rules and Practice Directions are developed by the Family Procedure Rule Committee (FPRC), working in close conjunction with Government officials. The Committee is made up of judges and legal and lay practitioners all of whom are experts in family law.

The President of the Family Division, Sir Andrew McFarlane, established a working group to identify the scale of the problem of medical expert witness shortages in the family courts, the causes and possible solutions; the final report was published in October 2020. Recently, the Family Justice Council (FJC), a sub-group of the Family Justice Board (FJB), coordinated an event aimed at medical and allied health professions, family lawyers and members of the judiciary to encourage experts to offer their services in family justice system.

The Government, the President of the Family Division, the FJC and the FPRC therefore continue to consider issues in this area as they arise.

## ■ Immigration: Appeals

**Kate Osamor:** [\[41082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases were waiting to be listed by the Immigration Appeal Tribunal on 31 August 2021.

**Kate Osamor:** [\[41083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time was between the submission of an appeal and a case being listed for a hearing in the Immigration Appeal Tribunal on 31 August 2021.

**Chris Philp:**

As at 31 March 2021 the number of cases without a hearing date:

a) In the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) was 17,334.

b) In the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) was 1,086.

These figures include appeals that have been adjourned following an initial hearing.

The average waiting time from receipt to the first substantive hearing in the period April 2020 to March 2021

a) in the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) was 40 weeks

b) in the Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) was 17 weeks.

Figures are provided for the most recent time period covered by official statistics.

Since the outset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic steps have been taken to increase listing with the introduction of remote hearings and the return of face-to-face hearings in covid-secure tribunal buildings.

## ■ Independent Monitoring Boards: Inspections

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[40796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Norwich, published in July 2021, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the number of visits allocated to IMBs.

**Alex Chalk:**

We highly value the IMB's commitment to ensuring the safety and care of prisoners and those held in detention, and understand the importance of monitoring visits to fulfil this duty. The IMB at HMP/YOI Norwich have a complex role to fulfil, and as a result, successfully bid for an additional number of board visits over and above their original allocation from the IMB National Management Board. The current allocation will still allow for an IMB presence at HMP/YOI Norwich several times a week, allowing the IMB to carry out vital monitoring in person which can be complemented with information gathered remotely, in line with practices taken forward over the last year.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[40797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Norwich, published in July 2021, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of visits allocated to IMBs over the last five years.

**Alex Chalk:**

Independent Monitoring Boards have always been encouraged to submit a monthly return of visits completed and also to state the total number of visits in annual reports. Analysis of visits across all IMBs in 2019 established there were inconsistencies and the Management Board directed a working group of members to explore a fair, transparent allocation of visits to establishments. This group met throughout 2019 and the Management Board accepted their proposals for an allocation of visits that reflected size, type of prison and complexity. This was shared with boards who had the opportunity to submit business cases if they felt it was insufficient. Norwich's request was partially upheld with extra visits being allocated. The total number of visits allocated across all boards has increased since 2019 when this work was completed ensuring fairness and transparency.

## ■ Judiciary

**Fleur Anderson:**

[\[38427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps he has taken to uphold and protect the independence of the judiciary.

**Chris Philp:**

The Lord Chancellor is committed to his statutory duty under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 to defend judicial independence. An independent judiciary is one of the cornerstones of the United Kingdom's constitution and vital to the proper functioning of our democracy based on the rule of law. Judges must be free to make their judicial decisions without being subject to interference by Parliament or the executive.

The Lord Chancellor is consistently clear on the importance of an independent judiciary both privately and publicly including when answering questions about the importance of parliamentarians respecting judicial independence to the House of Commons Justice Committee in December 2020; and in his recent speeches at Queen Mary University in March 2021 and at the Lord Mayor's Dinner for HM Judges in July 2021.

## ■ Legal Profession: Legal Costs

**Mr Nicholas Brown:**

[\[43393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the equity of the ability of law firms based in London to recover from the losing side higher rates of legal costs than firms based in the North East of England.

**Mr Nicholas Brown:**

**[43394]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the equity of law firms being able to recover different rates of legal costs against the other side based on their location rather than the complexity of the case.

**Chris Philp:**

I refer the Rt Hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne East to the previously answered PQs 8554 and 10168 in June this year on legal costs recovery: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8554>; <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-04/10168>.

On 30 July 2021, the Civil Justice Council (CJC) published its final report proposing revisions to the Guideline Hourly Rates (GHR): <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Civil-Justice-Council-final-report-on-guideline-hourly-rates.pdf>. These revisions have been accepted by the Master of the Rolls: <https://www.judiciary.uk/publications/master-of-the-rolls-accepts-recommended-changes-to-guideline-hourly-rates/>. The process for recovering costs is the same throughout England and Wales.

## ■ Lugano Convention

**Gareth Thomas:**

**[38131]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps the Government plans to take as a result of the European Commission's rejection of the UK's application to join the Lugano Convention; and if he will make a statement.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Government is aware of the European Commission's notification that it is not in a position to give its consent to UK accession to the Lugano Convention 2007. However, we understand that member states have not yet been given an opportunity to vote formally on that position.

We are committed to ensuring cross-border legal disputes can be resolved smoothly, in the interests of families, consumers and businesses both in the UK and across Europe. We maintain that we meet the criteria for accession – it is open to countries outside the EU; all non-EU parties to Lugano support UK membership.

## ■ Marriage: Humanism

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

**[37364]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what (a) assessments of the potential merits his Department has made and (b) steps his Department has taken to legally recognise humanist marriages since the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013; and if he will present that information in the form of a timeline.

**Dame Angela Eagle:**

[\[37365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish a list of all (a) substantial and (b) minor reforms his Department has made to marriage law since the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for marriage law in England and Wales. Marriage law in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a devolved matter.

The Government has received a number of representations about making separate provision for humanist marriage in England and Wales. As we have made clear, a Law Commission report due later this year is expected to present options for wholesale reform to the law governing marriage ceremonies, which the Government will consider carefully. Options being explored by the Law Commission include offering couples greater flexibility to form their own ceremonies, allowing the ceremony to take place in a much broader range of locations and to provide a framework that could allow non-religious belief organisations (such as Humanists) and/or independent celebrants to conduct legally binding weddings.

The Government will decide on provision for non-religious belief marriage on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendations.

Since 2013, the main reform related to marriage has been the recent amendment to the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005. This follows a commitment made in 2019 to accelerate plans to allow civil weddings and civil partnerships to be held outside through secondary legislation. The change took effect on 1 July and will give more options to couples and the sector in terms of how civil weddings and civil partnerships are celebrated by allowing all aspects of the ceremony to take place outdoors, within the boundary of the land of which the built premises form part. The proposed location for the outdoor proceedings must be assessed to be seemly and dignified.

This change will provide greater flexibility especially during the pandemic when there are important public health considerations to take into account. This is not radical reform and ultimately it does not change the current law's focus on premises.

These are time-limited amendments to the regulations which came into force on 1 July 2021 and will expire at the end of 5th April 2022. A consultation will be undertaken in the Autumn of 2021 to consider the practical impacts of this policy in detail and to enable a later amending Statutory Instrument which is not time limited. A full equality impact assessment will be undertaken on completion of the consultation and will be published in due course.

Amending the 2005 Regulations will benefit many thousands of couples who seek a civil marriage or civil partnership formation on approved premises. The power to make provision in regulations for approved premises is set out in statute and extends only to civil marriage and civil partnership formation.

## ■ Ministry of Justice: Food

**Philip Dunne:**

**[40780]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to encourage procurement of British produce within meals available for (a) staff of his Department and (b) people in his Department's care since 1 January 2021.

**Chris Philp:**

**a)** Meals for staff across the Department are primarily provided by each individual member of staff though some meals are available across the following environments, namely

- Prisons – the procurement of produce for such meals is similar to the provision of meals for people in his Department's care;
- Other (Courts, Approved Premises, Training Centres, Offices, etc) – several of our locations have a limited catering facility where food is available from the third party operator.

Our third party provided service contracts include a requirement that all procured produce needs to comply with the Government Buying Standards, for example

- All food served must be produced in a way that meets UK legislative standards for food production, or equivalent standards.
  - Catering contractors must ensure that food is verifiable as meeting these standards by either checking that farm inspection systems meet UK standards of inspection or their equivalent, or if not, that they are subject to an independent assurance system.
  - At least 10% of the total monetary value of primary commodity (that is, raw ingredient) food and drink procured shall be inspected and certified to:
    - i) publicly available Integrated Production (IP) or Integrated Farm Management (IFM) standards that require the systematic and integrated management, at farm level, of: natural habitats and biodiversity, prevention and control of pollution, energy, water and waste, management of soils, landscape and watercourses and contain within their scope requirements that are consistent with the definition of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) contained in European Council Directive 2009/128/EC
- or

- ii) publicly available organic standards compliant with European Council Regulation 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products.

Please note the 10% is of the total monetary value and can be made up of any combination of commodities allowing the procurer flexibility to find the best solutions for their circumstances.

**b)** Since 1 January 2021 we have embedded the Prison Bread contract that was openly competed in late 2020 culminating in award and go live in November 2020. This national contract ensures that all public sector prisons in England & Wales, as

well as privately managed prisons that opt to make use of this contract, have access to fresh bread that is 100% British.

Product provenance remains a key criterion when our contracted supplier of Prison Food adjusts their supply chain. Within this contract we continue to monitor spend on UK products every month and this has seen our spend increase on UK produce since the contract was awarded in 2017. At the time of contract award we were the first central government department to fully integrate the tools made available in support of the report by Dr Peter Bonfield titled - A Plan for Public Procurement. Elements of these tools have been deployed in 2021 on our Prison Retail Contract procurement exercise so that UK legislative standards for animal welfare, the environment and supply chain assurance all form part of the tender evaluation.

We continue to engage closely with other central government colleagues in order to refine policies and procedures that are aimed at supporting UK food producers. Earlier this week we engaged with the Future Food Framework/Buying Better Food\*, led by Crown Commercial Service and supported by the South West Food Hub, on their delivery of a new dynamic approach to public sector food procurement which has locality at its heart.

