



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 13 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:13 P.M., 13 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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Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Biofuels: Production

John Redwood:

[\[41600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to promote ethanol production in the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK biofuel market, including bioethanol, has been supported since 2008 through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO). The RTFO is a certificate trading scheme which sets targets and provides financial incentives for the supply of sustainable biofuels. This month the government has introduced E10 as the standard petrol across Great Britain. The introduction of E10 increases the amount of bioethanol blended with petrol sold at forecourts in the UK. E10's introduction has been welcomed by the UK bioethanol industry as positive for the environment and jobs in UK production plants and supply chain.

More broadly, the chemicals sector is crucial to the UK; with 83% of employment outside of London and the South East it provides high-skilled, highly paid jobs across the UK and supplies essential inputs to almost all other manufacturing industries.

Last year's UK Budget sets out our ambition to spread opportunity across the UK, led by vital investment, to help important businesses such as chemical companies to grow, and improve access to skills, capital and ideas. This ambition is being supported by measures such as the new two-year super-deduction that will cut companies' tax bill by 25p for every pound they invest in new equipment and mean they can reduce their taxable profits by 130% of the cost. In addition, the Government has a target for total R&D investment to reach 2.4% of GDP by 2027 and in the recent Innovation strategy we have committed to increase our annual public investment in R&D to a record £22billion.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme: Repayments

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[42187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to delay the repayment of bounce back loans by 12 months.

Paul Scully:

The Government has already taken action to give businesses the space and flexibility to repay their bounce back loans. Under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), no repayments are due from the borrower for the first 12 months of the loan. The Government also covers the first 12 months of interest payments charged to the business by the lender.

In order to give businesses further support, the Government introduced the “Pay as You Grow” (PAYG) measures last year, which allow individual businesses to tailor their repayments to their individual circumstances. Under these measures, the lenders are required to give all businesses that borrowed under the BBLS the option to repay their loan over a period of up to ten years, as well as the option to move temporarily to interest-only payments for periods of up to six months, or to pause their repayments entirely for up to six months.

■ Carbon Emissions: Taxation

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[44486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to introduce carbon pricing to encourage clean hydrogen production from nuclear energy and renewable energy sources.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has an ambitious carbon pricing mechanism through our new UK Emissions Trading Scheme, launched at the start of this year to increase our carbon pricing ambition over the EU scheme it replaces. The UK ETS will be the world's first net zero carbon cap and trade market, and a crucial step towards achieving the UK's target for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We have committed to explore expanding the UK ETS to other sectors.

We are also consulting on a business model to provide revenue support to low carbon hydrogen production plants in order to unlock private investment in hydrogen projects.

This will be complemented by the £240m Net-Zero Hydrogen Fund (NZHF), aimed at supporting multiple low carbon production routes that can realistically deploy in the 2020s to contribute to our 5GW ambition. As described in our recent Hydrogen Strategy, electrolysis using low carbon power, renewable or nuclear, will have an important role as we scale up UK hydrogen production.

■ Coal: Concessions

Alec Shelbrooke:

[\[41819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to maintain the supply of free coal to former miners as part of their existing pension entitlements.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

There are no plans to alter the current concessionary fuel arrangements awarded to certain qualifying former employees and their widows of the coal mining industry.

■ Company Accounts

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[44192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to allow companies to adopt policies to abide by Wates Review principles, rather than impose a public interest entities system; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Wates Principles provide a way to complying with corporate governance reporting requirement on large private companies in the Companies (Miscellaneous Reporting) Regulations 2018. Reporting started from January 2020. The Government and the Financial Reporting Council are in the process of evaluating its effectiveness, including use of the Wates Principles.

The Government's White Paper 'Restoring trust in audit and corporate governance' set out proposals to introduce a wider definition of 'public interest entity' to ensure that large businesses of all types which are of public importance are subject to appropriate regulation. The Government is currently considering responses and will respond in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Caroline Lucas:

[\[41806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many doses of covid-19 vaccine the UK has received from Covax for each month since Covax has been in operation; for what reasons the UK has received doses through Covax; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The UK committed approximately £71 million to the self-financing facility of COVAX, which enables high and upper-middle income countries to pool investments in potential vaccine candidates, and supported its establishment last year. This gives us the option to buy vaccines for up to 20% of the UK population - approximately 27 million doses. The Government has separately committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which will distribute 1.2 billion doses of vaccines to developing countries this year.

In addition, I am proud that as part of our commitment to the G7 to donate 100m doses over the course of the next year, the UK has so far donated over 10 million doses to those countries most in need, of which over 6 million have gone to COVAX. Throughout the COVID-19 vaccination programme, vaccine supply and deliveries have been carefully managed by the Vaccine Taskforce to meet the requirements of the domestic vaccination programme as well as support other countries' domestic campaigns. The recent sharing of 4 million doses with Australia is a good example of this.

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 3rd March 2021 to Question [157070](#) : the UK procured approximately 0.5 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine

through COVAX, which were delivered earlier this year. These doses helped the NHS deliver our vaccination programme as quickly as possible. No further doses have been received by the UK from COVAX.

■ Courier Services: Fees and Charges

Chi Onwurah: [45119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the application of consumer protection regulations to couriers' disbursement fees; and what discussions he has had with representatives of the CMA on the level of disbursement fees charged by couriers to recipients of packages.

Paul Scully:

Delivery charges are agreed between the retailer and the delivery/courier company. These are commercial decisions. We already have robust consumer legislation in place to ensure that when making a purchase online, retailers provide clear and upfront information about delivery charges and restrictions before the consumer makes a purchase. Breaches of the legislation should be reported in the first instance to the Citizens Advice consumer service on 0808 223 1133, or <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/>.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Welsh Government

Ruth Jones: [43658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last met Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Amanda Solloway:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy last met the Minister for the Economy in the Welsh Government on 14th July 2021.

I have also met the Welsh Minister for the Economy to discuss policies on innovation and space, most recently on 22nd June and 30th June.

■ Electricity Generation: Fossil Fuels

Virginia Crosbie: [44487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for introducing carbon pricing as a tool to decrease electricity generation from fossil fuels to meet the Government's 78 per cent emissions reduction target by 2035.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has an ambitious carbon pricing mechanism through our new UK Emissions Trading Scheme, launched at the start of this year to increase our carbon pricing ambition over the EU scheme it replaces. The scheme includes the energy generation sector. The UK ETS will be the world's first net zero carbon cap and trade

market, and a crucial step towards achieving the UK's target for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. We also have the Carbon Price Support mechanism for power generation. Emissions trading and the CPS have helped clean up our electricity generation and will be key to achieving the total phase out of coal by October 2024 and meeting the Government's 78% 2030 emissions reduction target.

■ Electricity: Storage

Alan Brown:

[41991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan 2021, published in July 2021, what estimate he has made of the total costs of constraint payments made to electricity producers under that plan; and what long-duration storage technologies will be utilised by the Government to reduce constraint payments and overall energy system costs.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

National Grid Electricity System Operator modelled future constraint costs in its [2020/21 Network Options Assessment \(NOA\)](#).

As outlined in the 2021 Smart System and Flexibility Plan, the Electricity System Operator is carrying out analysis to understand how storage can cost effectively manage network constraints, which is expected to be completed by December 2021; and Government has commissioned external analysis, which considers the system need for large-scale, long-duration storage including its role in reducing constraint payments and overall costs.

The Government and Ofgem intend to publish an electricity networks strategy later in the year, which will consider ways in which electricity network infrastructure can be built and used more efficiently to lessen the issue of constraints.

Alan Brown:

[41992]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan 2021, published in July 2021, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the requirement for long-duration flexible storage solutions to be incorporated in the Grid; and what technologies have been evaluated as possible options.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

We have commissioned external analysis to improve understanding of the role that large-scale, long-duration electricity storage will play in the electricity system, how much may be required at different points in time, and the benefits of different durations of storage. It includes a range of different technologies such as pumped hydro storage and less established long duration storage technologies like hydrogen storage and compressed air energy storage. This analysis will inform how we address the barriers to deployment that such storage faces. We aim to publish the results of this analysis in due course.

Alan Brown:

[41993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan 2021, published July 2021, what plans he has to adapt current contract reward mechanisms from a singular approach of contracting services such as balancing, ancillary, inertia, voltage and frequency regulation to a more holistic approach of rewarding contracts to technologies according to the entirety of services they provide to the Grid.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Markets which reflect the value of flexibility will be key to achieving a smart, flexible energy system. Our approach in the [2021 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan](#) centres on creating a best-in-class regulatory framework by removing regulatory and policy barriers and ensuring that markets reflect the value of flexibility to the system. We have set out actions to ensure that flexibility technologies are rewarded for the services they provide to the system including commitments on the Electricity System Operator (ESO) to deliver reforms to its suite of balancing services to enable the transition to a sustainable energy system.

We expect the ESO to maintain the pace of reform needed to operate a net-zero system and facilitate participation from all technologies to unlock the full value of flexibility being offered.

Alan Brown:

[41994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan 2021, published in July 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a requirement to provide contract periods beyond the current two-year award periods to incentivise the construction of new long duration storage technologies; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Alongside the 2021 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan, we published a call for evidence on large-scale, long-duration electricity storage designed to help us build our understanding of the specific challenges faced, and gather information about potential ways to address them, including which interventions (if any) would be most appropriate to support the deployment of such storage. We will continue to work closely with industry and other stakeholders as we consider the challenges and opportunities of different options for intervention.

■ **Fire Prevention: Batteries**

Jerome Mayhew:

[37594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to assess the fire risks posed by large scale lithium-ion battery storage.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Grid-scale lithium-ion battery energy storage systems are covered by a robust regulatory framework which requires manufacturers to ensure products are safe before they are placed on the market, that they are installed correctly, and that any safety issues found after products are on the market or after installation are dealt with.

In 2018, BEIS set up an industry-led Storage Health and Safety Governance Group responsible for ensuring that an appropriate, robust, and future-proofed health and safety framework is sustained as the industry develops. In 2020 following a recommendation from this Group, the Government commissioned a gap analysis to identify any gaps in the health and safety standards landscape. This will be published in due course

Fuel Poverty: Universal Credit**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[45071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps she plans to take to support people in fuel poverty following the removal of the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recognises that approximately 3.1 million households in England are experiencing fuel poverty. This is why we have committed £1.3 billion this year alone to improving the efficiency of fuel-poor and other low-income homes through stimulus schemes such as the Local Authority Delivery Scheme, the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund and the Home Upgrade Grant.

Green Jobs Taskforce**Alex Cunningham:**[\[44338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he expects to publish the Government's response to the recommendations of the Green Jobs Taskforce.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The evidence collected by the Green Jobs Taskforce, and its recommendations, is now being considered by the Government as part of the development of the Government's ambitious Net Zero Strategy, due to be published ahead of the UN's climate summit COP26 in Glasgow this November. This will be the first step in responding to the Taskforce's report.

Heating: Housing**Ben Lake:**[\[45241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the Government's proposed Clean Heat

Grant to meet the needs of people living in areas where conditions are not suitable for open-loop ground-source heat pumps.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Heat pumps are a cost-effective way of decarbonising heat and can be widely used in existing homes and buildings, including those not connected to the gas grid.

The Clean Heat Grant will provide upfront capital grants to support the installation of both air source and ground source heat pumps, in domestic and small non-domestic properties. The Government recognise that some properties may not be suitable for heat pumps and will therefore also provide targeted support for biomass boilers through the Clean Heat Grant, where these are installed in off gas grid, rural properties.

Ben Lake:

[\[45242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of reducing the amount of VAT payable on green home improvements for people living off-grid installing ground or water-source heat pumps.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Tax is a matter reserved for my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer. All tax policy changes are considered at the Budget, however I understand that there are currently no plans to change these provisions at this time.

Ben Lake:

[\[45244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the level of financial and other support required by households dependant on liquefied petroleum gas to transition to green alternatives.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government committed to phasing out the installation of fossil fuels in homes and buildings off the gas grid this decade. Alongside the publication of the Heat and Building Strategy, we are planning to consult on new regulations to meet this commitment.

We accept that for some the cost of installing a heat pump may be prohibitive, which is why we are providing support through schemes like the Renewable Heat Incentive and forthcoming Clean Heat Grant. The Home Upgrade Grant scheme will provide support to low income off grid households installing energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating.

■ **Honda: Swindon**

Ruth Jones:

[\[41270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the closure of the Honda plant in Swindon on levels of employment in that area.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Following Honda's announcement in February 2019 that it would close its Swindon plant in 2021, the company has worked closely with Government, Local Authorities and other stakeholders to support affected employees. The Government-led Honda Taskforce was instrumental in securing a new future for the Swindon site and attracting investment into Swindon, including over £44 million to regenerate the town centre. The sale of the site to Panattoni that Honda announced on 26 March represents £400million of private investment for the region and will create around 2,000 new jobs.

Hydrogen**Sarah Olney:**[\[44419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to match steps the EU is taking on support for green hydrogen.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

This August, the UK published the first ever UK Hydrogen Strategy, alongside key policy detail on how we will support new low carbon hydrogen production and ensure standards are in place to deliver the carbon emissions savings we need to meet net zero. This is the most substantive hydrogen strategy and policy package of its kind in the world and one that places the UK firmly at the forefront of the race to develop hydrogen as a promising replacement for fossil fuels in the global transition to net zero.

By setting out our approach not only for the financial mechanisms that will support new hydrogen production facilities, but also making firm commitments across networks, markets, standards and sector development, this package includes steps that have not been taken elsewhere in the EU or any of its member states.

The UK Hydrogen Strategy sets out the government's 'twin-track' approach to supporting both electrolytic 'green' and carbon capture (CCUS)-enabled 'blue' hydrogen production. The UK has expertise and assets to support these and other low carbon production routes, helping us drive cost effective supply volumes in the 2020s in line with our 2030 5GW ambition, whilst scaling up electrolytic hydrogen.

We are currently consulting on new policy interventions to support low carbon hydrogen, including the £240m Net Zero Hydrogen Fund, a hydrogen business model to incentivise the production and use of low carbon hydrogen, and a UK standard to ensure the hydrogen production we support is sufficiently low carbon.

Life Sciences: Devolved Matters**Martyn Day:**[\[42009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to work with the devolved nations in respect of the delivery of its Life Sciences Vision.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Life Sciences Vision is UK-wide and aims to increase the health, wealth and resilience for all four nations of the United Kingdom. The Government worked closely with the devolved administrations and stakeholders from all parts of the UK in developing the Vision, to ensure that it reflected the strengths and opportunities of the whole UK.

We will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations as we implement the Vision. BEIS officials are in regular contact with their devolved counterparts.

■ New Businesses: Environment Protection**Stuart Anderson:****[42133]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage start-ups in green growth sectors such as carbon capture.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS) is integral to the UK's Green Industrial Revolution. Building on the UK's industrial strengths and capabilities, we are leading efforts to establish this critical technology.

In July this year we launched call 1 of a CCUS Innovation 2.0 competition[1] to:

- support cost reductions in carbon capture, usage and storage;
- to help UK industry to understand the opportunity for deploying next generation carbon capture technology on industrial, waste, or power generation sites for 2030;and
- made available £19.5m of grant funding available as part of CCUS Innovation 2.0, eligible to small and medium enterprise (SME) applicants.

In order to support green growth sectors, since 2012 we have now run 8 rounds of the Energy Entrepreneurs Fund (EEF)[2].

The EEF seeks the best ideas, irrespective of source, across these energy technology areas from the public and private sector. It particularly aims to assist small and medium-sized enterprises, including start-ups, and those companies that are selected will receive additional funding for incubation support.

We also launched a £70 million Direct Air Capture (DAC) and Greenhouse Gas Removal (GGR) Innovation competition in 2021.

The programme is currently in Phase 1 of the programme and has 23 innovation projects developing a range of technologies.

[1] CCUS Innovation 2.0: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ccus-innovation-20-competition>

[2] Energy Entrepreneurs Fund: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/energy-entrepreneurs-fund>

■ Nuclear Power Stations: China

Alan Brown:

[\[40995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of EDF on the closure of the Taishan EPR nuclear power plant for safety reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

BEIS officials are engaged regularly with representatives from both EDF Energy and the Office for Nuclear Regulation (the ONR) on a wide range of matters relating to nuclear reactors, including Taishan nuclear power plant in China.

As the independent regulator, the ONR will ensure that events at Taishan, and any associated learning, forms part of its ongoing scrutiny of the EPR at Hinkley Point C.

In the design and construction of any nuclear site in Great Britain, licensees (operators) must demonstrate the highest standards with regards to oversight of their key suppliers and components, and the ONR will hold them to account against those requirements. If the ONR judged that any reactor was unsafe it would not allow it to be built or to operate.

■ Nuclear Power: Environment Protection

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[44484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to encourage green investment in nuclear energy.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Nuclear power is a proven technology which currently represents the UK's second largest provider of low-carbon electricity.

On 9 November 2020, we announced we would develop a UK Green Taxonomy, which will define those economic activities that can be considered to be environmentally sustainable.

We will be discussing the evidence supporting nuclear energy's inclusion in the UK's Green Taxonomy with the newly established Energy Working Group, and the Working Group's feedback will help inform our decision on including nuclear in the taxonomy.

The government will then consult on draft Technical Screening Criteria in the Green Taxonomy ahead of finalising the Taxonomy.

■ Oil: Shetland**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[45220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the compatibility of the Cambo oilfield near Shetland with the UK's upcoming role as President of the COP 26 summit.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Cambo is not a new oilfield, it was licensed in 2001. The development proposal from Cambo is being scrutinised in line with robust regulatory procedures and no decision has yet been taken.

Oil and natural gas are still required for heating, cooking and transport, and are vital to the production of many everyday essentials like medicines, plastics, cosmetics and household appliances. While we are working hard to drive down demand for fossil fuels, there will continue to be ongoing demand for oil and gas over the coming years, as recognised by the independent Climate Change Committee, with the UK as net importers of both oil and gas.

Looking forward, the Government will introduce a climate compatibility checkpoint which will be used to assess whether any future licensing rounds remain in keeping with our climate goals. We have committed to launching the checkpoint by the end of 2021.

Liz Saville Roberts:[\[45229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of whether proposals for the Cambo oilfield are compatible with the (a) Government's climate targets and (b) Paris Agreement on climate change.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Cambo is not a new oilfield, it was licensed in 2001. The development proposal from Cambo is being scrutinised in line with robust regulatory procedures and no decision has yet been taken.

Oil and natural gas are still required for heating, cooking and transport, and are vital to the production of many everyday essentials like medicines, plastics, cosmetics and household appliances. While we are working hard to drive down demand for fossil fuels, there will continue to be ongoing demand for oil and gas over the coming years, as recognised by the independent Climate Change Committee, with the UK as net importers of both oil and gas.

Looking forward, the Government will introduce a climate compatibility checkpoint which will be used to assess whether any future licensing rounds remain in keeping with our climate goals. We have committed to launching the checkpoint by the end of 2021.

■ Renewable Energy: Prices

Drew Hendry:

[\[41971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his officials have had with Ofgem on the marketing of Green Energy tariffs by energy companies when those tariffs can be effected by wholesale changes to the market price of fossil fuels via alterations in the energy cap.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The default energy price cap and any associated derogations for renewable tariffs is a matter for the regulator Ofgem and is not subject to discussion with BEIS officials.

■ Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme

Darren Jones:

[\[45239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total sum is of (a) premiums accepted from insurers under the Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme up to 30 June 2021 and (b) any financial windfall or retained monies received by the Government with specific reference to that scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Trade Credit Reinsurance Scheme has benefitted over half a million businesses, providing certainty for firms across the UK and safeguarding jobs. It has protected more than an estimated £600 billion of business turnover through providing around £210 billion in insurance cover.

As the scheme remains open to receive claims, it would not be appropriate to disclose information on the financial performance of the scheme at this point.

■ Vans: Manufacturing Industries

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[41074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of vehicle supply shortages affecting the UK van sector; and what cross-departmental steps he is taking to help rectify those supply shortages.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has regularly engaged with multiple stakeholders including the Department for Transport, manufacturers and automotive trade associations to discuss steps to help rectify supply chain shortages.

The Government recognises the severity of the semiconductor shortage and its impacts on vehicle supply chains. BEIS officials are working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) who are leading on this issue. DCMS is working closely with companies affected by this shortage to discuss interim support measures and supply solutions, as well as lobbying for a coordinated multilateral response through the G7. DCMS is also engaging bilaterally with key supplier countries like the US and Japan, to lobby for fair UK access to currently constrained

supply and address systemic issues in the sector to avoid future repetition of the current shortage.

■ Welsh Government

Ruth Jones: [\[42113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last spoke to the Minister for the Economy in the Welsh Government.

Paul Scully:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy last met the Minister for the Economy in the Welsh Government on 14th July 2021.

BEIS Ministers meet Ministers from the Devolved Administrations regularly through the Net Zero and Business and Industry Inter-ministerial Groups. These last met on 30th June and 28th July respectively.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Stephen Timms: [\[41616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a long-term target for floating wind platforms in securing economic benefits and UK supply chain growth.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government set an ambitious target of 1GW of floating offshore wind by 2030 last year as part of the wider 40GW by 2030 offshore wind target, and is committed to ensuring the UK captures the economic benefits of deploying such technology.

We are committed to developing a strong supply chain for floating offshore wind in parallel with growing deployment and are working with industry and other stakeholders on this.

Floating offshore wind projects will be eligible to bid in the next Contract for Difference (CfD) allocation round, which will open in December 2021. Our approach to the next CfD allocation round will provide the foundation for investment in a sustainable, competitive UK based supply chain from which we will learn to help plan our future approach and the feasible scale of ramp up of deployment, building on the success of fixed bottom wind, which has this year delivered supply chain investments in blades, monopiles and transition pieces, creating and safeguarding over 1,800 direct jobs by 2030.

Stephen Timms: [\[41617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help secure the potential benefits of the supply chain position of the UK's lead in floating wind technology.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government set an ambitious target of 1GW of floating offshore wind by 2030, last year as part of the wider 40GW by 2030 offshore wind target. This will stimulate development in projects and investment in the supply chain.

As part of the Government's £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio fund, announced in my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan, we are supporting innovation through the Floating Offshore Wind Demonstration Programme. This aims to support development and demonstration of state of the art technologies and products in the future offshore wind industry.

Karl Turner:[\[44316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the effect of the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017 on the domestic labour market.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly meets with the Home Secretary to discuss a wide range of issues.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice****Justin Madders:**[\[41920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group on the launch of the covid-19 inquiry; and how that group will be represented during that inquiry.

Kim Johnson:[\[42195\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on establishing an inquiry into the Government's handling of the covid-19 outbreak; and whether the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group will be included in the membership of the commission of that inquiry.

Penny Mordaunt:

On 12 May, the Prime Minister confirmed the public inquiry into COVID-19 will begin in Spring 2022. The Government recognises that it must engage and consult with bereaved families and others, before the terms of reference are finalised. The terms of reference will set out the purpose and structure of the Covid-19 inquiry, including the exact areas that will be investigated.

The Government is aware of Bereaved Families for Justice' call to be represented during the COVID-19 Inquiry. Throughout the pandemic senior ministers, including the Prime Minister, have met and will continue to meet with bereaved families.

We also recognise the need for bereaved families to be represented on the 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. I want to thank the Bereaved Families for Justice group for all their efforts in representing bereaved families throughout the pandemic.

■ **Independent Adviser On Ministers' Interests: Freedom of Information**

Angela Rayner:

[\[38276\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies to the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests.

Chloe Smith:

The work of the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests in advising Her Majesty's Government is in scope of the Freedom of Information regime.