## ■ Ministry of Justice: Protective Clothing

**Philip Davies:**

**[38211]**

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

**Chris Philp:**

Throughout the pandemic, the Civil Service / Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has followed, and continues to follow, the latest government guidance in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace, including any variations between the four nations of the UK.

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

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

The MoJ fully supports individuals who choose to wear a face covering in the workplace.



**■ Ministry of Justice: Temporary Employment****Mr David Lammy:** [\[44186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much his Department has spent with each company providing agency staff to his Department in each year since 2010.

**Chris Philp:**

The information requested for is provided in the attached Tables.

**Attachments:**

1. Table 1 [2021-09-10 PQ 44186 Table 1 Spend By Agency.xlsx]
2. Table 2 [2021-09-10 PQ 44186 Table 2 Spend By Agency.xlsx]

**■ Powers of Attorney: Repayments****Daisy Cooper:** [\[41298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 34612 on Powers of Attorney: Repayments, what estimate he has made of the number of applicants eligible for a refund of power of attorney fees overcharged by the Office of the Public Guardian who have not yet received such a refund.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Department estimates that around 675,000 applicants out of our original estimate of one million, have not applied for a refund.

At its launch in 2018 the scheme was announced on GOV.UK and promoted through media and stakeholder channels. Solicitors, Will writers, financial organisations and third sector organisations were encouraged to use their channels to promote the refund scheme and were provided with information in advance of the launch to ensure that they were well prepared to signpost the relevant sources on GOV.UK, or more actively support their clients if they wished to. Although the online application form previously hosted on Gov.UK is no longer in use, information regarding where to apply remains on GOV.UK. OPG are still accepting written requests for a refund from customers. Further reminders about the scheme were sent out last year.

As of June 2021, £16,463,993 worth of refunds have been made and 324,937 claims have been received.

**■ Prison Sentences: Mental Illness****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[40750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of people who received a custodial sentence aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who were receiving treatment for a mental health condition prior to sentencing since 2018.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Justice takes mental health provision very seriously and is committed to working closely with health partners to ensure that offenders are able to access the treatment and support required for their mental health needs. NHS England and

NHSE Improvement (NHSE/I) are responsible for commissioning healthcare services, including mental health treatment, in all prisons in England.

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

**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. In addition, some of the information requested in the above questions (regarding: education in alternative provision; exclusion from school; and treatment for a mental health condition) is not centrally held in the court proceedings database or Prison-NOMIS (Prison National Offender Management Information System) database and can only be provided by manually searching court and prison records (where medical and personal records were self-declared) at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Prison Sentences: School Exclusions

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

**[40749]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of people with a custodial sentence aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who had previously been educated in (i) alternative provision, (ii) received a fixed term exclusion from school and (iii) were permanently excluded from school before receiving a custodial sentence in each year since 2015.

**Alex Chalk:**

The government recognises the importance of education and schooling in preventing young people being drawn into criminality and offending.

The cross-government Beating Crime Plan published in July announced a targeted investment of over £45 million in specialist support in both mainstream schools and Alternative Provision (AP) in serious violence hotspots, to support young people at risk of involvement in violence to re-engage in education.

The AP Specialist Taskforces programme aims to provide intensive multi-agency support to vulnerable children and young people in AP most at risk of disengaging with education, being criminally exploited by gangs, and becoming involved in county lines and knife crime.

In addition, the government is also introducing 'SAFE Taskforces' in serious violence hotspots which will be led by local mainstream schools, to protect young people from serious violence who are truant and at risk of being permanently excluded. SAFE Taskforces will work directly with the police, social care, Violence Reduction Units and voluntary sector organisations to identify those at risk to re-engage them in education.

The full information requested by the question could only be obtained at disproportionate cost as it would require a manual review of cases.

In 2019, the Ministry of Justice published a one-off piece of analysis in collaboration with the Department for Education on understanding the educational background of offenders which will cover some of the issues raised in the question. The analysis compares male and female offenders' educational attainment, pupil characteristics (such as Special Educational Needs), persistent absence and exclusion.

See pages 45-51 in the Women and the Criminal Justice System 2019 report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/women-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2019>

#### ■ Prison Sentences: Special Educational Needs

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[40747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of boys with a custodial sentence aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who have been assessed for (i) autism, (ii) special educational needs, (iii) an Education, Health and Care Plan whilst in custody in England since 2018.

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**

[40748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of girls with a custodial sentence aged (a) 13 to 18 and (b) 19 to 21 who have been assessed for (i) autism, (ii) special educational needs and (iii) an Education, Health and Care Plan whilst in custody in England since 2018.

**Alex Chalk:**

his information could only be collated at disproportionate cost.

The Ministry of Justice has published a one-off piece of analysis in collaboration with the Department for Education on understanding the educational background of offenders. The analysis compares the genders in a matched young offender cohort, broken down by sentencing disposal, educational attainment, pupil characteristics (such as Special Educational Needs), persistent absence and exclusion. See pages 45-51 in the Women and the Criminal Justice System 2019 report here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/women-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2019>

## ■ Prisoners

**Philip Davies:**

**[40788]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2021 to Question 33876 on Prisoners, if he will provide numbers rather than percentages for the figures set out in that answer.

**Alex Chalk:**

Information on the criminogenic[1] and responsivity[2] needs of offenders is captured through the Offender Assessment System (OASys). The most recent figures were published on 18 July 2019 in the 'Identified needs of offenders in custody and the community from OASys,'[3] based on a snapshot as at 30 June 2018.

It is important to note that at the time of this analysis (2018), annual male prison population was more than 20 times greater than the female prison population (79,450 vs 3,847). Raw numbers may therefore provide a misleading picture of the difference in prevalence of criminogenic and responsivity needs among men and women in prison. Therefore, rates and percentages are preferred methods for adjusting for the difference in population size.

**Identified adult needs by sex and need, from OASys Assessments taken from 30 June 2018**

	WOMEN	MEN
Relationship need in custody	1,766	36,451
Accommodation need in custody	1,404	29,562
Drugs need in custody	1,102	23,744
Alcohol need in custody	491	8,982
Employability need in custody	1,449	32,743

[1] There are eight criminogenic needs measured in OASys: which are linked to offending behaviour (Accommodation, Employability, Relationships, Lifestyle, Drugs Misuse, Alcohol Misuse, Thinking & Behaviour and Attitudes).

[2] Learning Disability and Challenge, Mental Health Problem, and an Indicator of low maturity (The indicator for low level of maturity is for the aid of practitioners, and the clinical rule is that this is flagged for males aged 18-25 only).

[3] The total number of needs refer to the number of flags for both the criminogenic needs and responsivity needs under that sentence type/length. A person can have multiple needs identified.

**■ Prisoners' Release: Housing**

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[40801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison leavers in each region will be helped into private rented sector accommodation through the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders scheme; and how the outcomes of the scheme will be measured.

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[40802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how funding provided to local authorities through the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders scheme will be used to support prison leavers into private rented sector accommodation.

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[40803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to expand the 84-night temporary accommodation scheme for prison leavers to the seven probation regions not included in the funding.

**Alex Chalk:**

As part of our commitment to eliminate rough sleeping, we are working across Government, with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Welsh Government and other Government Departments, to address the barriers offenders face in securing suitable accommodation.

On 28 July 2021, the Government announced allocations for the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders scheme, with £13 million allocated to 87 schemes across 145 local authorities to support prison leavers to access private rented sector accommodation. Local authority-led schemes vary and include a mixture of funding deposits, insurance or landlord incentives to help people into their own home, as well as landlord liaison and ongoing tenancy support. The scheme has been developed, together with the Community Accommodation Service, to provide a pathway for prison leavers from prison into their own private rented sector accommodation. No public targets have been set, but local authorities will be providing monitoring information to the MHCLG alongside wider monitoring information on homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Community Accommodation Service is providing transitional housing for up to 84 nights for offenders under probation supervision in five Probation Service regions who are at risk of homelessness on release from prison. We are monitoring the impact of the scheme closely to inform decisions in relation to its development.

**■ Prisoners: Drugs**

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[40799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Norwich, published in July 2021, what steps his Department is taking, in conjunction with Project ADDER where prisons are located in Project ADDER areas, to improve prison drug rehabilitation services in those prisons.

**Alex Chalk:**

Project ADDER is a Home Office, Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England initiative which will test an intensive whole system approach in the community to tackling drug use in locations hardest hit by drug misuse, alongside national activity to disrupt the middle market supply of drugs.

NHS England and NHSE Improvement (NHSE/I) are responsible for commissioning healthcare services, including integrated substance misuse services in all prisons in England. Currently, NHSE/I are recruiting additional roles, such as outreach nurses in prisons for those who commit a 'trigger crime'.

Through Project ADDER, work is underway to improve outcomes for offenders with substance misuse needs in prisons located within Project ADDER areas, which differs from prison to prison. In all Project ADDER areas, including Norwich, local authority commissioners are mobilising plans for additional community-based drug treatment staff. These staff will be working closely with the existing prison-based treatment services to ensure continuity of care processes are maintained and strengthened. This includes investing in 'through the gate' and prison in-reach posts. Some ADDER areas are also introducing specific family, employment and housing support to those involved in the criminal justice system including those in prison and prison leavers

In addition, as part of the Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Accelerator prison project, we are testing new ways of improving substance misuse support in five prisons. Whilst not located directly in Project ADDER areas, some of these prisons will release into these areas, with links being made at a local level.

Outside of prison, the Ministry of Justice continues to work closely with key departments across government, as well as health and justice partners and third sector organisations, to maximise the £80m spend the Government has invested on drug treatment services in 2021/22, to enhance treatment and recovery services for prison leavers and those on community sentences.

**■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation****Ms Lyn Brown:****[40798]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Norwich, published in July 2021, what estimate he has made of the number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection who do not have access to any offending behaviour programmes or accredited interventions to allow progression towards release.

**Alex Chalk:**

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continue to work with prisoners serving indeterminate sentences of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) to offer them opportunities to reduce their identified risks. The latest published national figures at the end of June 2021 show the unreleased IPP population standing at 1,722, which is

a reduction from 1,969 at the end of June 2020 and the 6,000 at its highest in 2012. This demonstrates that opportunities remain available to IPP prisoners wishing to progress despite the pandemic. To continue the progress already made, HMPPS undertakes case file reviews with IPPs which now includes those prisoners who have an index offence that is not classed as violence or a sexual offence, those with a robbery index offence, as well as those that are post-tariff expiry of five years or more. These reviews reinvigorate cases that are not progressing and identify appropriate individual progression pathways.

Every effort is made to locate an IPP prisoner to a prison best placed to meet their sentence planning needs as promptly as is reasonably possible. However, transfers during a parole review would usually only take place if it is to access a progression opportunity and does not disrupt an impending parole hearing date. Prisons will otherwise seek to progress IPP prisoners at the earliest opportunity following the conclusion of a parole review.

Access to offending behaviour programmes is not relevant for all IPPs. Where it is, IPPs are prioritised for a place and the number of IPPs waiting for an OBP place is kept under review. Where required, all those serving an IPP can access interventions necessary to support their progression.

## ■ Probate

**Julian Sturdy:**

**[40870]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle delays with probate applications and (b) improve communication between probate offices and applicants.

**Chris Philp:**

The most recently published information regarding combined waiting times for a grant of probate, on paper and digital cases, covers January 2021 to March 2021 and is published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly (Table 25):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by the probate service during the Covid 19 pandemic, and as a result of HMCTS increasing resources to meet demand, the average length of time taken for a grant of probate following receipt of the documents required has been maintained at between four to six weeks.

HMCTS continues to listen to user feedback and to invest in the improvement of the online Probate system to make it more accessible and easier for applicants to understand.

Improvements have also been made to communication routes. As of March 2020, all calls are now answered by the Courts & Tribunals Service Centres, which are equipped with modern technology to monitor performance levels and make improvements to the service being offered.



Contact channels and operating hours have also been extended to meet user needs meaning the service can now be contacted via:

- webchat available at <https://www.gov.uk/applying-for-probate/apply-for-probate> (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 2pm).
- telephone on 0300 303 0648 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm and Saturday 8am to 2pm).
- email at [contactprobate@justice.gov.uk](mailto:contactprobate@justice.gov.uk)

For professional users, real time information about the progress of digital cases can now be obtained via the online Probate service without the need to contact HMCTS.

## ■ Probate: Standards

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[41219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department has taken to tackle delays in the probate system.

**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[41220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of the role of Exela Technologies in the efficiency of the probate process.

**Chris Philp:**

The most recently published information regarding combined waiting times for a grant of probate, on paper and digital cases, covers January 2021 to March 2021 and is published on gov.uk via Family Court Statistics Quarterly (Table 25):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-court-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021>

Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by the probate service during the Covid 19 pandemic, and as a result of HMCTS increasing resources to meet demand, the average length of time taken for a grant of probate following receipt of the documents required has been maintained at between four to six weeks.

HMCTS continues to invest in the improvement of the online Probate system which was developed as part of the wider HMCTS Reform Programme to further streamline ways of working resulting in a system that is simpler and easy to understand for applicants; is accessible; and more efficient and robust to run.

The introduction of digital systems and bulk scanning has proved vital during the Covid 19 pandemic, allowing HMCTS staff to continue to process incoming applications and allowing Court users to access Probate services remotely.

The Exela contract is managed in line with MOJ Policy for strategic contracts and is therefore subject to the highest levels of governance to ensure service delivery. More than half a million documents were scanned without error in 2020 and on the rare occasions where errors occur, the majority of documents are re-scanned within 24 hours of a request being made.

## ■ Prosecutions: Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[40826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of compatibility of the Single Justice Procedure in respect of prosecutions under covid-19 related legislation and the right to fair trial principles.

**Chris Philp:**

A case dealt with under the Single Justice Procedure is dealt with in the same way as any other case, except that a single magistrate can deal with it (rather than two) and the hearing need not be in public. The magistrate must comply with the same legislative safeguards as all other proceedings, and the Sentencing Council Sentencing Guidelines apply in the same way.

The Single Justice Procedure is a quicker and more straightforward procedure, and there are a number of further safeguards built into the process to ensure a defendant's right to a fair trial is protected. A defendant must agree to this procedure being used and they have the option to opt out of the Single Justice Procedure and have their case heard in open court, at any time before sentencing. A magistrate can also refer a case to open court if they deem it would not be appropriately dealt with using the procedure. Furthermore, if a defendant was unaware of the proceedings, they are entitled to make a statutory declaration which revokes the conviction and recommences the proceedings.

## ■ Remand in Custody

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[40800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Norwich, published in July 2021, what steps he is taking to mitigate the effects of delayed hearings on remand prisoners in reception prisons.

**Alex Chalk:**

Only those who pose the highest risk to the public or are likely to abscond are held on remand. Extensions to normal custody time limits must be approved by independent judges and defendants have the right to apply for bail. At the same time, courts are continuing to prioritise remand hearings and the most urgent cases to protect the public. Our investment in more Nightingale courtrooms and video hearings has already seen outstanding magistrates' cases fall significantly since last summer.

We know this period has been very difficult for prisoners, their families and friends. Maintaining safety and the mental health and wellbeing of prisoners continues to be a priority, as it has been throughout the pandemic. We have put in place tailored guidance on supporting specific groups of people in prison whose wellbeing may be more impacted by the Covid-19 measures – including older prisoners, those with learning disabilities and/or autism, transgender prisoners, and groups known to be at increased risk of self-harm. We have produced a range of products to support governors in devising and implementing local safety and welfare plans: these include

resources for staff assisting prisoners who might be struggling, and tools to promote wellbeing.

We also know that the early days in custody can be a particularly risky period, and we have previously published an Early Days toolkit to enable governors to evaluate what their prisons are doing to mitigate risk during this period. As part of our recovery plans, we are prioritising prisoner wellbeing and keep under review the support that can be provided, including for people on remand. We have issued comprehensive safety guidance to establishments to support their recovery.

We recognise how important it has been for prisoners to maintain family ties through the pandemic. People on remand are entitled to additional visits from friends and family and, while visits have been restricted, we introduced secure video calling in all prisons. 60% of the prison estate has access to in-cell telephony and, for those that do not, we introduced over 1,500 secure mobile handsets and provided every prisoner £5 PIN credit per week. Social visits have now resumed but with restrictions and testing in place to facilitate physical contact.

## ■ Young Offenders

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

**[40805]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to HM Inspectorate of Probation report, Traumatic Brain Injury, published on 13 August 2021, what steps he is taking to (a) implement training on the effects of traumatic brain injury for staff working in youth justice, probation and prison services, (b) promote awareness and understanding of the effects of traumatic brain injury and (c) implement further linkworker schemes for offenders with histories of traumatic brain injury.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Justice is committed to meeting and protecting the needs of all vulnerable offenders, including those with neurodivergent needs such as impairments due to traumatic brain injuries (ABIs).

In the Sentencing White Paper 'A Smarter Approach to Sentencing', the Department committed to a National Staff Training Toolkit on Neurodiversity. This will aim to improve our staff's awareness and understanding of neurodivergent needs, including traumatic brain injury, and enable them to feel confident to make referrals to health services if needed. In the National Disability Strategy, published in July this year, we committed to roll out the toolkit by 2022.

It is a priority within the new Probation Disability Plan to provide staff with the relevant skills to support people on probation, including developing a model for learning about the effects of Acquired Brain Injury.

More widely, the Lord Chancellor commissioned the justice inspectorates to carry out a Call for Evidence (CfE) on neurodiversity in the criminal justice system (CJS) which was published on 15 July 2021. The CfE report provides an overview of the current national provision to support adult offenders with neurodivergent conditions in the CJS, including traumatic brain injury.

The CfE report provides six recommendations as to how current provision might be improved. MoJ officials are drafting an action plan in response to the recommendations of the report which is due to be published in October. This will include considering increased opportunities for neurodivergent individuals, including through link worker schemes.

## ■ Young Offenders: Rehabilitation

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[40804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact of the length of prison education classes on their efficacy for (a) young people and (b) people with learning disabilities.

**Alex Chalk:**

In the youth estate, the delivery and access to education is a statutory requirement for all children in custody and a key element of the youth custody provision. Work is currently under way to commission a new education service for under-18 Young Offenders Institutions (YOIs) in England to improve the learning outcomes for children in YOIs by supporting the integration of custody, education and health services, and developing a better understanding of education outcomes for children in custody. There has been no specific assessment as to the length of education classes in relation to their efficacy, with the aims of a new education service to provide a needs-based education offer of high quality.

In the adult estate for prisoners aged 18+, the length of sessions is determined at a local level by each prison and is not mandated centrally. As such, no assessment has been made of the impact of the length of education classes. However, we are working to improve neurodiversity assessments and the provision of good quality specialist support. This includes trialling a new specialist neurodiversity support manager role who will be responsible for leading on a strategy to support neurodiverse prisoners to achieve and progress. We will also be seeking to build learning from the 'independent review of neurodiversity in the criminal justice system' evidence into future plans for improving education.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### ■ Leader of the House: Protective Clothing

**Philip Davies:**

[\[38212\]](#)

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

**Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:**

The Office of the Leader of the House of Commons is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. member to the response to be given by the Cabinet Office (38198).

**PRIME MINISTER****■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[41158\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he raised any concerns regarding the plans for NATO withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan during his discussions with the President of the United States.

**Boris Johnson:**

My recent discussions with President Biden have covered a number of issues including: the rapid and safe evacuation of our nationals and those who previously worked with our governments, the importance of not losing the gains made in Afghanistan over the last twenty years, protecting ourselves against any emerging threat from terrorism, and continuing to support the people of Afghanistan. We also agreed on the need for the global community to come together to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. I outlined UK plans to play a leading role in pursuing these objectives, including through regional partners, the UN and the G7.