The Ministerial Code and the Independent Adviser's Terms of Reference, both of which are published on GOV.UK, also sets out a number of expectations about transparency of the Independent Adviser's work and advice. In particular:

- A statement covering relevant Ministers' interests will be published twice yearly. The last such statement - the List of Ministers' Interests - was published at the end of May 2021.
- The Independent Adviser's advice to the Prime Minister where he has carried out an investigation into an alleged breach of the Ministerial Code will be published.
- The Independent Adviser also published an Annual Report, setting out the work he has undertaken and his observations on matters within his responsibilities.

As with all Freedom of Information requests, due consideration should be given to the qualified and absolute exemptions under the Act which Parliament has legislated for.

There may be information held where it is not in the public interest for such information to be in the public domain. It is long-standing Government policy not to comment on individual personnel matters, including investigations into conduct, in order to protect the rights of all involved. As with all information, personal data and information provided in confidence will be considered against the relevant exemptions. This also avoids prejudice to the ability to carry out such investigations. The Ministerial Code states that the personal information which Ministers disclose to those who advise them on the management of their interests will be treated in confidence.

■ **Voting Rights: British Nationals Abroad**

Alex Sobel:

[\[42086\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the timetable is to bring forward legislative proposals to allow UK citizens living abroad for more than fifteen years the right to vote in UK elections.

Chloe Smith:

On 5 July, the Government introduced the Elections Bill which includes measures to remove the current 15 year rule and enfranchise all British citizens for UK Parliamentary elections who were previously registered or resident in the UK.

The passage of the Bill can be followed here <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3020>.

■ Zero Hours Contracts: Ellesmere Port and Neston**Justin Madders:**[\[41928\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people are employed on zero hour contracts in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

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 PQ41928 [UKSA response to PQ 41928 (1).pdf]

DEFENCE**■ A400M Aircraft****Mr Mark Francois:**[\[41716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the current acquisition cost is of the A400M aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The current total provision for acquisition of the A400M fleet is £2.6 billion.

■ Afghanistan: Armed Forces**John Healey:**[\[41648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department is providing to Afghan armed forces soldiers in the UK.

John Healey:[\[41649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has for integrating former Afghan armed forces soldiers currently in the UK into the UK armed forces.

James Heappey:

The Prime Minister has directed that the whole of Government work collectively to deliver the best possible start to life in the UK for Afghan evacuees. Defence will leverage the unique bonds of fellowship within the Armed Forces and veterans' community to ensure that those Afghan evacuees who trained with or served alongside the UK Armed Forces are appropriately supported as they build their new life in the UK. This will complement and augment the wider cross-Government

integration work being conducted under Op WARM WELCOME and will ensure that we look after those who looked out for us.

■ **Afghanistan: Defence Equipment**

Mr Mark Francois:

[41725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what military equipment, if any, was left behind during the recent evacuation of British forces from Afghanistan.

James Heappey:

During Operation PITTING and the withdrawal of the UK military from Afghanistan spare capacity was used on flights to return as much equipment to the UK as possible. However, people were prioritised over equipment at all times to evacuate UK nationals and eligible persons under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). Consequently, a small amount of equipment was left behind or gifted to partner nations.

All sensitive equipment and anything considered attractive to criminal and terrorist organisations was recovered during withdrawal.

■ **Afghanistan: Gurkhas**

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[41790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Gurkhas (a) are serving during the withdrawal of British armed forces from Afghanistan and (b) have served in that country since 2001.

James Heappey:

No Gurkha units were deployed to Afghanistan to support Operation PITTING. At least 2,890 Gurkhas deployed to Afghanistan between November 2001 and May 2021. An exact number is unavailable as personnel and deployment data held by the Department is incomplete before 2007.

■ **Afghanistan: Immigration**

Claudia Webbe:

[45310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish a comprehensive plan to evacuate and support people in Afghanistan who worked for contractors on behalf of allied forces or third party organisations who are not eligible under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) Scheme.

James Heappey:

Our immediate priority are those eligible persons, including British Nationals, approved Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) individuals, their families, and others called forward for evacuation in August who were unable to board a plane.

The Ministry of Defence is working with partners across Government and countries in the region to facilitate safe passage out of Afghanistan for these individuals and travel back to the UK.

It would not be appropriate to publish these plans. Support to other groups of individuals at risk of persecution may be considered under the Afghan Citizens' Relocation Scheme, details of which will be announced shortly by the Home Office.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[45311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will amend the eligibility criteria of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme so that people in Afghanistan who worked for contractors on behalf of allied forces or third party organisations can be prioritised for relocation under that scheme.

James Heappey:

We must prioritise our immediate efforts on those who have most directly supported the UK Government in Afghanistan and therefore, through their associations and the nature of that work, are likely to be at the highest risk of reprisals under the Taliban administration. The Afghan Citizens' Relocation Scheme, due to be launched shortly will support further categories of persons and details of eligibility will be announced by the Home Office in due course.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[44218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which company manufactures the 40mm ammunition intended for use by the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 8 September 2021 to question 41730.

Attachments:

1. 41730 - Ajax Vehicle; Ammunition [UIN 41730.docx]

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[44219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many rounds of 40mm ammunition for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle have been purchased as of 7 September 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

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

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Procurement**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[44225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the Head of Defence Equipment and Support was first informed of the problems with the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 6 September 2021 to question 37380.

Attachments:

1. 37380 - Ajax Vehicles; Testing [UIN 37380.docx]

■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing**Mr Mark Francois:**[\[41731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who would be liable to pay compensation for any injuries incurred by service personnel in the trials of the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

Depending on the circumstances of each claim, Army personnel might wish to make a claim under the Armed Forces compensation scheme or against the MOD. Depending on those circumstances, the MOD might seek to involve its contractor, General Dynamics UK.

Mr Mark Francois:[\[44217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many rounds of 40mm ammunition for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle have been fired during the Ajax trials programme as of 7 September 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

A total of 6,177 rounds have been fired to September 2021, which includes 563 Armour Piercing Fin Stabilised Discarding Sabot-Tracer rounds and 5,614 Target Practice-Tracer rounds.

Jamie Stone:[\[45238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel who received assessments due to the impact of being involved with in the trial of Ajax tanks were assessed as requiring treatment; and what treatments were considered necessary.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to HCWS260, the Written Statement I laid in this House on Monday 6 September, and also the oral statement I made on Wednesday 9 September, which provided a comprehensive update on the Armoured Cavalry (Ajax) programme. The assessments are ongoing and I will provide an update to the House in due course.

Attachments:

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

■ Armed Forces: Discharges

Kate Osborne:

[\[42171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 10678 on Armed Forces: Injuries, how many service personnel left the services (a) with and (b) without medical discharge in each of the last 10 years.

Leo Docherty:

Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2021, there were a) 20,970 UK Regular Armed Forces medical discharges and b) 157,295 UK Regular Armed Forces personnel who left service without a medical discharge. A breakdown by Financial Year is presented as follows:

Table 1: UK Regular Armed Forces ¹ medical discharges and other outflow, by Financial Year, numbers

1 April 2011 to 31 March 2021

YEAR	MEDICAL DISCHARGES	OTHER OUTFLOW ²
Total	20,970	157,295
2011/12	1,615	19,946
2012/13	2,314	21,553
2013/14	2,697	20,878
2014/15	2,644	16,643
2015/16	2,332	14,599
2016/17	2,467	12,839
2017/18	2,377	13,045
2018/19	1,822	13,021
2019/20	1,578	13,831
2020/21	1,124	10,940

Sources: DMICP, FMed 23, JPA

■ Armed Forces: Injuries

Kate Osborne:

[\[42170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 10678 on Armed Forces: Injuries, how many service personnel were not medically discharged despite having major injuries in each of the last 10 years.

Leo Docherty:

“Major injuries” have been interpreted as injuries that have a NOTICAS (notification of casualty) listing of Very Seriously Injured (VSI) or Seriously Injured (SI), a limb amputation, or a Health and Safety incident with a Major or Specified severity. It is possible to recover from a ‘major’ injury and be retained in service in the same or an alternative role.

Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2021, there were 10,915 UK Service personnel who suffered a major injury but were not medically discharged. A breakdown by Financial Year is presented as follows:

■ **Army: Training****Siobhain McDonagh:****[41628]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average wait time was to begin basic training in the Army by gender for (a) Reserves and (b) full-time soldiers in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021 to date.

Leo Docherty:

The average wait time to begin basic training in the Army by gender for (a) Reserves and (b) full-time soldiers in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021 to date is given below:

		AVERAGE WAIT TIME BY RECRUITING YEAR (IN DAYS)		
Rank	Gender	19-20	20-21	21-22
Regular Other Ranks	Male	124	149	145
	Female	128	167	137
Reserve Other Ranks	Male	36	34	17
	Female	38	18	38

Notes/Caveats:

1. This is one of two questions tabled by Siobhain McDonagh (Lab, Mitcham and Morden) on the average wait time to begin Basic Training by gender for British Army candidates. It is unclear what has prompted the questions.
2. This data has been provided from a single Service source rather than official statistics produced by Defence Statistics as they do not collate this information.
3. The figures represented show the average wait time in days by Recruiting Year (April – March). The average wait time for Recruiting Year 2021/2022 is based on

candidates with an Assessment Centre date pass since 01 April 2021 who are booked to commence Basic Training prior to 31 March 2022 and thus is subject to change.

4. For Regular Other Ranks the wait time is from Assessment Centre pass up until the commencement of Basic Training, at which point they are enlisted.
5. For Reserve Other Ranks the wait time is from Assessment Centre pass until enlistment, which is completed within their Reserve Unit and occurs before the candidate commences Basic Training.

Siobhain McDonagh:

[41629]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average wait time was to begin basic training in the Army by gender for the training facility at (a) Pirbright, (b) Winchester, (c) Harrogate and (d) Catterick in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021 to date.

Leo Docherty:

The average wait time to begin basic training in the Army by gender for the training facility at (a) Pirbright, (b) Winchester, (c) Harrogate and (d) Catterick in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021 to date is given below:

AVERAGE WAIT TIME – SOLIDER ASSESSMENT TO BASIC TRAINING START (IN DAYS)

Training Centre	Year	Gender	
Ph 1 Input Trg School Name	Ph 1 Input Trg Year	F	M
Army Foundation College (AFC) Harrogate	2019/2020	135	145
	2020/2021	158	138
Army Training Centre (ATC) Pirbright	2019/2020	139	130
	2020/2021	202	162
	2021/2022	162	149
Army Training Regiment (ATR) Winchester	2019/2020	137	125
	2020/2021	204	153
	2021/2022	158	142

AVERAGE WAIT TIME – SOLIDER ASSESSMENT TO BASIC TRAINING START (IN DAYS)

Infantry Training Centre (ITC) Catterick	2019/2020	100	97
	2020/2021	104	143
	2021/2022	92	143

Notes/Caveats:

1. This data has been provided from a single Service source rather than official statistics produced by Defence Statistics as they do not collate this information.
2. For Training Year 2021/2022 the average has been calculated based on data held as of 07 September 2021.
3. No courses have yet commenced at AFC Harrogate for this Training Year.

■ **AWACS: Procurement**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[41726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date he plans to sign the contract to procure three E-7 Wedgetail aircraft from Boeing.

Jeremy Quin:

Negotiations with Boeing to agree a revised contract for the acquisition of three E-7 Wedgetail aircraft for the Royal Air Force are ongoing. Therefore, to protect the Department's commercial interests, I am withholding any further detail at this time.

■ **Challenger Tanks**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[44213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Challenger 2 tanks (a) have been sold by the Defence Equipment Sales Authority or its predecessors, (b) have been placed in long-term storage and (c) are still in operational service.

Jeremy Quin:

I can confirm that no Challenger 2 tanks have been sold by the Defence Equipment Sales Authority or its predecessors. At present, 75 CR2 are held in long term storage.