**TRANSPORT****■ Community Transport: Local Government****Steve Reed:**[\[44355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the availability of local authority-provided community transport schemes.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government believes that community transport operators provide vital services which both encourage growth and reduce isolation by linking people with their communities.

Local transport authorities (LTAs) understand their communities best and so it is for them to determine their local community's needs. They have a power to fund services which they deem to be socially necessary.

To benefit from the transformational funding in England's National Bus Strategy, LTAs are expected to continue working together with operators towards agreeing ambitious Bus Services Improvement Plans (BSIPs) by 31 October. The Government expects LTAs to work closely and in a spirit of co-operation with community transport bodies to ensure that BSIPs meet the needs of local communities.

£43 million of Bus Service Operators Grant is committed to LTAs annually so that they can subsidise socially necessary bus services, which includes community transport.

## ■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

**Catherine West:** [\[42054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to local authorities to fund and increase the availability of electric charging points.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department is committed to ensuring consumers have reliable access to a comprehensive vehicle charging network so that they can easily and conveniently charge their vehicles wherever they live and travel. The Government has committed £1.3 billion to accelerate the roll out of charging infrastructure which will see the installation of more on-street charge points near homes.

Local authorities will have a key role in planning and enabling the delivery of charge points to meet the needs of their local communities and areas, with particular focus on supporting those who do not have access to off-street parking. The On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) is available to all UK local authorities to provide public chargepoints for their residents without access to private parking. By 01 August 2021, the Scheme had supported 49 different local authorities to install over 1,400 chargepoints, while a further 88 local authorities have also been awarded grant funding to provide more than 3,200 on-street public chargepoints with their installations to be completed. This year, £20 million is available under the Scheme. Free support and expert advice for applications to the Scheme is provided on the Department's behalf by Energy Saving Trust.

Government also committed at Spending Review a further £90 million to fund local EV charging infrastructure, to support the roll out of larger, on-street charging schemes and rapid hubs in England.

## ■ Pedestrians: Roads

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[38317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what (a) steps he is taking to and (b) discussions he has had with local authorities on increasing the number of pedestrianised streets.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[38319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce traffic in urban centres.

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[38320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support disabled people to access urban centres.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department is providing unprecedented amounts of funding to local authorities to enable them to deliver better and more accessible walking and cycling infrastructure, including pedestrianised streets. In Summer 2020 the Prime Minister launched

ambitious plans to boost walking and cycling in England, with a vision for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030. This commitment is backed with £2 billion of investment over five years and was followed by the publication of Gear Change: One Year On, which increased funding to £338 million this financial year and celebrated what has been achieved in the past twelve months.

Pedestrianisation of streets is already an option available to local authorities to consider in managing their streets. Decisions on whether to do so are matters for them.

The Secretary of State has made it clear that authorities should take into account the needs of all road users in designing their schemes and should consult properly on them.

### ■ **Railway Stations: Access**

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[41794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to allocate additional funding to improve disability access at (a) Moulsecoomb, (b) Preston Park Road and (c) other railway stations that did not receive funding under the last round of Access for All programme funding; and if he will make a statement.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

We are in the process of setting the funding envelopes for the next rail control period (2024-29). When further funding is available, any station without an accessible route into the station and to all platforms will be a potential candidate.

Further measures to improve rail accessibility were included in the recent rail reform White Paper.

## TREASURY

### ■ **Child Trust Fund: Wales**

**Gerald Jones:**

[\[44410\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many mature Child Trust Funds have been placed into protective accounts because the account holder could not be contacted, in Wales, for the latest time period available.

**John Glen:**

The number of protected Child Trust Funds in Wales can only be made available at a disproportionate cost.

### ■ **Children: Day Care**

**Jessica Morden:**

[\[40784\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps are taken to ensure that the local authority is provided with real time information regarding change in circumstances so that



any housing benefit entitlements can be adjusted in cases where a claimant notifies HMRC of a change in their childcare costs affecting tax credits.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC do not share information with local authorities about changes to their customers' tax credits awards. Guidance on GOV.UK explains what steps Housing Benefit customers should take to contact their council/DWP to report changes which may affect their entitlement to Housing Benefit: [www.gov.uk/housing-benefit/report-a-change-of-circumstances](https://www.gov.uk/housing-benefit/report-a-change-of-circumstances).

■ **Civil Servants: Location**

**Alicia Kearns:** [37617]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what criteria his Department is using to assess possible relocations under the Places for Growth programme.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

At Budget 2021, the Chancellor announced that the Government's new economic campus will be located in Darlington. There will be at least 750 roles based there, across teams from HM Treasury, the Department for International Trade, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Office for National Statistics. The Places for Growth relocation strategy prioritises skills and local talent over cost reductions, providing better value for money for the taxpayer. This is just one part of the Government's Places for Growth programme which will relocate Civil Servants and public bodies, functions and departmental activities outside of London and the South East.

■ **Credit Unions**

**Steve Reed:** [44358]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the levels of local authority support for credit unions.

**John Glen:**

The Government recognises the vital role of credit unions in the financial wellbeing of their communities, providing an ethical home for their members' savings and affordable loans to those who may otherwise have to resort to high-cost lenders.

Local authorities have significant freedoms to choose what investments they make and how to finance them. The Government funded £617m for the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund, as well as further funding for the Small Business Grant Fund. Both funds closed in August 2020. The Government has also provided £2 billion of discretionary grant funding for local authorities in England through the Additional Restrictions Grant, to support businesses in the local area, which credit unions may have benefited from. Local authorities determine how much funding to provide to businesses and exactly which businesses to target.

Separately, the Government has provided significant support for credit unions. In total, £96 million of dormant asset funding has been released to Fair4All Finance, the independent body set up by Government to distribute dormant assets funding to support financial inclusion. Fair4All Finance has so far provided over £15m in financial support to the community finance sector, including credit unions, as part of their COVID-19 response. This includes £12m of equity investments in community finance providers and £3.6m in COVID-19 grants, including funding from their £5m COVID resilience fund. It also includes an expanded Affordable Credit Scale-up Programme, which aims to improve the access and availability of affordable credit, and which I expect to be of benefit to credit unions.

### ■ **Drinking Water: Parks**

**Nick Fletcher:**

[\[41388\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has plans to reduce the VAT charged on the installation of water fountains for public use in public parks.

**Jesse Norman:**

The installation of water fountains for public use in public parks is subject to the standard rate of VAT.

VAT raised around £130 billion in 2019/20, and helps to fund key spending priorities. Any reduction in tax paid is a reduction in the money available to support important public services, including the NHS and policing. In addition, this request should be viewed in the context of over £50 billion of requests for relief from VAT received since the EU referendum. Such costs would have to be balanced by increased taxes elsewhere, or reductions in Government spending.

There are no current plans to change the VAT treatment of the installation of water fountains for public use in public parks. However, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

### ■ **Holiday Accommodation and Second Homes**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[37472\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to amend the fiscal framework for (a) second and (b) holiday homes.

**Jesse Norman:**

All tax policy remains under review, but it would not be appropriate to speculate on the likelihood of future changes outside of a fiscal event.

Many second homeowners and owners of holiday lets will be liable for the Higher Rates for Additional Dwellings SDLT surcharge when they purchase additional property. This is part of the Government's commitment to support first time buyers.

Owners of holiday lets may consider whether they can benefit from small business rates relief. In March, the Government announced that it will legislate to change the criteria determining whether a holiday let is valued for business rates to account for

the number of days it was let. MHCLG will shortly publish further details on this change in their response to their consultation on the business rates treatment of self-catering accommodation.

## ■ Infrastructure: Environmental Protection

**Virginia Crosbie:**

[\[44485\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to introduce a Regulated Asset Based Model for large-scale green infrastructure projects.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

In July 2019, the Government published a consultation on the viability of a Regulated Asset Base (RAB) model for financing new nuclear projects. The responses to this consultation were published in December 2020 alongside the Energy White Paper. At this time, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy indicated that the RAB could help secure private investment in nuclear projects and cost consumers less in the long run. The Government is in negotiations with EDF in relation to the Sizewell C project and is continuing to explore a range of financing options, including the RAB model and the potential role of government finance during construction, provided there is clear value for money for consumers and taxpayers.

Furthermore, in August 2020, the Government published a response to the June 2019 consultation on Carbon Capture and Storage (CCUS) business models. CCUS is expected to decarbonise heavy industrial process and gas-fired power stations by capturing carbon dioxide emissions and transporting it via a network of pipelines to underwater stores. Government concluded that a RAB model would likely be the most effective way to provide value for money for taxpayers whilst also providing investors with confidence over the reliability and sustainability of a revenue stream. Government published further updates to the model in February, May and August 2021.

## ■ Multinational Companies: Tax Evasion

**Damien Moore:**

[\[41207\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to tackle tax evasion by multinational companies.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC's role is to collect the right amount of tax due under UK law. HMRC work to make sure large businesses, like all other taxpayers, pay all the taxes due under UK law.

In line with HMRC's published criminal investigation policy, while HMRC reserve the right to undertake criminal investigations, it is their policy to deal with fraud by use of cost-effective civil fraud investigations. This applies to multinational enterprises (MNEs) as it does to other types of organisations and taxpayers.

In order to address tax risks which particularly relate to MNEs, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) have over 450 employees working on international issues including

transfer pricing, diverted profits tax, controlled foreign companies and cross border debt. This continuing programme of investigations into potential tax avoidance, and sometimes tax evasion, by MNEs has helped secure around £6 billion from MNEs between April 2015 when Diverted Profits Tax was introduced and March 2020.

## ■ Non-domestic Rates: Tax Allowances

**Rachel Reeves:**

[\[44317\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much of the £1.5 billion Business Rates Relief fund, announced on 25 March 2021, has been distributed to businesses; and what the timescale is by which all of the fund will have been distributed to businesses.

**Jesse Norman:**

Funding for businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that have not otherwise been eligible for existing reliefs will be available once the legislation relating to material change in circumstance provisions has passed and Local Authorities (LAs) have established their own local relief schemes. The Government will support LAs to do this as quickly as possible, including through new burdens funding.