Of the British Army's current operational fleet of 227 Challenger 2 tanks, a proportion are held in storage at readiness but for reasons of security, we are unable to provide detail on numbers.

■ **Defence Equipment and Support: Pay**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[41719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total salary costs were for Defence Equipment and Support employees in the 2020-21 financial year.

Jeremy Quin:

The information requested forms part of the Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) Annual Report and Accounts (ARAC) for the financial year 2020-21, which is due to be published later this year, following completion of the approvals process. As such, verified information is only available for financial year 2019/20, and as noted on page 61 of the DE&S ARAC 2019-20, the total salary costs for that financial year were £468 million.

The 2019-20 DE&S ARAC can be accessed on gov.uk at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/943847/DE_S_2019-20_ARAC_web_2.pdf.

■ Defence Equipment and Support: Staff**Mr Mark Francois:****[41718]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff are employed by Defence Equipment and Support.

Mr Mark Francois:**[41722]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Defence Equipment and Support staff are employed at (a) Abbey Wood, (b) elsewhere in the UK and (c) overseas.

Jeremy Quin:

As at 31 August 2021, Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) employed 10,653 permanent or fixed-term appointment staff (civilian), with 7,892 employed at Abbey Wood. There were 2,761 staff based elsewhere within the UK and 35 staff based overseas.

In addition, there are 1,237 military posts in DE&S with 721 personnel based in Abbey Wood, 470 personnel based elsewhere in UK and 46 personnel based overseas.

Mr Mark Francois:**[41720]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) three star or equivalent posts, (b) two star or equivalent posts and (c) one star or equivalent posts there are in Defence Equipment and Support.

Jeremy Quin:

The current number of Three Star, Two Star and One Star posts (and their equivalents) within Defence Equipment and Support can be found within the table below:

GRADE	NUMBER OF POSTS
Three Star	5
Two Star	20
One Star	105

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[41721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff employed at Defence Equipment and Support are in salary bands of £100,000 or more per annum.

Jeremy Quin:

There are 47 civilian staff, employed by Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) who are in salary bands of £100,000 or more per annum.

Of the military posts in DE&S, 24 personnel are in salary bands of £100,000 or more per annum.

■ **Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[41709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Department's Press Release entitled Fleet Solid Support ships competition launched, dated 21 May 2021, whether the UK's new Fleet Solid Support Ships contract will be UK-designed.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[41710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how his Department defines UK-content in relation to the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[41711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK's new Fleet Solid Support Ships will be manufactured in the UK.

Jeremy Quin:

As announced on 1 September 2021, four consortia were awarded Competitive Procurement Phase contracts. All four consortia have UK involvement.

Enabled by the Procurement Phase contracts, the final contract for the manufacture of the Fleet Solid Support ships will be awarded to a UK business, either solely or as part of a consortium. The Ministry of Defence has not placed any restrictions on the origins of tendered designs, but we have been clear that a significant proportion of the build work will be carried out in the UK, which would be defined as UK content. We recognise the social value contribution shipbuilding can make in the UK, and will be encouraging investment in domestic shipyards, whilst balancing the need to deliver value for money.

■ **Future Combat Air System**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[41728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the initial operating capability is of the Tempest in RAF service.

Jeremy Quin:

A core aircraft is set to play a crucial role in our concept of a Future Combat Air System, but this will likely be just one element in a network of capabilities supporting

uncrewed aircraft that are expected to replace the United Kingdom's Typhoon aircraft air to air combat capability from the mid 2030s.

■ **Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Conditions of Employment**

Grahame Morris: [\[44293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the introduction of Operational MGS Employment Contracts for civilian guards at UK military bases on levels of staff fatigue.

Leo Docherty:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: The health, safety, and wellbeing of MGS employees is of the highest priority to the Department. While fatigue is not specifically assessed, all new rosters are subject to Trade Union consultation and assessed against the Working Time Regulations prior to introduction.

Grahame Morris: [\[44294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the introduction of Operational MGS Employment Contracts on levels of security at UK military bases.

Leo Docherty:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: During the introduction of the Operational MGS Employment Contract, the ability to sustain unarmed guarding tasks as a result of staff recruitment and retention risks was assessed. Levels of security at UK military bases are unaffected.

Jack Dromey: [\[45088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will publish impact assessments made prior to the introduction of Operational MGS Employment Contracts for civilian guards at UK military bases.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) Guard Service is an in-house guarding service provided to the MOD, Executive Agencies and Foreign Governments' Visiting Forces. As such it would not be appropriate to publish any impact assessments made prior to the introduction of Operational MGS Employment Contracts.

In addition, impact assessments pertaining to employment contracts are commercially sensitive and publication could negatively impact upon the ability of the MGS to compete for the delivery of Unarmed Guarding tasks across the Defence estate.

Jack Dromey: [\[45089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the potential savings to the public purse of introducing Operational MGS Employment Contracts.

Leo Docherty:

It is estimated that the introduction of Operational MGS Employment Contracts will lead to savings of some £63 million over 10 years.

Jack Dromey:[\[45090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the number of applications for promotion of the introduction of Operational MGS Employment Contracts for all new employment contracts.

Leo Docherty:

Equality Impact Assessments were completed prior to the introduction of the Operational MGS Employment Contract (OMEC) and pay rates relate to existing staff's terms to ensure promotion remains a viable and attractive option for those wishing to further their career within the MOD.

A recent recruitment campaign on OMEC terms and conditions received 20 applications, including those seeking promotion, indicating the new contract does not discourage those seeking promotion opportunities.

Dan Jarvis:[\[45126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what comparative assessment he has made of the (a) pay, (b) working hours and (c) other conditions of employment for civilian guards at UK military bases on (i) Operational MGS Employment Contracts and (ii) previous contracts.

Leo Docherty:

The pay, working hours and other conditions of employment under the Operational MGS Employment Contract (OMEC) have been compared against previous MOD contracts, as well as the private sector security industry. The comparative assessment has concluded that:

- OMEC terms and conditions remain comparable with legacy MGS contracts in relation to conditions of employment, for example access to the Civil Service pension scheme, annual leave and sick entitlements.
- OMEC offers an increased rate of basic pay for shift working employees per annum compared with legacy MGS
- OMEC pay rates ensure promotion remains a viable and attractive option for those wishing to further their career.

While OMEC conditions are predicated on full time employees working a 48-hour working week (gross), compared with 42 hours (gross) on legacy contracts to accommodate a change in shift duration, the rostered working patterns developed were subject to Trade Union consultation and validated against Working Time Regulations.

■ Ministry of Defence Guard Service: Working Hours

Dan Jarvis:

[\[45127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the likelihood of civilian guards at UK military bases on Operational MGS Employment Contracts working at least (a) 60 and (b) 72 hours in a rolling 7-day period.

Leo Docherty:

No specific assessment has been made of the likelihood of MGS staff working 60 and 72 hours in a rolling 7-day period, as this is not a requirement under the contract.

Under the terms and conditions of service set out in the Operational MGS Employment Contract, MGS employees are contracted to work a 48-hour working week (gross).

Individuals may voluntarily work additional hours/shifts in excess of their 48-hour working week if available and will be paid accordingly.

■ Ministry of Defence: Listed Buildings

Tim Loughton:

[\[43367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, 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.

Jeremy Quin:

A list of the properties classified as heritage assets by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has been placed in the Library of the House. There is a wide range of heritage assets, other than properties, including below ground archaeology, memorials, walls and milestones which have not been included in this list.

The MOD does not record the economic value of heritage assets. The annual income provided by these properties is not held centrally by the MOD.

Attachments:

1. MOD Listed Building's; Heritage Status [20210908_PQ10021_Listed Buildings Heritage Status.pdf]

■ Ministry of Defence: Written Questions

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[41723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average length of time taken by his Department is to answer written Parliamentary questions over the last 12 months.

Leo Docherty:

Over the last 12 Months (1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021) 2,274 written Parliamentary questions were tabled to the Ministry of Defence, of which 2,226 were answered within the given Parliamentary deadlines (97.8%).

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[41724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has a target time in which to answer (a) named day and (b) ordinary written Parliamentary questions.

Leo Docherty:

The target time for the Ministry of Defence to answer (a) named day and (b) ordinary written Parliamentary questions is (a) three sitting days after the the date of tabling and (b) within one working week of the of the given date for answer.

This is in line with the House of Commons guidance on answering written Parliamentary questions.

■ **Navy: Fisheries**

Jim Shannon:

[\[43517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK leaving the EU on the duties of the Royal Navy Fisheries Protection squadron.

James Heappey:

At the end of the EU Exit Transition Period, the Royal Navy (RN) increased the availability of assets to ensure readiness to react to any increased demand from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to deal with illegal fishing or non-compliance. The RN Overseas Patrol Squadron remains ready to assist the MMO as required in Marine Enforcement duties.

■ **Navy: Injuries**

Kate Osborne:

[\[42172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 June 2021 to Question 10678 on Armed Forces: Injuries, whether Gavin Brierley, SN:30073719, of the Navy was one of the 3,205 people classified as having major injuries.

Leo Docherty:

As my answer contains personal information, I will communicate privately with the hon. Member.

■ **Tank Museum: Challenger Tanks**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[44214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to donate a Challenger 2 tank to the Tank Museum at Bovington.

Jeremy Quin:

There are no confirmed plans to donate a Challenger 2 at this stage, however the Ministry of Defence is actively engaged with the Tank Museum to understand how it might be able to support this ambition.

■ Veterans: Radiation Exposure

Julian Knight:

[40950]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of awarding a campaign service medal to armed forces personnel who served on Operation Grapple between 1956 and 1958.

Leo Docherty:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: The Independent Advisory Military Sub-Committee (AMSC) was re-established in 2019 to offer advice to the Committee on the Grant of Honours Decorations and Medals (the HD Committee) in the Cabinet Office on historic military medals claims, including cases which may not have been previously considered or where new evidence has emerged. The HD Committee is the principal body with responsibility for making recommendations on honours, awards, and medals.

The outcome of the review by the AMSC into the case of medallic recognition for all those who participated in the British Nuclear Test Programme during the period 1952 to 1991 was published by the Cabinet Office on 10 December 2020. The AMSC concluded that the case did not meet the level of risk and rigour which is generally required for the award of a campaign medal or clasp and the Ministry of Defence respects the findings of the independent review. This decision in no way diminishes the contribution of veterans who participated in the Nuclear Test Programme, and the Government continues to acknowledge and be grateful to all Service personnel who participated.

■ Warrior Armoured Vehicle

Mr Kevan Jones:

[44206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles are operable.

Jeremy Quin:

Details of the number of vehicles in the UK Armed Forces are published on an annual basis on the Government's website. The most recent publication can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and-formations-2021>

For reasons of security, we do not break this number down any further.

■ Warrior Armoured Vehicle: Ammunition

Mr Mark Francois:

[44220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which company manufactures the 30mm ammunition used by the Warrior Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

The 30mm ammunition used by the Warrior Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicles is manufactured by BAE Systems.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Broadcasting: Russia****Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[41759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to review the broadcasting licences of Russian state-backed media outlets (a) RT and (b) Sputnik in relation to potential campaigns of misinformation.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government takes the issue of misinformation and disinformation very seriously, especially when it affects UK audiences. Ofcom, the UK broadcasting regulator, is responsible for issuing television and radio broadcasting licences and ensuring licence holders are compliant with UK broadcast standards and licensing requirements.

Autonomous Non-Profit Organisation TV Novosti holds three UK television broadcasting licences, two for the provision of the RT service and one for the provision of the RT Europe service. Sputnik does not hold a UK broadcasting licence.

All Ofcom licensed services are required to comply with Ofcom's Broadcasting Code. This requires that news is duly accurate and that factual programmes do not materially mislead the audience. Licensees must also abide by Ofcom's 'due' impartiality requirements.

Channel Four**Mrs Helen Grant:**[\[41830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, on what dates (a) he and (b) officials across Government have had discussions and meetings with (i) global media companies, (ii) UK broadcasters and (iii) financial institutions on the possibility of their purchasing Channel 4.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government is consulting on whether an alternative ownership model for Channel 4 (but one where it retains a public service remit) may be better for the broadcaster, and better for the country.

We want Channel 4 to continue to be a public service broadcaster, and we want it to continue to contribute socially, economically and culturally to life across the UK. But all linear TV broadcasters are facing significant challenges in today's changing media landscape and Channel 4 is uniquely constrained in its ability to meet these challenges while it remains under public ownership - particularly because its access to capital and ability to pursue strategic partnership opportunities is limited.

Moving Channel 4 into private ownership could allow it to access new capital, take advantage of international opportunities, and create strategic partnerships only available through the private sector.

Consulting on the broadcaster's future is therefore about ensuring that Channel 4 can continue to contribute to the UK's success in public service broadcasting for years to come, and how we ensure its ownership model best supports this aim.

The Government has not decided whether to sell Channel 4, or how Channel 4 may be sold. Ministers and DCMS officials are meeting with a broad range of stakeholders to discuss our ongoing consultation. Their views and evidence will inform our policy-making and a final decision.

Mrs Helen Grant:

[41831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of delivering the Government's objectives for Channel 4 by increasing the broadcaster's investment and commissioning more content under the corporation's current ownership model.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government is consulting on whether an alternative ownership model for Channel 4 (but one where it retains a public service remit) may be better for the broadcaster, and better for the country.

We want Channel 4 to continue to be a public service broadcaster, and we want it to and continue to contribute socially, economically and culturally to life across the UK. But all linear TV broadcasters are facing significant challenges in today's changing media landscape and Channel 4 is uniquely constrained in its ability to meet these challenges while it remains under public ownership - particularly because its access to capital and ability to pursue strategic partnership opportunities is limited.

Moving Channel 4 into private ownership could allow it to access new capital, take advantage of international opportunities, and create strategic partnerships only available through the private sector.

Consulting on the broadcaster's future is therefore about ensuring that Channel 4 can continue to contribute to the UK's success in public service broadcasting for years to come, and how we ensure its ownership model best supports this aim.

No decisions have been made yet - the government, through its consultation, is seeking evidence from a wide range of stakeholders to inform its policy-making and a final decision on the ownership model of the channel.

Mrs Helen Grant:

[41832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will conduct and publish the results of an assessment of the potential impact of revising Channel 4's publisher-broadcaster model on (a) the UK production sector as a whole, (b) small and medium-sized production companies and (c) UK production companies based outside of London.

Mrs Helen Grant:

[\[41835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make and publish the results of an assessment of the potential effect that a change in Channel 4's ownership model may have on the levelling up of the UK's creative sector outside of London.

Mrs Helen Grant:

[\[41840\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential risk that the privatisation of Channel 4 would lead to the loss of distinctive UK content and a shift towards generic content tailored to an international audience.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government is currently consulting on issues around the channel's publisher-broadcaster restriction, its contribution to levelling up, and its remit.

We will use the responses to our consultation, and evidence received through it, to inform our decision-making. As such, it would not be appropriate for us to carry out an impact assessment until we have considered the responses and answered the questions set out in the consultation - until then, we do not know what specific impacts we are assessing.

Mrs Helen Grant:

[\[41833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that a potential change to Channel 4's publisher-broadcaster model will not negatively effect businesses and employment in the UK's production sector.

Mrs Helen Grant:

[\[41834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had with UK production companies on the potential impact that privatising Channel 4 may have on the future of the production sector.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises that Channel 4 has consistently delivered on its remit in the decades since being established, including supporting the UK's independent production sector.

Forty years on, this sector is now flourishing. Independent production is increasingly less reliant on income from UK public service broadcasters, and will continue to be in demand for the high-quality, differentiated, distinctively British content it produces. In the 10 years between 2008 and 2018, the contribution of PSB commissions to sector revenue fell from 64% to 42%, due in large part to the growth of international revenue.

Potential reform of the publisher broadcaster restriction could enable Channel 4 to achieve greater financial diversification that will support its growth and long term

sustainability, therefore increasing its ability to invest in UK content and the creative industries.

We are consulting on this so the government may take into account a broad range of evidence and views to shape its policy-making. Both officials and Ministers have also met regularly with key stakeholders from within the production sector, including PACT.

Whatever decision we make, it will not compromise this Government's commitment to the independent production sector and wider creative economy. Our support for the UK film and TV industry has helped it bounce back from the impact of the pandemic when it had to shut-down in March 2020. For Q4 2020 the UK film and TV industry had the second highest production spend for any quarter on record - at £1.19 billion.

Last year, the government invested over £1 billion through the creative sector tax reliefs which support the UK screen sectors. In High-End TV, the UK has seen a production boom worth over £4 billion since a dedicated tax relief was introduced in 2013.

More than 600 productions have been supported by the government's UK Film and TV Production Restart Scheme, protecting over 55,000 jobs and securing £1.9 billion of production spend.

■ Channel Four: Arts

Mrs Helen Grant:

[\[41836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking in relation to securing the contribution that Channel 4 makes to the UK's creative economy through its (a) regional offices and employees, (b) 50 per cent commissioning spend outside of London and (c) investment in skills and apprenticeships across the country.

Mr John Whittingdale:

We value Channel 4's contribution to the UK's creative economy, and the consultation clearly states that we consider a continued and renewed commitment to it will be appropriate to any potential change of ownership.

We have also been clear that whatever Ministers decide, Channel 4 will continue to have a Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) remit. Currently all national PSBs, including those that are privately owned, have quotas for content outside of the M25.

■ Channel Four: Young People

Mrs Helen Grant:

[\[41837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that under a potential change in ownership model Channel 4 would maintain its current levels of investment in skills and productivity for young people.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government believes that a change in ownership could allow Channel 4 the best chance of responding effectively to current market dynamics and opportunities, with greater access to capital and more scope to form strategic partnerships and expand internationally.

We all have a role to play in ensuring that the UK has an effective skills system that meets the needs of employers and learners - including young people - and that everyone with talent and ambition, regardless of their background, should have the opportunity to build a successful career in the Creative Industries.

A thriving, sustainable Channel 4 could offer the best prospects for long term job creation for young people in the creative economy. That is why we are considering potential reform to gather views and evidence on how the channel's future sustainability can be achieved.

Mrs Helen Grant:**[41838]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure that under a potential change in ownership model Channel 4 would maintain its focus on producing content that appeals to young people.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Channel 4's current remit and obligations are largely based on the key building blocks for public service broadcasting as set out in the 2003 Communications Act, with further changes made in the 2010 Digital Economy Act. The Government has made clear in the consultation that it intends to preserve Channel 4's PSB remit.

The consultation also makes clear that the Government sees the value delivered to society through the obligations placed on Channel 4 to broadcast content appealing to young and diverse audiences. Indeed, we would expect the channel's success with younger audiences to be something particularly appealing to potential buyers.

The Government is minded to retain such obligations, though it will be important to ensure its remit does not prohibit Channel 4's future sustainability and its ability to broadcast relevant and quality content given the developments in the media landscape – with young audiences increasingly likely to consume content on non-linear platforms such as VoD services for example.

We are seeking views on the possible modernisation of Channel 4's remit and obligations through the consultation.

■ Contracts for Services**Dr Kieran Mullan:****[42208]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential overall cost effectiveness of social outcomes contracting to Government.

Matt Warman:

The Life Chances Fund (LCF) is a fund specifically designed to test the use of Social Impact Bonds (SIBs), also known as social outcomes contracts. The evaluation supporting the LCF has been designed to provide an answer to the question of cost effectiveness. It seeks to determine the comparative cost benefits of using SIBs compared to other commissioning routes.

The evaluation findings are due in 2025, following the completion of LCF funding.

■ Cultural Heritage: Repairs and Maintenance**Stuart Anderson:**[\[43666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support is available to help museums and other historic sites undertake upgrades or expansion projects.

Caroline Dineneage:

Historic England, funded by DCMS, is the government's statutory advisor on heritage and tasked with protecting the historical environment of England by preserving and listing historic buildings, ancient monuments and advising central and local government. Historic England currently offers c. £11 million per year for capital works to heritage sites across the country, through their Repair Grants for heritage at risk.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is an arms length body of DCMS and distributes both Lottery player funding and government funding. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has a range of grants open to both museum and heritage organisations from £3,000 - £5M, which includes grants for maintenance and capital projects.

National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England also offer support by distributing grants via the government funded Culture Recovery Fund which includes a significant allocation for capital funding to cultural and heritage sites. In 2021/22 £33.6 million is available through the Grants for Programmes of Major Works and Additional Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk schemes.

Investment is also being made in vital infrastructure, repair and maintenance work for museums.

The Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND) will provide £18.8m in capital funding grants of between £50k-£5m for infrastructure, repair and maintenance work in regional accredited museums.

In addition, over the past three years, government has distributed £131m capital funding among DCMS-Sponsored bodies, including the national museums and galleries, to enable them to carry out essential estates maintenance and improvement works.

■ Internet: Costs

Justin Madders:

[\[41926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment has been made of the cost of fixed wireless internet access in households where fibre broadband is not accessible.

Matt Warman:

There is now a thriving market of over 80 providers rolling out gigabit broadband all over the UK and 46% of premises currently have access. Furthermore 96% of the UK have access to superfast broadband services, one of the highest in Europe. Some premises in the UK may be served by broadband provided over a wireless network (known as fixed wireless access, or FWA), using either a mobile network or a dedicated network.

The pricing of fixed wireless internet access services is typically defined by most providers on a national basis, and does not vary depending on whether fibre broadband is available or not. Analysis suggests that pricing is comparable with fixed line services. These services are made available by providers where they have coverage and capacity to do so. Consumers can compare fixed wireless access products through various price comparison and other consumer websites, and both MNOs and Wireless Internet Service Providers (WISPs) offer a range of services and prices to suit consumer needs.

■ Life Chances Fund

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[42207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has for the future of the Life Chances Fund.

Matt Warman:

The Life Chances Fund was established as a nine-year fund running from 2016 up until 2025; the government remains committed to delivering the Fund within this timeframe. It is expected to support over 48,000 people to achieve improved life outcomes across the country.

DCMS will continue to share insights and learnings from the Life Chances Fund across government, in order to support the commissioning of future programmes and services, based on evidence and data.

■ Live Events Reinsurance Scheme

Jamie Stone:

[\[45236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what proportion of the events industry his Department estimates will avail itself of the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme.

Jamie Stone:

[\[45237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what (a) method, (b) calculations and (c) evidential basis his Department used to agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer a five per cent premium for the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme; and what assessment was made of the potential merits of similar models that have a zero per cent premium.

Caroline Dinenage:

DCMS has worked closely with representatives from both the events and insurance industries over recent months to develop the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme.

Details of the scheme - announced on 5 August with supplementary information released on 6 September - were designed to both provide the necessary confidence and reassurance to allow event organisers to plan and invest in live events over the coming year, whilst managing exposure and suitably protecting the taxpayer.

Where possible we sought to work in partnership with insurers and align with market practice. Through engaging with the sector throughout the design of the scheme we have been able to create a scheme which will play a vital role in helping the live events industry to rebuild with confidence. Numerous organisations - including UK Music and Live Nation - recognised the important contribution the scheme will make in enabling activity to go ahead when it was launched last month.

■ Public Libraries

Steve Reed:

[\[45133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what data his Department holds on the number of books no longer required in public library collections that have been made available for sale to the public in each of the last five years.

Caroline Dinenage:

The government does not hold this information. The review and disposal of bookstock is the responsibility of each library authority and its individual libraries to determine.

■ Sports: Hitchin and Harpenden

Bim Afolami:

[\[42079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much financial support the Government has provided to grassroots sport in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency in each of the last three years.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity are incredibly important for our physical and mental health and all generations and communities should be able to enjoy the health, wellbeing, social and other benefits of being active. Due to this, the government made sure that people could exercise at least once a day even during the height of the first period of enhanced national restrictions and we opened up grassroots sport and leisure facilities as soon as it was safe to do so.