Formal guidance will follow in due course, setting out the specific considerations that LAs should have regard for when providing relief. Relief will be for LAs to award on a discretionary basis.

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

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[44171\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 15 July 2021 to Question 31282 on Non-domestic Rating (Telecommunications Infrastructure Relief) (England) Regulations, how many of the 71 certificates were issued to BT.

**Jesse Norman:**

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

## ■ Offshore Industry: Taxation

**Catherine West:**

[\[43606\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to review all tax policy to ensure it does not incentivise oil and gas extraction.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Our domestic oil and gas industry produces the equivalent of around half of the UK's primary energy needs and will continue to play an important role as we transition to a net zero economy. The industry has paid around £375bn in production taxes to date and supports around 147,000 jobs directly and in their supply chains, employing

people in locations right across the country and supporting many more local jobs in sectors that rely on a vibrant oil and gas industry.

The Government places additional taxes on the extraction of oil and gas to ensure a fair return for the nation while also supporting the industry to address genuine costs through targeted tax reliefs, such as those to encourage the safe removal of infrastructure at the end of a field's life.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, and any changes are made in the round at fiscal events.

## ■ Post Office Card Account

**Marion Fellows:** [\[44378\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the continued payment of (a) tax credits and (b) child benefit to recipients when the Post Office card account ends.

**Marion Fellows:** [\[44379\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the continued payment of (a) tax credits and (b) child benefit to recipients who (i) may experience difficulties in opening and (ii) are unable to open a bank account.

**Marion Fellows:** [\[44380\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to operate a Payment Exception Service for (a) tax credits and (b) child benefit payments when the Post Office Card Account ends.

**Jesse Norman:**

In order to ensure the continued payment of Child Benefit and Tax Credit, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have been contacting all of their affected Post Office Card Account customers to tell them of the forthcoming change and facilitate moving their payments into other bank accounts.

For any customers unable to open a bank account, HMRC operate a specific Payment Exception Service.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Complaints

**Drew Hendry:** [\[38302\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of HMRC's timeframes for handling complaints.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC report regularly their complaints handling performance and publish data every month on GOV.UK. The average complaints handling time of 17 days for new complaints received was also reported in HMRC's 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts.

HMRC's complaints regime also includes the option of escalation to an independent Adjudicator. The latest Adjudicator's annual report can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-adjudicators-office-annual-report-2021>. The Adjudicator's remit includes the timeframe for responding to complaints.

HMRC remain committed to learning from the real-time feedback provided, together with other sources of customer insight as they continue working towards improving all elements of their service.

## ■ Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

**Drew Hendry:**

**[38303]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of average HMRC telephony response times; and what recent assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) effectiveness of HMRC telephony response times.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC publish their telephony response times on a monthly and quarterly basis: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-monthly-performance-reports> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates>.

Like other service organisations, HMRC have been affected by the pandemic and are doing all they can to offer the best possible service to their customers, whether supporting them with their taxes or delivering the Government's support schemes.

Wait times on some helplines are longer than HMRC would like, and they are sorry about the inconvenience this causes to customers at busy times. HMRC's digital services are available 24 hours a day, and customer satisfaction for them is very high; HMRC encourage customers to go online where they can and have increased webchat availability as a channel across most areas.

## ■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Driving Instruction

**Kirsten Oswald:**

**[40953]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will consider the operational challenges facing self-employed driving instructors, who are unable to operate their businesses at full capacity as a result of the need to mitigate against the transmission of covid-19, when deciding which types of businesses are eligible for funding in the future under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government recognises that many self-employed people have encountered immense challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) provides substantial support to self-employed people who meet the eligibility criteria, including self-employed driving instructors.

Together, the five SEISS grants combined will have provided an individual with support of up to £36,570, making it one of the most generous self-employment income support schemes in the world.

At the Spring Budget 2021, the Chancellor announced a generous extension of economic support for businesses and individuals, with many schemes including the SEISS continuing well beyond Step 4 of the Roadmap in order to accommodate even a cautious view about the time it might have taken to exit restrictions. The Government has confirmed that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the SEISS will be closing at the end of September 2021 and the Government will maintain its focus on helping people back into work.

## ■ Stamp Duties

**Chris Grayling:**

[\[40627\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total revenue from stamp duty has been in each of the last three financial years.

**Jesse Norman:**

HMRC publish provisional monthly statistics tables for “HMRC tax receipts and National Insurance contributions for the UK” which contain columns with the UK figures for Stamp taxes on the 3 categories of “Shares”, “Stamp Duty Land Tax” and “Annual Tax on Enveloped Dwellings”. The provisional nature of these figures can mean that that they can change.

## ■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: Greater London

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[41222\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the allowance for stamp duty tax relief for those living in London, in the context of higher average house prices in that city.

**Jesse Norman:**

The nil rate band (the price threshold at which SDLT becomes payable) is set at £125,000 outside of the SDLT holiday.

In 2017, the Government increased the price at which a residential property becomes liable to SDLT to £300,000 for first-time buyers; this means that over 70% of first-time buyers will pay no SDLT at all. First-time buyers purchasing houses worth between £300,000 and £500,000 save £5,000, outside of the SDLT holiday.

SDLT rates and thresholds apply consistently across England and Northern Ireland. Introducing regional variations in the nil rate band could create distortions in the housing market, be complex to achieve and be confusing for taxpayers.



## ■ Tax Allowances: Companies

**Patrick Grady:**

**[37498]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of restricting tax relief for private equity companies which take over UK-based companies to (a) prevent them from offsetting debt against their corporation tax liability and (b) require them to pay tax on their turnover.

**Jesse Norman:**

Groups of companies which are owned by private equity funds are subject to the same UK tax rules as other companies. The UK has some of the world's most comprehensive rules limiting relief for interest. Tax relief is only available for interest on debts incurred for commercial purposes and on arm's length terms. It is further limited by the Corporate Interest Restriction, introduced from 2017 in line with the OECD-G20 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting project.

Unlike profit taxes, a turnover tax would not take into account businesses' ability to pay, meaning those with low profit margins would be disproportionately burdened. If applied to all businesses in a supply chain, multiple layers of tax could accrue, the cost of which could be passed onto consumers. Rather than applying a general turnover tax, the UK has a value added tax, VAT, which applies to all companies with taxable turnover over the threshold, including companies owned by private equity funds.

## ■ Tax Evasion

**Jim Shannon:**

**[38262]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to (a) tackle and (b) hold people accountable for tax evasion.

**Jesse Norman:**

Since 2010, the Government has introduced over 150 new measures to tackle tax avoidance, evasion and other forms of non-compliance, and has secured and protected over £250 billion in tax revenues that would have otherwise gone unpaid. These efforts have helped to reduce the tax gap to a record low of 4.7% for the year 2018-19.

At Spring Budget 2021, the Government announced a further 14 measures to tackle tax non-compliance, forecast to raise £2.2 billion over the next five years. The Government remains committed to reducing the tax gap and will bring forward further measures in due course.

## ■ Tax Evasion: Landlords

**Charlotte Nichols:**

**[38447]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will give HMRC the resources to discover and tax undeclared private landlords rather than rely on a voluntary scheme of disclosure.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is committed to reducing non-compliance in the tax system among all taxpayers, including landlords, and continues to give HMRC the resources they need to tackle the tax gap.

Since 2013-14, HMRC's Let Property Campaign has prompted approximately 58,000 additional disclosures and raised an estimated £254 million in additional compliance yield for the Exchequer.

HMRC do not rely on voluntary disclosure from landlords and use a range of data and approaches to identify landlords with undeclared rental income. Where landlords do not come forward to declare their rental income, after being prompted, HMRC take further steps including opening formal compliance interventions where necessary.

**■ Taxation: : Self-assessment****Daisy Cooper:**[\[38424\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a lower limit of £1,000 of foreign income before requiring a self-assessment tax return to be completed by those of state pension age and older.

**Jesse Norman:**

Current rules allow those over the State Pension Age with untaxed income under £2,500 a year, including foreign income, to report this income directly to HMRC and pay via a PAYE coding notice rather than having to submit a Self-Assessment return. There are no plans to introduce a specific lower limit for foreign income or to remove the need for individuals with foreign pensions to complete a Self-Assessment return.

**■ Treasury: Listed Buildings****Tim Loughton:**[\[44164\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by his Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

HM Treasury is advised on the management of designated heritage assets in its portfolio by Historic England's Government Historic Estate Unit. Further details can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/advice-for-government-historic-estates/>

HM Treasury does not collect or collate data on the value (property value) or income data for these assets.

## ■ Treasury: Protective Clothing

**Philip Davies:**

[38207]

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

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Throughout the pandemic, the Civil Service / HM Treasury and its agencies and related bodies has followed, and continues to follow, the latest government guidance in relation to managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace, including any variations between the four nations of the UK.

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

It is for individual employers to determine which mitigations are appropriate to adopt as they review their workplace risk assessments in light of the updated guidance. Face coverings, which are no longer required by law, are one possible mitigation employers could adopt if the situation warranted it.

HM Treasury fully supports individuals who choose to wear a face covering in the workplace.

## ■ VAT

**Rachael Maskell:**

[37517]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a permanent reduction in VAT to encourage environmentally sustainable consumer choices.

**Rachael Maskell:**

[37518]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a permanent reduction in VAT for (a) the travel industry and (b) other sectors affected by the ongoing covid-19 pandemic.

**Zarah Sultana:**

[41325]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a permanent lower level of VAT for all food and beverages sold in pubs to support the pubs and brewery sector.

**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.

VAT raised around £130 billion in 2019/20 and helps to fund key spending priorities. Any reduction in tax paid is a reduction in the money available to support important public services, including the NHS and policing. While all taxes are kept under review, any decision to grant new permanent VAT reliefs would have to be balanced by a reduction in public spending, increased borrowing or increased taxation elsewhere.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:**

[\[38151\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the steps he plans to take following the publication of the responses to the call for evidence on the consultation on VAT reform in the sharing economy.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is continuing to evaluate the potential VAT challenges created by the growth of the sharing economy and remains committed to continuing engagement with all interested stakeholders.