Since April 2018, the Department has invested £218,711 into grassroots sport projects within the Hitchin and Harpenden constituency through Sport England. This sum includes £45,189 from Sport England's Community Emergency Fund to support local sports clubs and community organisations through the coronavirus pandemic, and £18,144 in Return to Play, which are small grants to support a return to sport and physical activity as coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

The investment breakdown per year: 2018/19: £60,000, 2019/20: £33,428, 2020/21: £69,034 and 2021/22 (to June 2021): £56,249.

■ **Television: Standards**

Mrs Helen Grant:

[\[41839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Department's news story, It's time to level up Britain's screens, published on 23 June 2021, what evidence his Department used to inform the assessment that choice is no longer an issue for UK viewers.

Mr John Whittingdale:

There is a wealth of evidence set out in our consultation document that supports the case we have made about the evolving media landscape and the challenges this presents for linear TV broadcasters. Linear TV viewing is down almost 60% amongst 16-25 year olds since 2010, whilst 16-34 year olds now spend almost twice as much time on YouTube and subscription VoD services than they do with broadcast content. There are now 315 channels, compared to 5 in 1982 when Channel 4 was established. Linear TV advertising revenues - which constituted over 90% of Channel 4's revenue in 2020 - have declined across the sector at a compound annual rate of 2.5% since 2015.

Moreover, Ofcom, in their latest recommendations to Government on the future of public service media, outlined what it called the 'rapid change in the industry – driven by global commercial trends and a transformation in viewing habits - [which] is making it harder for public service broadcasters to compete for audiences and maintain their current offer'.

It is against this backdrop that the Government is taking action through a strategic review of the UK's public service broadcasting system, with plans to bring forward a White Paper in the Autumn, to ensure that our traditional public service broadcasters are equipped to retain their place at the centre of the UK's media ecosystem.

EDUCATION

■ **Adult Education: Finance**

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[45096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much was clawed back from the adult education budget of each further education college in England in 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

The information requested is not yet available.

The 2020/21 funding year completed in July 2021. Providers are now checking their data for a final submission in October and considering whether to submit a business case for any local COVID-19 circumstances that may have affected their delivery. Following the final submission, we will reconcile the funding claimed in November and start to recover funding in December. We will be able to confirm planned recoveries in December.

■ Children: Day Care**Helen Hayes:****[42044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential developmental benefits of expanding 30 hours free childcare for three- and four-year-olds to all low-income families.

Helen Hayes:**[42045]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to tackle the educational gap between children of three and four years from low income families in receipt of 15 hours free childcare and those in receipt of 30 hours free childcare.

Vicky Ford:

All 3 and 4- year-olds are entitled to 15 hours free childcare each week, providing children with high-quality early education. Eligible working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds are eligible for an additional 15 hours (30 hours) to help them with the additional costs associated with childcare.

The Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project suggested there was no evidence that full-time provision (of 10 sessions per week) resulted in better outcomes for children than part-time provision (for example, 5 sessions per week). Findings suggest that an extended period of pre-school experience on a part-time basis is likely to be more advantageous than a shorter period of full-time provision. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eppse-3-to-14-years>.

The 2017 Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) report showed mixed outcomes at age 3 from childcare used at ages 2 to 3. Some measures showed some improvement with additional hours of childcare (such as cognitive outcomes, socio-emotional outcomes and peer problems) but some measures showed detrimental outcomes (such as emotional self-regulation). Further information can be accessed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627098/SEED_ECEC_impact_at_age_3.pdf.

The 2018 SEED Report concerned the impact of early education at ages 2 to 4 on child outcomes at age 4, and the importance of the early years home environment. The report suggested that outcomes were more strongly associated with

demographics and the home environment than time spent in childcare. It did not find that the amount of childcare per week had any greater effect on the most disadvantaged children, although on one outcome, it had a greater effect on moderately disadvantaged children. The report can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/738725/SEED_Impact_Age_4_Report_September_2018.pdf.

When 5-year-olds were assessed in 2019, nearly three-quarters of the country's youngest children had achieved a good level of development. This is a substantial improvement, when around half of children achieved that same level of development in 2013, when comparable data is first available.

As part of the COVID-19 education recovery strategy we have invested £17 million on the delivery of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention - improving the language skills of reception age children who need it most during the outbreak. Two-thirds of eligible mainstream primary schools have signed up for this programme, the majority of these have free school meal rates above the national average. We estimate 90,000 reception age children will get extra support with their speech and language development.

In June 2021 we also announced an additional £1.4 billion to support education recovery for children aged 2 to 19 in schools, colleges and early years settings, including £153 million which will provide the opportunity for evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners. This includes new programmes focusing on key areas such as speech and language development.

■ Children's Centres: Closures

Colleen Fletcher:

[45140]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of Sure Start centres that have (a) closed and (b) reduced the services they provide in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England since 2010.

Vicky Ford:

Based on the information supplied by local authorities as of 31 August 2021, the linked database sets out the number of Sure Start children's centres sites that have closed in Coventry North East constituency, Coventry, the West Midlands and England since 2010: [https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/\[1\]](https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/[1]). The Department does not routinely collect data on the services provided by children's centres. This data is held at a local level.

[1] Source: This is based on information supplied by local authorities on the number of children's centres in their area to Get Information about Schools (GIAS) database about the location of <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk> and internal management information held by the department as of 31 August 2021. These figures may be different to previous answers and could change again in future since local authorities may update their data at any time. The GIAS collects data on

children's centres that local authorities have closed on a permanent basis. It does not collect data on children's centres that local authorities may have closed temporarily in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Day Care: Ellesmere Port and Neston

Justin Madders:

[41919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of childcare hours funded by the Government are used in (a) England and (b) Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Vicky Ford:

Government funding of early education is based on actual take-up. The number and percentage of disadvantaged 2-year-olds and all 3 and 4-year-old children registered to receive funded early education in January 2021 in Cheshire West and Chester local authority and England is published in the National Statistics release 'Education Provision: Children under 5 years of age', which can be accessed here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-provision-children-under-5/2021>. This information is also attached. Figures by parliamentary constituency are not available, therefore data has been provided for Cheshire West and Chester local authority, in which Ellesmere Port and Neston parliamentary constituency is located.

All children aged 3 and 4-years-old, and eligible disadvantaged 2-year-olds, are entitled to 15 hours per week of funded early education for 38 weeks of the year. Eligible working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to an additional 15 weekly hours of extended funded early education for 38 weeks of the year. It is estimated that almost 3 in 4 eligible children took up some extended hours in January 2021. It is not possible to calculate this estimate at local authority level, therefore the percentage take-up is not included in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. 41919_table [41919_table_funded_early_education_by_entitlement_Cheshire West_Chester_LA_and_England_Jan_2021 (1).xls]

■ Free School Meals

Dame Diana Johnson:

[45072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the finding of the Child Action Poverty Group's August 2021 report, Fixing lunch: the case for expanding free school meals, that one million children living in poverty are not eligible for free school meals, if he will take steps to broaden the eligibility criteria for free school meals.

Vicky Ford:

We think it is important that free school meal support is targeted at those that need it most. Free school meals (FSM) are an integral part of our provision for families on low incomes and our wider actions to promote social mobility.

Under the benefits-related criteria, there are currently around 1.7 million pupils eligible for and claiming FSM. An additional 1.3 million infants receive a free meal under the universal infant free school meal policy.

We introduced new eligibility criteria in April 2018 in recognition of the transition to Universal Credit, the arrangements in place are forecasted to reach more children, notwithstanding the current economic circumstances in which more children will be able to benefit from FSM.

Further to this we included generous protections, which mean any family eligible for FSM transitioning to Universal Credit from a legacy benefit will continue to have access to FSM even if they move above the earnings threshold.

■ Lifelong Education

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[41865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to promote lifelong learning and skills development.

Gillian Keegan:

The government is investing £2.5 billion in the National Skills Fund in England.

Since 1 April, the government is supporting adults who do not hold A level equivalent or higher qualifications, to access over 400 funded level 3 courses, with Free Courses for Jobs. This offer is a long-term commitment, backed by £95 million from the National Skills Fund in year one.

Complementing this support for adults, Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks to give people the opportunity to build up sector specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. The department is expanding the Skills Bootcamp programme across the country during the 2021/22 financial year, with £43 million from the National Skills Fund. There will be digital Skills Bootcamps available in each English region and a wide coverage of technical Skills Bootcamps. We are also delivering Skills Bootcamps in retrofit construction skills to support the green industrial revolution.

From 2025, the department will introduce a Lifelong Loan Entitlement equivalent to 4 years of post-18 education. People will be supported to study throughout their life, with the opportunity to train, retrain and upskill as needed in response to changing skills needs and employment patterns. It will help transform post-18 study, delivering greater parity between further and higher education.

The department is continuing to invest in education and skills training for adults through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (£1.34 billion in 2021/22). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3, to support adults to gain the skills required for work, apprenticeships, or further learning.

■ National School Breakfast Programme

Siobhain McDonagh:

[41627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to clarify (a) which schools are participating in the National School Breakfast Programme and (b) whether the purpose of that programme is to alleviate classroom hunger.

Vicky Ford:

The government is committed to continuing support for breakfast clubs and we are funding up to a further £24 million to continue our programme over the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas meaning that thousands of children in low income families will be offered nutritious breakfasts.

The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas. Schools will be eligible for the programme if they have 50% or more pupils within bands A-F of the Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) scale. When schools join the programme, they will sign a partnership agreement that requires them to identify and target those children that are most in need of support. Our provider, Family Action, will monitor attendance data at each participating school, and will support those schools with their targeting where needed. This will ensure that the programme benefits the children who are most in need of support.

The enrolment process for schools joining the programme is currently ongoing, and we have seen a strong interest so far from eligible schools since we invited the expressions of interest. Schools are currently still able to apply to join the programme. As we are still registering schools for the programme, it is too early to publish a list of participating schools. However, we will consider the best opportunities to share information on the programme as it progresses.

Christian Wakeford:

[42215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department plans to take in the event that the size of food orders under the new school breakfast tender decrease in the third term of support when schools must cover 25 per cent of the cost of food orders.

Vicky Ford:

The government is committed to continuing support for breakfast clubs and we are funding up to a further £24 million to continue our programme over the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas meaning that thousands of children in low-income families will be offered nutritious breakfasts. The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas.

In terms of the schools' financial contribution, this is an attractive offer to schools, providing free breakfasts for their pupils for two terms followed by a very substantial discount for the following four terms. Asking schools to contribute a small proportion of the costs means that the overall funding of up to £24 million can go further,

reaching a higher number of schools, and therefore more disadvantaged children overall. We have seen strong interest from eligible schools so far since we invited expressions of interest, and our programme will make a real difference in terms of children's health, attainment, wellbeing and readiness to learn.

Our provider, Family Action, is ensuring that schools fully understand and are committed to their financial contribution when they join the programme. The department and Family Action are continually monitoring the programme and will act upon any issues that may arise.

Kate Green:

[\[45117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of charging schools supported by the new National School Breakfast Programme for 25 per cent of the cost of food ordered in the third term of support.

Vicky Ford:

The government is committed to continuing support for breakfast clubs and we are further funding up to £24 million to continue our programme over the next two years. This funding will support around 2,500 schools in disadvantaged areas meaning that thousands of children in low-income families will be offered nutritious breakfasts.

The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas. Schools will be eligible for the programme if they have 50% or more pupils within bands A-F of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index scale.