In accordance with the Government's tax policy making process, it will provide updates on this work in due course and will consult widely on any proposed policy changes.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Age: Discrimination

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[37469\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to tackle age discrimination in the workplace.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) provides protection for those aged 16 and over against direct and indirect age discrimination in employment. The Act makes it unlawful for an employer to directly discriminate against an employee or a job applicant because of their actual or perceived age or the age of someone they are associated with. Differential treatment because of age is permitted if the employer can show that this is proportionate and in pursuit of a legitimate aim. There are also a number of other limited exceptions to the general prohibition.

It is also unlawful for an employer to indirectly discriminate on age grounds, for example by use of a recruitment policy which unjustifiably disadvantages particular age groups; to harass an employee for reasons related to their age and to victimise an employee for bringing or supporting a complaint under the Act.

A person who believes that they have experienced discrimination because of age, or other unlawful treatment, may take their case to an employment tribunal. Before doing so, we advise people to seek advice and if possible try to solve their issue through conciliation.

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[38436]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to tackle ageism in society.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Equality Act prohibits age discrimination in a variety of fields, including employment, the provision of services and the exercise of public functions. Differential treatment based on a person's age is permitted, but only where this can be objectively justified.

Other legislation in recent years has also helped to tackle ageism – for example the abolition of the default retirement age in 2011 – but our approach goes beyond basic legal protections. For example, to support older workers to remain in work, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Government's Business Champion for Older Workers are working with employer organisations – including CIPD, British Chambers of Commerce, ACAS and Local Enterprise Partnerships – to encourage employers to support their older workers, retain them in the workforce and benefit from their skills and experience.

For those who become unemployed, the Government's Plan for Jobs provides new funding to ensure more people, including those aged 50 and over, get tailored Jobcentre Plus support to help them find work and to build the skills they need to get into work. As part of the Jobcentre Plus offer for people aged 50 and over, we are also providing dedicated support through 50 PLUS Champions, to ensure they fully benefit from the Plan for Jobs package and existing Jobcentre Plus support.

## ■ **Employment: Discrimination**

**Marsha De Cordova:**

**[41232]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the impact of legal deadlines for employment discrimination claims on individuals' access to justice.

**Marsha De Cordova:**

**[41233]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the legal deadlines for individuals making employment discrimination claims.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

Individuals who experience discrimination in the workplace can access justice through an Employment Tribunal, under the Equality Act 2010. While the time limit for bringing a claim is three months from the last incident, tribunals have the discretion to provide extensions where they consider it 'just and equitable' to do so.

The Government Equalities Office consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace recently considered the impact of the three month time limit where it applies to Equality Act based cases. In our [July 2021 response](#) to that consultation, we committed to keeping the extension of the 3 month limit under review.

**■ RAF Greenham Common: Demonstrations**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[41268\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans she has to mark the 40th anniversary of the march to Greenham Common.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Equality Hub has no current plans to mark this anniversary.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Department for Work and Pensions: Listed Buildings**

**Tim Loughton:** [\[44160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish the (a) properties classified as heritage assets by her Department, (b) most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) annual income derived from those properties.

**Guy Opperman:**

DWP is advised on the management of designated heritage assets in its portfolio by Historic England's Government Historic Estate Unit. Further details can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/our-planning-services/advice-for-government-historic-estates/>

DWP does not collect or collate data on the value (property value) or income data for these assets .

**■ Discretionary Housing Payments: Young People**

**Jo Gideon:** [\[41353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons why young people have accessed Discretionary Housing Payment.

**Will Quince:**

We have made no specific assessment of the reasons why young people have accessed Discretionary Housing Payments.

Discretionary Housing Payments can be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who require further financial assistance towards housing costs is required.

Local authorities administer the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme as they are best placed to make informed judgements about relative priorities and needs in their area to ensure that the most vulnerable are supported and the funds are targeted effectively.

There are no prescribed resources tests; local authorities simply have to be satisfied that the person concerned is in need of further financial assistance towards housing costs.

There is no limit to the length of time over which a Discretionary Housing Payment award may be made. It may be awarded for a short period to give a claimant time to deal with their financial circumstances or for an indefinite period until their circumstances change. The start and end dates of an award are decided by local authorities on a case-by-case basis.

Since 2011, the government has provided over £1 billion in Discretionary Housing Payments to local authorities to help support vulnerable people affected by welfare reforms.

**■ Industrial Health and Safety****Alison Thewliss:**[\[44375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has had recent discussions with the No Falls Foundation on the production of a no falls charter.

**Alison Thewliss:**[\[44376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has provided (a) financial and (b) other support to the No Falls Foundation to help the uptake of a no falls charter for those operating in working at height sectors.

**Mims Davies:**

To date there has been no discussion between the No Falls Foundation and the Health and Safety Executive about the production of a no falls charter, nor has any financial or other support been provided.

**Alison Thewliss:**[\[44377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of improving the data collected on workplace deaths using the RIDDOR system.



**Mims Davies:**

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) places a legal duty on responsible persons (usually employers in relation to employees) to report certain incidents at work (including work- related fatalities) to the relevant Enforcing Authority (HSE or Local Authority). The regulations apply to all sectors and workplaces in Great Britain.

The Regulations were amended in 2013 as a result of recommendations made by Professor Lofstedt in his 2011 report “ [Reclaiming health and safety for all: An independent review of health and safety legislation](#) ” to simplify reporting requirements.

The Regulations are reviewed every 5 years to ensure that they remain appropriate and fit for purpose. The Regulations were last reviewed in 2018 and no recommendations were made in relation to the reporting of work- related fatalities.

HSE has produced web-based [guidance](#) to support responsible persons in making judgements about what needs to be reported under RIDDOR. This guidance is also reviewed on a regular basis with reporting requirements routinely communicated to duty holders via targeted media activity.

**■ Social Security Benefits: Domestic Abuse****Stella Creasy:****[40902]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the authorisation of regulations defining safe accommodation under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, what her planned timeframe is for delivering an exemption from the spare room subsidy to victims of domestic abuse with sanctuary scheme properties.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 6 September 2021]:* The Domestic Abuse Support (Relevant Accommodation and Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Sanctuary Schemes) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 were laid on 9 September 2021 and the sanctuary scheme exemption from the removal of the spare room subsidy will come in to force on 1 October 2021.

**Charlotte Nichols:****[41346]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help prevent financial abuse from domestic partners in the welfare system when making benefit calculations involving people who are cohabitating.

**Will Quince:**

Universal Credit provides a tailored service that recognises those with complex needs at any point throughout their journey and ensures appropriate support is quickly made available.

Split payments were created to prevent hardship to the claimant and their family, in circumstances where there is vulnerability in the household which leads to financial difficulty. In certain circumstances someone in a joint claim, including individuals

suffering from domestic abuse, can request a split payment and we will support them in putting this arrangement in place. We have made changes to the digital claimant messaging to try to ensure that the main carer receives the Universal Credit payment directly.

We continue to support victims of domestic abuse to claim benefits through a range of measures. These include special provisions for temporary accommodation, easements, rapid advances and signposting to expert third-party support. As it can be difficult for individuals facing domestic abuse to come forward, all Work Coaches undergo mandatory training regarding how to support vulnerable claimants, including recognising the signs of domestic abuse. In July 2019 we also changed Universal Credit claimant messaging to encourage those in joint claims to nominate the bank account of the main carer to receive their Universal Credit payment.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Eligibility

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[41172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to review the tariff income system.

**Will Quince:**

There are no plans to change the tariff income rule which is a long-standing principle of means-tested benefits.

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Fraud

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[43390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what proportion of cases referred through the benefit fraud portal were found to be fraudulent claims in the last 12 months.

**Will Quince:**

*[Holding answer 9 September 2021]:* DWP takes fraud and error very seriously and values the part played by members of the public in reporting potential benefit fraud.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, we estimate that around 6% of allegations received through the GOV.UK on-line reporting tool found evidence of benefit incorrectness that resulted in a range of outcomes, including prosecution, the imposition of an Administrative Penalty, benefit correction and recovery of overpaid monies. This figure is calculated as a proportion of allegations reported via the GOV.UK on-line fraud reporting tool that contained sufficient information for our referral management team to record them on our systems and progress them.

All allegations of fraud are corroborated by DWP in the first instance to decide on the appropriate course of action where there is a concern about entitlement. Where fraud is proven, we are committed to the use of appropriate penalties.

We are increasingly focussed on preventing fraud and error entering the benefit system, with the Chancellor announcing £44m at the Spring Budget to support the expansion of both our Integrated Risk and Intelligence Service and our new

Enhanced Checking Service, with the development of Transaction Risking as a means of identifying high risk claims.

Our work with other Government departments and law enforcement agencies, both nationally and across borders, helps ensure appropriate intelligence and resources are shared, enabling the totality of any criminality to be identified and investigated.

Our Annual Report and Accounts published on 15 July 2021 provides more information on what we are doing to prevent fraud from occurring: [DWP annual report and accounts 2020 to 2021 \(opens in a new tab\)](#)

## ■ Universal Credit

**Peter Aldous:** [\[40868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of changing the universal credit childcare payments system to allow parents looking for work to claim costs upfront.

**Will Quince:**

No assessment has been made. There is currently an on-going Judicial Review on Universal Credit childcare and the payment of upfront costs. An appeal hearing took place in the Court of Appeal in July and a decision is awaited. It is therefore not appropriate to comment directly on this matter at this time. It should be noted there are no changes to the current processes and the legislation remains the same.

Childcare costs should not be a barrier to getting into work – this Government is committed to helping parents into work. Universal Credit pays up to 85% of childcare costs for working parents, compared to 70% in legacy benefits, and childcare costs can be claimed up to a month before starting a job.