In terms of the schools' financial contribution, this is an attractive offer to schools, providing free breakfasts for their pupils for 2 terms followed by a very substantial discount for the following 4 terms. Asking schools to contribute a small proportion of the costs means that the overall funding of up to £24 million can go further, reaching a higher number of schools, and therefore more disadvantaged children overall. Since inviting expressions of interest, we have seen strong interest from eligible schools so far and our programme will make a real difference in terms of children's health, attainment, wellbeing and readiness to learn. Our provider, Family Action, are ensuring that schools fully understand and are committed to their financial contribution when they join the programme .

■ **National School Breakfast Programme: Mitcham and Morden**

Siobhain McDonagh:

[\[41626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools in Mitcham and Morden constituency will be supported by the new National School Breakfast Programme tender during the academic year 2021-2022.

Matt Vickers:

[\[42201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools in Stockton South constituency will be supported by the new National School Breakfast Programme tender during the academic year 2021-2022.

Christian Wakeford:

[42214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether any schools in Bury South will be supported by the new National School Breakfast Programme in the 2021-22 academic year.

Vicky Ford:

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

The focus of the programme is to target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas. Schools' eligibility for the programme is based on the Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) – a nationally recognised indicator of need – to ensure provision is directed where it is most needed. Schools will be eligible for the programme if they have 50% or more pupils within bands A-F of the IDACI scale.

The enrolment process for schools joining the programme is currently ongoing, and we have seen a strong interest so far from eligible schools since we invited the expressions of interest. Schools are currently still able to apply to join the programme. As we are still registering schools for the programme, it is too early to publish a list of participating schools. However, we will consider the best opportunities to share information on the programme as it progresses.

■ Pre-school Education: Admissions

Justin Madders:

[41918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment he has made of (a) availability of pre-school places and (b) demand for those places.

Vicky Ford:

Local authorities are responsible for stewardship of local childcare markets. The department continues to work in close partnership with local authorities to monitor sufficiency of provision for children and parents. We have not seen a significant number of parents unable to secure a childcare place, this term or since early year settings re-opened fully on 1 June 2020. Where parents have been unable to temporarily secure a childcare place, for example due to their usual setting being temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this has been able to be quickly resolved locally. Local authorities are not reporting any significant sufficiency issues.

Our official data collection has monitored attendance in early years settings throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, and can be accessed here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>. Additionally, Ipsos MORI conducted wave 8 of our parent poll, 'Childcare use, perceived impact on child

development, and information on working from home for families of 0-4 year-olds during COVID-19' in March 2021, with a representative sample of 1,000 parents of children aged 0-4 in England. The data has been weighted to match the population profile of parents of children aged 0-4 in England by region, social grade and the age of the selected child. Key points from the findings include:

- Most parents (86%) who used formal childcare before the COVID-19 outbreak and are currently using it say that their child is spending about the same number of hours or more in formal childcare as they did before.
- More than half (53%) of parents report their child is currently using formal childcare, this increases to 88% when looking at just those children who were receiving formal childcare before the COVID-19 outbreak. Households in the least deprived areas were more likely to be using formal childcare.
- Only 4% of parents who are not currently using formal childcare would like to use it but cannot find a suitable provider.
- Nearly two thirds of parents of 0–4-year-olds currently using childcare (64%) agree that the hours their child(ren) can access formal or informal childcare/school fits with the working hours of the adults in the household.

The report can be accessed via this link: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/childcare-use-perceived-impact-child-development-and-information-working-home-families-0-4-year>.

Wave 9 of the parent poll, which covers similar territory, was conducted by Ipsos MORI in July 2021. The government intends to publish this evidence as soon as possible. The government continues to work in partnership with local authorities and stakeholders to monitor sufficiency of early education and childcare provision for parents and children.

■ Pre-school Education: Closures

Justin Madders: [41917]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of pre-schools in England have closed since March 2020.

Vicky Ford:

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Schools: Food

Kerry McCarthy: [45059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to page 15 of the National Food Strategy, whether he plans to implement the recommendation that the School Food Standards should be updated.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[45060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with departmental colleagues on the introduction of an updated Reference Diet as set out in recommendation 14 of the National Food Strategy.

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[45061\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to remove the School Food Standards requirement to serve meat three times a week in line with the Reference Diet recommended in the National Food Strategy.

Vicky Ford:

The School Food Standards provide the legislative framework to ensure schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. The School Food Standards are in line with current government advice on red and processed meat, encouraging schools to serve it in moderation as a good source of nutrients, including iron, zinc and vitamin B12.

Work to update the standards was paused during the COVID-19 outbreak. We do however keep this position under review, and are working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to carefully consider the National Food Strategy's recommendations and will respond in full with a White Paper in due course.

■ Schools: Mental Health Services

Louise Haigh:

[\[41999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the findings of Mind's report entitled, Not making the grade: why our approach to mental health at secondary school is failing young people, published on 30 June 2021.

Vicky Ford:

The government is grateful to Mind and Young Minds for their report about mental health in secondary schools. We recognise the difficulties that a significant number of young people are facing with their mental health and wellbeing, and that this can be linked to experiences of racism, trauma and abuse. We also know that the COVID-19 outbreak has had a particular impact on the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Mental health and wellbeing are a priority for the government, and we are working closely with schools and colleges to support pupils to return in a way that supports their mental wellbeing.

We recently announced more than £17 million to improve mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges. This includes funding to train a senior mental health lead in 7,800 schools and colleges in England this academic year. Senior leads will learn about the range of mental health issues likely to be encountered in schools and colleges, the risk factors associated with specific groups,

including pupils who have suffered from trauma and vulnerable groups and how to put in place whole school approaches that embed that knowledge into wider staff training and school processes, including behaviour and attendance policies.

This is in addition to the £79 million we announced in March to boost children and young people's mental health support. This funding will increase Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to cover around 35% of pupils in England by 2023. MHSTs work with groups of schools and colleges to identify specialist needs of pupils in their areas.

We understand that mental health difficulties can lead to challenging behaviour, and we know some students require additional support to behave well. Our Behaviour Hubs programme equips schools and multi-academy trusts to create and sustain positive behaviour cultures. The programme includes specialist training modules on managing challenging behaviour and inclusive practices and policies.

However, we will always support headteachers to use exclusion when required as part of creating calm and disciplined classrooms – and our guidance sets out how headteachers can make these difficult decisions in a way which is lawful and fair. At times, it may also be necessary to use reasonable force to restrain a pupil – for example, to break up a fight to protect teachers and other pupils. We trust schools to use their judgement in recording incidents involving force and, when serious incidents occur, we would expect schools to record the incident and let the parents know.

Furthermore, recently the department carried out a call for evidence as part of a fundamental review of both the behaviour and discipline and suspensions and permanent exclusions guidance. For this we gathered views on behaviour management which included interventions that support pupils with particular vulnerabilities. This will help us understand how schools have appropriate provision to support any mental health needs, special educational needs or disability that a pupil may have.

Racism has no place in schools, or in society. We expect headteachers to put effective behaviour policies in place to tackle this, including actions to prevent bullying, and have put in place support. Our Respectful School Communities tool can support schools to develop an approach which promotes respect and discipline, in order to combat bullying, harassment and abuse of any kind. We are also currently running a procurement exercise to fund anti-bullying organisations in 2021-22, to make sure that schools have the right support in place to prevent bullying of all pupils, including those with protected characteristics. This builds upon the changes we have made to make relationships education compulsory in all schools, which covers teaching pupils the knowledge they need to foster respect for other people and for difference. Where bullying and racist incidents do occur, schools should develop their own approaches for monitoring these and exercise their own judgement as to what will work best for their circumstances.

■ Special Educational Needs

Olivia Blake:

[\[45319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has with relevant stakeholders on including in the forthcoming SEND green paper the UNCRPD Monitoring Committee's observations and recommendations for developing an inclusive education system under UNCRPD Article 24 obligations.

Vicky Ford:

The government's commitment to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education is at the heart of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system. This is a key principle that underpins the government's approach.

We have had, and continue to have, discussions with a wide range of individuals and organisations to inform work on the review. This includes children and young people with SEND, parents, education establishments, local authorities, representatives from health and care services and a wide range of voluntary and community sector organisations and experts.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Paula Barker:

[\[42199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of universities resuming face-to-face teaching at the start of the new academic term in September 2021.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has now lifted the restrictions on higher education (HE) including removing all restrictions on face-to-face teaching. Providers are therefore able to shape courses without restrictions on face-to-face teaching and learning.

HE providers should therefore not be planning to restrict teaching based on COVID-19 restrictions. However, as autonomous institutions, it is for providers to determine their own provision, taking account of government guidance.

As a result of COVID-19, some providers have accelerated their digital teaching and learning plans, and some will retain an element of blended learning. We know that the COVID-19 outbreak has enabled many providers to identify new and innovative ways to teaching and learning, and students will continue to benefit from these alongside in-person provision.

We expect all universities to continue to deliver excellent teaching and learning, in line with guidance from the Office for Students (OfS), and that they should provide students with a full experience.

The OfS has made it clear that all HE providers must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards and the OfS will be monitoring to ensure this is the case.

Universities should be open about what students can expect. If students have concerns, they should first raise them with their HE provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

■ **Universities: Freedom of Speech**

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[41864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to protect freedom of speech on university campuses.

Michelle Donelan:

This government believes that freedom of speech and academic freedom are fundamental pillars of our higher education system and that protecting these principles should be a priority for universities. That is why the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill was introduced on 12 May. The bill will strengthen existing freedom of speech duties and directly address gaps within the existing law. This includes the fact that there is no clear way of enforcing the current law when a higher education provider breaches it, as well as applying the duties directly to students' unions. The changes will introduce clear consequences for breaches of the new duties and ensure that these principles are upheld.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Agriculture**

Holly Lynch:

[\[41996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support farmers and workers in the UK's global agricultural supply chains to help (a) decarbonise production systems and (b) absorb the costs of more sustainable methods of farming.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government is committed to tackling deforestation and greening agricultural supply chains. We are supporting a broad package of measures to support the transition to sustainable global supply chains and to protect forests and other ecosystems.

We are working with developing country governments to identify how public policies and support to agriculture can be developed or reformed to leverage private investment into more sustainable agriculture; and to support farmers to shift from environmentally harmful practices to more sustainable ones. Together with the Just Rural Transition initiative launched in 2019, and in partnership with the World Bank, we are assisting interested developing countries to analyse their policy options for helping farmers to make this transition. Through the COP26 Sustainable Agriculture campaign, we are mobilising further support to help those countries to develop, test and pilot sustainable approaches. This includes re-orienting investment in research,

development and innovation to help farmers access and scale up sustainable technologies and practices.

We are also supporting multilateral organisations to improve climate outcomes in their agricultural programming. This includes providing £150 million to the International Fund for Agricultural Development's flagship 'Adaptation for Smallholder Adaptation Programme' and mainstreaming climate work into the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme.

We are introducing world-leading due diligence legislation through the Environment Bill to tackle illegal deforestation in UK supply chains, and have convened the Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade (FACT) Dialogue as part of our COP 26 Presidency. Through the FACT dialogue we are working with other producer and consumer governments to develop a shared roadmap of actions to protect forests and other ecosystems while promoting sustainable development and trade.

■ **Agriculture: Seasonal Workers**

Harriett Baldwin:

[41870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers pilot scheme; and when he plans to publish evaluation information on the (a) first-year pilot and (b) extended pilot.

Victoria Prentis:

On 22 December 2020, the Government extended the Seasonal Workers Pilot for one year and expanded the number of visas from 10,000 to 30,000.

The extension and expansion of the Pilot for 2021 will allow for further review of the Pilot, including how growers will reduce their reliance on migrant labour now we have left the EU, whilst also easing some of the pressure experienced on farms when they are at their busiest. We intend to publish the first-year review later this year.

Defra is working closely with industry and the Home Office – who engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, when designing and implementing immigration policy – to understand better the effectiveness of interventions and to ensure there is a long-term strategy for the food and farming workforce beyond 2021.

■ **Alpacas: Bovine Tuberculosis**

Mr Robert Goodwill:

[41757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much his Department spent on (a) legal fees and (b) associated costs in connection with the proposed culling of Geronimo the alpaca from Shepherds Close Farm in Wickwar.