In cases where people need to pay for childcare upfront, prior to starting work, Work Coaches may be able to use the Flexible Support Fund for eligible claimants to meet these costs until their first wage is received. Budgeting advances are also available to eligible claimants who require help with upfront costs, for example when altering hours worked or changing childcare providers. Claimants on Universal Credit are encouraged to manage their own finances and budgets to better mirror the world of work and the majority of claimants can, and do, manage their childcare payments effectively.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[41263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the five week wait for new universal credit claimants to receive their first payment.

**Ruth Jones:** [\[41264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the five week wait for new universal credit claimants to receive their first payment on poverty levels in Newport West constituency.

**Will Quince:**

No assessment has been made.

Projecting the impact of an individual policy on poverty levels is complex and inherently speculative.

It is very difficult to isolate the specific impact of one policy and determine its effect on how many people fall below the poverty threshold, which itself changes over time.

Nobody in need has to wait five weeks for their first payment of Universal Credit. New Claims Advances are available urgently if a claimant needs support during their first assessment period and budgeting support is available for anyone who needs extra help. Advances are a claimant's benefit entitlement paid early, allowing claimants in need to access up to 100% of their estimated Universal Credit monthly payment upfront. This means that claimants will receive the same two-year entitlement spread across 25 payments, rather than 24.

**■ Universal Credit: Deductions****Peter Aldous:**[\[40869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of universal credit claimants had deductions made to their monthly payment (a) in March 2020 and (b) in the most recent month for which figures are available, by (i) categories of third party debt deductions, (ii) advance payments and (iii) benefit overpayments and (iv) other types of deductions.

**Will Quince:**

We carefully balance our duty to the taxpayer to recover overpayments, with support for claimants. Safeguards are in place to ensure deductions are manageable. From 12 April 2021, we further reduced the cap on deductions from Universal Credit awards to 25 per cent and lengthened the period from 12 to 24 months, meaning in effect someone can receive 25 payments over 24 months, giving them more flexibility over the payments of their Universal Credit award. This will also allow claimants to retain more of their award, giving additional financial security, and follows a previous change in October 2019 that reduced the cap from 40% to 30%.

Customers can contact the Department if they are experiencing financial hardship to discuss a reduction in their rate of repayment, depending on their financial circumstances, whilst work coaches can also signpost claimants to other financial support.

The information requested is provided in the attached spreadsheet.

**■ Universal Credit: Overpayments****Damien Moore:**[\[41211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit overpayments of an amount exceeding £1,000 have been identified as having arisen as a result of an error by a departmental official in the last 12 months.

**Damien Moore:**

[\[41212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many requests her Department has received for a formal waiver to the recovery of universal credit overpayments of an amount exceeding £1,000, which arose as a result of an error by a departmental official in the last 12 months; and how many of those requests were granted.

**Damien Moore:**

[\[41213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department informs people who have been overpaid universal credit that they can apply for a formal waiver.

**Will Quince:**

From August 2020 to July 2021, a total of \*89,000 Universal Credit Official Error Overpayments in excess of £1,000 were recorded on Debt Manager. There are currently approximately 6 million Universal Credit claimants.

The Department is unable to provide information on how many waiver requests for Universal Credit Official Error overpayments exceeding £1,000 were made (and were successful) in the last 12 months, as to do so would incur disproportionate costs.

When the Department informs claimants of a benefit overpayment (either by letter, or via the journal in Universal Credit), they are advised to contact the Department's Debt Management Team to discuss repayment. During this discussion, if a claimant expresses concern about repayment, Debt Management staff will inform them that they can request that a waiver be considered.

It should be noted that a waiver can only be granted where the recovery of the overpayment is causing substantial medical and/or financial hardship, and where clear evidence of this can be provided.

DWP pays welfare benefits to around 23 million people and is committed to ensuring that the right people are paid the right amount of Universal Credit. The vast majority of benefit expenditure (more than £200bn across all benefits) was paid correctly in the last financial year, with front line staff working hard to prevent overpayments from occurring.

*\*Please note that this data is taken from operational data systems, and is not intended for publication. Therefore, the data itself is not quality assured to the standard of published Official Statistics and National Statistics.*

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ The Insolvency Service Performance Targets 2021-22

**Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully):** [\[HCWS279\]](#)

My Right Honourable friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility (Lord Callanan) has today made the following statement:

I have set performance targets for the Insolvency Service for the financial year 2021-22. The Insolvency Service is the Government agency that delivers public services to those affected by financial distress or failure by providing frameworks to deal with insolvency and the financial misconduct that sometimes accompanies or leads to it.

The Insolvency Service aims to deliver economic confidence through a fair corporate and personal insolvency regime which gives investors and lenders confidence to take the commercial risks necessary to support economic growth. It has a crucial role to play in supporting businesses and individuals in financial difficulty or facing redundancy owing to their employer's insolvency.

This year, the Insolvency Service has reinforced its commitment to putting customer satisfaction and real-life impacts at the heart of its services, and a new approach has been taken to measuring the quality of customer contact.

I have set measures and targets at a level which will drive the Insolvency Service to deliver its essential services effectively for its stakeholders. These measures include:

MEASURE	2021-22 TARGET
Make bankruptcy orders sought by individuals within 2 working days	95% or greater
Determine debt relief order applications within 48 hours	95% or greater
Average time taken to process redundancy payment claims	14 days or less
Issue reports to creditors within fifteen days of interviewing <sup>[1]</sup>	92% or greater
Deliver against the agency apprentice target for 2021-22 as a percentage of new staff	2.3% or more
Pay supplier invoices within 5 working days	80%

MEASURE	2021-22 TARGET
Pay supplier invoices within 30 calendar days	100%
Customer satisfaction score	84% or greater

The Insolvency Service's Annual Plan for 2021-22 is published in full on Gov.uk.

[1] Or a decision that no interview is required

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### ■ Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation: Advisory Board and Future Focus

**Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):** [\[HCWS277\]](#)

The Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) sits at the heart of the government's ambitious data agenda, and will play a critical role in helping the UK government to deliver on the priorities set out in the National Data Strategy. The CDEI is the UK government's expert body on the trustworthy use of data and data-driven technologies, including AI.

Today, we are [announcing](#) changes to the CDEI's role and the make up of its advisory board. Building on the insights of the CDEI's first two years of operation, and having conducted a robust internal review, it is clear that more active support is needed to facilitate responsible innovation on data use across the economy. The CDEI is well placed to play this role, and having listened carefully to the public's views through our consultation on the National Data Strategy, I have decided that this should be the priority for the CDEI's next phase of work. It should be concentrating on current government priorities with the primary role of operationalising government's data and AI policy. The CDEI's purpose is making sure that responsible data-driven innovation in complex areas actually happens, boosting the UK's tech and research competitiveness, and supporting the transformation of the use of data and AI by the public and private sectors.

When working in partnership with organisations, the CDEI will deliver, test and refine trustworthy approaches to data and AI governance, and address barriers to innovation. It will operationalise concepts such as "transparency" and "accountability" in the real world, and build the foundations for public trust in the use of data and AI. In doing so, it will help the UK to capitalise on the societal and economic opportunities posed by data and data-driven technologies, while managing the risks.

The CDEI is already working with partners to pilot tech and data policy use cases in a number of sectors including local government, transport, online safety, recruitment and social care. Given these new objectives and activities, the CDEI's current status as an Expert Committee is adequate and we are not planning for it to be placed on a statutory footing at this time. Similarly, the government will not require the CDEI to report to Parliament in future separately from its parent department, DCMS. The CDEI will be



subject to parliamentary scrutiny in the same way as any other aspect of departmental activity.

To support the delivery of an ambitious new work programme closely aligned with government priorities, we have appointed an [advisory board](#) of leading experts to support the CDEI in its new phase of operations. The open recruitment campaign attracted a stellar group of proven innovators in data use. We are grateful that several outstanding members of the existing board have agreed to continue in their posts as well, including the Deputy Chair, Edwina Dunn. Edwina has agreed to act as interim Chair, while we continue our search for a permanent Chair.

## ■ Data: a new direction

**Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):**

**[[HCWS276](#)]**

Today, I am pleased to announce to the House that the Government is launching a consultation on reforms to the UK's regime for the protection of personal data. This consultation will be open for 10 weeks, from 10 September 2021 until 19 November 2021.

The Government will have the freedom to create a bold new data regime outside of the EU. The UK can now reshape its approach to regulation and seize opportunities with its new regulatory freedoms, helping to drive growth, innovation and competition across the country.

This consultation is the first step in delivering on that objective and the next step in the Government's Plan for Digital Regulation, while building on our groundbreaking action to keep people safe online through the Online Safety Bill. Furthermore we recently published plans to establish a new pro-competition regime for digital markets and outlined that we will be seeking to agree data adequacy agreements with leading economies such as the US and Singapore.

Data is a huge strategic asset. As set out in Mission 2 of the UK's National Data Strategy, the Government wants to create a more pro-growth and trusted regime for personal data protection. We want to unlock the power of this data to drive innovation and boost the economy, while continuing to protect people's safety and privacy. This is one of our Ten Tech Priorities.

In order to do this, the UK needs agile and adaptable data protection laws that enhance its global reputation as a hub for responsible data-driven business that respects high standards of data protection. A responsive framework will enable responsible innovation and a focus on privacy outcomes that avoids imposing any rules today that become obsolete tomorrow as technology evolves.

Any data protection regime requires active interpretation and pragmatic application to new and emerging technologies, such as machine learning. Over three years after its introduction, however, there is persistent uncertainty about how to apply the current regime, aspects of which are unnecessarily complex or vague. This risks throwing up barriers to responsible data access, use and sharing.

The reforms outlined in this consultation will:

- Strengthen our position as a science superpower, by simplifying data use by researchers and developers of AI and other cutting edge technologies.
- Build on the unprecedented and life-saving collaboration between the public and private sectors in using data responsibly to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Secure the UK's status as a global hub for the free and responsible flow of personal data, complementing our ambitious agenda for new trade deals and data adequacy agreements with some of the world's fastest growing economies.
- Reinforce the responsibility of businesses to keep personal information safe and encourage investment in effective compliance activities that reflect how they operate and their users' expectations.
- Ensure that the Information Commissioner's Office remains a world-leading regulator, empowered to ensure people can use data responsibly to achieve economic and social goals.

Throughout this process, the UK intends to maintain its high standards of data protection, while taking a pragmatic and risk-based approach, rather than one that over-emphasises bureaucratic exercises. Far from being a barrier to innovation or trade, we know that regulatory certainty and high data protection standards allow businesses and consumers to thrive.

The reforms proposed in the Government's consultation will create a set of new, ambitious, pro-growth and innovation-friendly data protection rules and regulations that underpins the trustworthy use of data for an even better UK data rights regime.

These reforms have clear benefits for both citizens and businesses. We are proposing to introduce more flexibility in how organisations embed privacy management in their processes alongside greater transparency about how their users' data is protected and clearer procedures for handling complaints. We propose taking action to tackle nuisance calls which can disproportionately affect the most vulnerable people in our society. We will explore whether ICO should have powers to impose higher fines and carry out audits of companies which are responsible for breaching direct marketing rules. We will continue to look into voluntary industry-led action; and explore whether to mandate communications providers to do more to block calls and texts at source or to provide free-of-charge call-blocking services.

Furthermore, our proposed reforms will clarify how all kinds of businesses can navigate the data protection regime to innovate responsibly with personal data. We are also proposing measures that would require the ICO to recognise and account for how its regulatory activity on data protection may impact on competition and innovation in the digital economy.

Internationally, our reforms will allow us to operate a risk-based and proportionate regime that allows the UK to strike deals with some of the fastest growing economies in the world while keeping people's data safe and secure.

These reforms will keep people's data safe and secure, while ushering in a new golden age of growth and innovation right across the UK, as we build back better and I hope you will all join me in supporting this work.

Further details can be found in the consultation and supportive documents, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/data-a-new-direction>.

A copy of the consultation and the analysis of expected impact will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## ■ National Data Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation Update

**Minister of State for Media and Data (Mr John Whittingdale):**

**[HCWS278]**

I am pleased to inform the House that the Government is, today, publishing an update on the National Data Strategy which sets out our approach to monitoring and evaluating the strategy. It also launches a 12 week call for evidence on the development of an indicator suite to support implementation of the strategy.

The National Data Strategy was originally published for consultation in September 2020, setting out for the first time the government's ambitions to unlock the power of data in a single publication. The consultation confirmed that the strategy framework was fit for purpose, and the government published a response to the consultation in May 2021 to confirm that our focus would now turn to implementation.

The monitoring and evaluation update published today sets out in more detail our approach to implementation, including how we will track delivery of government's interventions, assess their effectiveness, and plan for further interventions in the future.

We are also calling for evidence to develop an indicator suite that will track developments across the data ecosystem. This is the first time such a product has been produced by government for data use in the UK. To tackle this challenge, and in the spirit of collaboration with which the National Data Strategy has been developed to date, we are seeking the widest possible input to inform the indicator suite's development, to create a product which can be of value to all members of the data ecosystem. We will provide an update on the development of the indicator suite in due course.

More broadly, we will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders to implement the National Data Strategy, including working through the National Data Strategy Forum to help shape the development of the future vision for the Strategy.

A copy of this update will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Police Leadership**

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):** [\[HCWS281\]](#)

I am pleased to inform Parliament that Her Majesty the Queen has granted a two-year extension to the appointment of Dame Cressida Dick DBE QPM, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

I recommended this extension to Her Majesty having had regard to a recommendation from the Mayor of London as occupant of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.

This extension to 9 April 2024 provides continuity for the Metropolitan Police Service as we move forward, emerging from the restrictions demanded by the coronavirus pandemic, and face the challenges that lie ahead in protecting the safety of people in London and across the country. These include driving down violent crime, boosting the confidence of women, girls and ethnic minorities in law enforcement and responding to the concerns that have emerged from the Report of the Daniel Morgan Independent Panel.

I will continue working closely with the Commissioner and the Mayor to ensure that the Met tackles these key challenges and serves the public well.

**■ Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules**

**The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Future Borders and Immigration (Kevin Foster):** [\[HCWS280\]](#)

My Rt Hon friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

We have made changes to the Immigration Rules which will align the travel document requirements for most EEA and Swiss citizens with those which apply to other third country nationals.

From 1 January 2021, the Government has implemented a single global points-based immigration system.

Inconsistency in the design and security features of EEA national identity cards gives rise to document security risks, and the need for manual processing increases border queues. We therefore announced in October 2020 we would be phasing out the use of most EEA and Swiss national identity cards for entry to the UK.

The changes mean, from 1 October 2021, EEA and Swiss citizens outside of those with status under the EU Settlement Scheme or rights under the Withdrawal Agreements will, like other nationalities, need a passport to demonstrate nationality and identity at the UK border, rather than use a national identity card.

We have also made a change to the Immigration Rules which reflects the change in the security situation in Afghanistan, by making changes to allow current and former Afghan locally employed staff (LES) and their family members who are outside Afghanistan to

relocate to the UK under the Afghan relocations and assistance policy and the ex gratia scheme. The schemes had previously only been available to those in Afghanistan.

Further to this we are also making a further change to grant indefinite leave to enter the UK to LES who are approved for relocation to the UK. This will replace the five years' limited leave they are currently granted. Those already in the UK will be able to apply for indefinite leave to remain before their limited leave expires if they choose to.

These changes emphasise the UK commitment to supporting LES and their families to settle in the UK, and our gratitude for the support they provided to UK forces in Afghanistan.

We are launching the new International Sportsperson visa category which will amalgamate and replace the Tier 2 and Tier 5 categories for professional sporting workers with simplified, dedicated visa arrangements.

The Tier 5 visa routes are being rebranded to deliver a package of Temporary Work routes, providing a better service for customers through simplified Rules that are aligned with the new points-based system.

We are also launching a dedicated Temporary Worker – Creative Worker visa category, tailored to creative workers to better serve the needs of the sector.

Consequential amendments are being made to Appendix AR to provide a right of administrative review for eligible decisions under the new International Sportsperson route and the re-branded Temporary Worker routes.

Some changes are being made in respect of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), which enables EEA and Swiss citizens resident in the UK by the end of the transition period, and their family members, to obtain the UK immigration status they need to continue living in the UK.

The changes reflect in the Immigration Rules for the EUSS, in Appendix EU, the concession outside the Rules for applicants whose continuous residence in the UK has been affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) which was published in guidance on 10 June 2021. This will ensure, in a range of circumstances where, due to COVID-19, the applicant would have exceeded the permitted absence from the UK, and broken their period of continuous residence, they will continue to qualify for status under the EUSS.

The changes also allow a joining family member to apply to the EUSS whilst in the UK as a visitor, replacing the concession to this effect outside Appendix EU currently set out in guidance.

Technical changes are being made to reflect the passing of the 30 June 2021 deadline for applications to the EUSS by those resident in the UK by the end of the transition period (though a late application can still be made where there are reasonable grounds why the person missed that deadline), and to reflect the fact a person who is exempt from immigration control can, if they wish, apply to the EUSS whilst they remain exempt or they can apply once they have ceased to be exempt.

Changes are being made to the Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) to re-brand the route from T5 (Temporary Worker) Youth Mobility Scheme to Youth Mobility Scheme.

We are also expanding our YMS to include new arrangements with Iceland and India. This will deliver on international commitments made via a Memorandum of Understanding with Iceland and mobility agreements with India. Both schemes are expected to launch on 1 January 2022.

The YMS update will also allow citizens and nationals or the rightful holder of a passport issued by a territory, without Deemed Sponsorship Status to apply for this route from any post that accepts such applications worldwide.

The allocations for 2022 have also been updated in Appendix Youth Mobility Scheme: eligible nationals.

Finally, following a concession made outside the Rules to allow the partner and, if applicable, child under 18 of a British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holder to join the BN(O) status holder following a grant on the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) route, this has now been incorporated into the Immigration Rules for the BN(O) route.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Transport update

**Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

[\[HCWS282\]](#)

The HGV driver shortage is a long-standing challenge facing countries across the world.

As a result of the pandemic, driver testing was suspended for large parts of the last year. It is now back up and running and the Government has already increased capacity, but we can go further.

Over the summer, we consulted on three measures which will substantially increase the number of vocational driving tests available. I can announce today that we will proceed with the measures we consulted on:

First, car drivers will no longer need to take another test to tow a trailer or caravan, allowing roughly 30,000 more HGV driving tests to be conducted every year.

Second, tests will also be made shorter by removing the 'reversing exercise' element – and for vehicles with trailers, the 'uncoupling and recoupling' exercise – and having it tested separately by a third party.

And third, we will make it quicker to get a licence to drive an articulated vehicle, without first having to get a licence for a smaller vehicle. This would make around 20,000 more HGV driving tests available every year and mean drivers can gain their licence and enter the industry more quickly - without reducing the rigour of the test.

We've already provided a 50% increase in testing compared to pre Covid. These measures go even further. These new measures follow a public consultation over the summer, which saw thousands of respondents, including industry leaders, support the move as a positive step to help the sector tackle the lorry driver shortage currently

affecting countries around the world. Some of these changes will generate additional capacity for HGV tests very rapidly, and we will shortly lay the appropriate licensing regulations before the House. These changes will not change the standard of driving required to drive an HGV, with road safety continuing to be of paramount importance. Any driver who does not demonstrate utmost competence will not be granted a licence. All car drivers will also still be encouraged to undertake training to tow trailers and caravans.

A new cross-government ministerial group has been set up to monitor labour supply chains, identify pinch points and consider necessary government action. Chaired by CDL and meeting on a weekly basis, the group includes ministers from numerous Government departments including the DfT, DfE, Home Office, BEIS and DEFRA to make sure all angles are being considered.

The driver shortage is a widespread problem affecting countries across Europe and also the United States, caused by a range of factors, including an ageing workforce. Today's announcement will ramp up driver testing and numbers and help industry leaders build a resilient haulage sector which attracts drivers from across society.