Victoria Prentis:

With the exception of legal costs which were awarded to Defra by the High Court following the unsuccessful Judicial Review in 2019 and the owner's failed appeal

against the granting of a warrant, the costs associated with the compulsory slaughter of the twice-TB-test positive alpaca have not been separately accounted for.

■ **Animal Products: Imports**

Kim Leadbeater: [\[38492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Justice on jail terms for offenders of (a) trophy hunting and (b) importers of trophy hunting.

Rebecca Pow:

In the UK we have robust legislation, such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, in place to protect our wildlife. Controls on imports from trophy hunting are currently enforced by the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 2018 and the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

As set out in the Government's manifesto, we are banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species. We will be setting out our plans soon, including on sanctions, and my department remains in communication with the Ministry of Justice regarding such matters.

Kim Leadbeater: [\[38493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to (a) prevent and (b) prosecute trophy hunting.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government takes the conservation of endangered species very seriously, which is why we are banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species, as set out in the Government's manifesto.

Our approach will be robust and effective and will deliver the change we promised to help protect thousands of species worldwide. We will be setting out our plans soon.

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[45218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ban the import of hunting trophies into the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government takes the conservation of endangered species very seriously, which is why we are banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species, as set out in the Government's manifesto.

Our approach will be robust and effective and will deliver the change we promised to help protect thousands of species worldwide. We will be setting out our plans soon.

■ Beverage Containers: Deposit Return Schemes

Justin Madders:

[\[41925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish his response to the consultation on the Introduction of a deposit return scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which closed on 24 March 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government remains committed to introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers. We are currently analysing responses to the recent consultation and will set out next steps in due course.

■ Biodiversity

Bim Afolami:

[\[42075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of a pilot scheme to consider the impact of biodiversity net gain in 2022 and 2023 before its full implementation in 2024.

Rebecca Pow:

We know that a number of local planning authorities and developers are already seeking biodiversity net gains from development and we are continuing to speak to industry and the planning sector to understand the issues and needs arising from pre-commencement practice.

Some aspects of the biodiversity net gain policy were tested, and evaluated, as part of the biodiversity offsetting pilots which took place from 2012 to 2014. We will shortly be consulting formally on more details of biodiversity net gain's implementation and will consider which components of the approach might benefit from pre-commencement testing as part of this.

■ Biofuels

John Redwood:

[\[41598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his plans are to encourage growing crops for fuel.

Victoria Prentis:

Biofuels used in the transport sector have been supported since 2008 through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), led by the Department of Transport. The RTFO is a certificate trading scheme which sets targets and provides financial incentives for the supply of sustainable biofuels. To qualify for support under the RTFO biofuels must meet mandatory sustainability criteria, which include measures to prevent deforestation and other negative land use impacts.

This month, the Government introduced E10 (petrol with up to 10% ethanol) as the standard petrol across Great Britain. The introduction of E10 increases the amount of bioethanol blended with petrol sold at forecourts in the UK. Bioethanol production in the UK results in valuable by-products, such as high protein animal feed and stored

CO₂ for the food and drink industries, reducing the need to import these products. Increased UK demand due to the introduction of E10 has wider economic benefits in terms of providing support for UK bioethanol producers and farmers in the supply chain.

In the Government's response to the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) annual progress report to Parliament in 2020, we announced that we will publish a new Biomass Strategy in 2022. This will review what amount of sustainable biomass could be available to the UK, including feedstocks grown for transport biofuels. It will assess how this resource could be best used across the economy to help achieve our net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050.

We are clear that we will support farmers to produce high quality crops in a more sustainable way, ensuring that policy supports the conditions where domestic farm businesses can thrive, whether that be production for food or fuel production. Our Agriculture Transition Plan (2020) sets out how we will use public money to reward farmers and land managers for delivering environmentally sustainable outcomes.

■ Carbon Emissions

Sarah Owen:

[45282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Climate Assembly UK's report entitled The path to net zero.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government welcomed and thanked the Climate Assembly UK for their report. The Government has been working closely with the Climate Assembly UK since it was first commissioned. The Climate Assembly UK's recommendations demonstrate strong public support for the Government's intention to deliver net zero and build back greener. Initiatives like the Climate Assembly UK play an important role in helping develop policies that are achievable and fair. The Government is looking closely at the Climate Assembly UK report's findings and departments will consider them in plans to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The Government will publish a comprehensive Net Zero Strategy ahead of COP26, setting out the vision and policies to reach net zero. This will address many of the themes set out in the Climate Assembly UK report, including those where Defra is responsible.

■ Cats: Imports

Dr Neil Hudson:

[R] [42205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many cats entering the UK non-commercially were under six months of age in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

We operate one of the most rigorous and robust pet travel checking regimes in Europe. All non-commercial dogs, cats and ferrets entering Great Britain on approved routes (every route other than ROI and NI) under the Pet Travel rules undergo 100% documentary and identity checks by authorised pet checkers.

There are numerous approved routes into the UK by which pets can travel. These diverse routes are managed by independent pet checkers and by a variety of carriers including ferries, air travel and trains. Pet checkers and carriers independently record the number of how many cats, dogs, ferrets and assistance dogs have travelled and are required to record additional details of the animal where non-compliance is discovered. They may also independently record identifying details for their own records.

The data regarding the Pet Travel Rules is based on information provided by checkers employed by approved carriers of pet animals. Raw data on the number of animals travelled via each authorised pet checker or carrier is provided to the Animal and Plant Health Agency and Border Force to enable effective enforcement action. This new system, with carrier captured data, records the number of pet animals entering the country more accurately than the previous legacy database (Pets database) which was initially deployed in 2006, but it is not a requirement to record the age of the animals travelling on those routes. Therefore, we cannot provide this data.

Dr Neil Hudson:**[R] [\[42206\]](#)**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many cats entering the UK commercially were under six months of age in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

Prior to 2021 TRACES (Trade Control and Expert System) was used to record imports of animal/animal product movements into the UK. TRACES is a European Commission system employed by EU member states to facilitate and record animal movements into and throughout the EU.

Following the United Kingdom's departure from the EU, all imports are notified via IPAFFs with the relevant information required. The data collected previously under TRACES and now IPAFFS covers all commercially imported cats and dogs, including commercial kittens, rescue cats and kittens, research cats and unaccompanied pets. The number of animals imported into the Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) is recorded on these systems but not the age of animals. Therefore, unfortunately we are unable to provide this level of data.

■ Climate Change Convention

Ruth Jones:

[\[38415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the UK's preparedness for the COP-15 summit in October 2021.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) announced on 18 August that CBD COP15 will now be scheduled to take place as a two-part Summit. In August, China announced that there will be a virtual, High-Level Segment from the 11 to 15 October 2021 followed by an in-person event in Kunming, China, from 25 April to 8 May 2022.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is responsible for representing the UK at meetings of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. As part of this framework the UK is advocating ambitious global targets to bend the curve of biodiversity loss by 2030, including targets to ensure more ocean and land is protected, ecosystems are restored, species population sizes are recovering and, that by 2050 extinctions are halted. This ambitious set of targets must be supported by increased finance for nature and strengthened reporting and review mechanisms to facilitate the achievement of them.

To secure this ambition, the UK has participated fully in each of the virtual negotiations sessions which have taken place this year. In addition, the UK, in partnership with Norway, is leading a programme of workshops for Parties to enhance planning, reporting and review mechanisms to strengthen the implementation mechanisms of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the CBD. We are working internationally, including through the Leaders' Pledge for Nature; the UK-led Global Ocean Alliance; in our role as Ocean Co-Chair of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People and bilaterally with priority countries to secure a successful CBD outcome.

We must tackle the biodiversity crisis head on, and the delay to these important negotiations is no excuse for taking our foot off the pedal. We hope more countries will use the extra time to join us in safeguarding and financing nature conservation to ensure the adoption of a truly ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

■ Electronic Training Aids

Steve Double:

[\[41952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the maximum permitted electrical discharges (mJ) are for (a) dog training collars and (b) livestock fencing.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK is a global leader in animal welfare and this Government is committed to ensuring high standards. The maximum permitted electrical discharge for dog training collars and livestock fencing is not regulated under animal welfare legislation. However, such systems may be subject to other legislation which regulates the design and installation of electrical systems.

As set out in our Action Plan for Animal Welfare launched on 12 May 2021 we propose to ban some electronic training collars (e collars). Our decision reflects the concern that handheld remote-controlled devices can be all too easily open to abuse and therefore be harmful to animal welfare.

Regarding electric livestock fencing, our codes of recommendations and animal welfare guides for cattle, horses and sheep state that any electrical discharge must be felt only as slight discomfort by the animal. Those responsible for the welfare of farmed animals must therefore ensure that any electric fences are designed, constructed, used and maintained properly, and that systems prevent electricity being conducted anywhere it should not be, for example, gates and water troughs.

Breaching a provision within the codes is not an offence in itself, but if proceedings are brought against someone for an offence under the Animal Welfare Act (2006), the Court will look at whether or not they have complied with the relevant code in deciding whether they have committed an offence.

■ Elephants: Kenya

Ruth Jones: [\[42124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of poaching on elephant numbers in Kenya.

Ruth Jones: [\[42125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of poaching on elephant numbers in Zimbabwe.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK does not undertake its own assessment. Global assessments of poaching and illegal trade in elephants and their ivory are carried out through two programmes operated through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) system monitors trends in levels of illegal killing of elephants and ETIS (Elephant Trade Information System) monitors the pattern and scale of illegal trade in ivory and other elephant specimens.

The IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group also carries out African elephant population assessments and trends by country and published the African Elephant Status Report in 2016. This report includes elephant numbers at a national level.

■ Environment Agency**Ruth Jones:** [\[42128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last met with the chief executive of the Environment Agency.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra Ministers and officials meet regularly with the chief executive of the Environment Agency.

■ Food: Self-sufficiency**John Redwood:** [\[41599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to expand UK food production by domestic farms.

Victoria Prentis:

The Agriculture Transition Plan published in November 2020 outlined how we will support farmers to reduce their costs and improve their profitability.

Between 2021 and 2028, we will offer a range of support to help farmers maintain and improve productivity through investment in research and development.

From autumn 2021, we will open the new Farming Investment Fund which will provide grants to farmers, foresters, and growers (including contractors to these sectors).

The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund will support smaller investments through a pre-determined list of items, while the Farming Transformation Fund will support more substantial investments in equipment, technology, or infrastructure, with the potential to transform business performance.

These grants will help producers to focus on more efficient and sustainable production methods to reduce resource costs, improve yields, and give a better return.

Mr Richard Holden: [\[42193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote (a) UK-sourced food and (b) food produced in the counties, regions and nations of the UK through Government procurement.

Victoria Prentis:

As a Government, we have a manifesto commitment that we want people at home and abroad to be lining up to buy British. We welcome efforts from all parts of the food chain to promote and source British products, and we work closely with industry and trade associations to engage with and support initiatives that highlight the qualities of British products. We will always champion our farmers and producers, supporting them to grow more of our great British food, and to provide a reliable and sustainable food supply to the British public.

We are further committed in the manifesto to encourage the public sector to buy British. As part of achieving this commitment, we will be consulting on proposals to strengthen the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services early in 2022. Alongside ensuring our policy reflects best practice, the consultation will examine ways to promote greater take-up of local produce and make public procurement more accessible to SMEs. The update will promote this by focusing on the UK's strengths such as high production and welfare standards and innovative, sustainable farming practices.

We are also working across Government to identify and trial innovative approaches to public food procurement. This includes a pilot in the South West, in collaboration with Crown Commercial Services, to simplify the route into the public sector, encouraging more local and sustainable SME businesses to join public sector food contracts. Following a successful pilot, the trial will undergo a national rollout, supporting food producers from all regions and nations of the UK.

■ Furs: Imports

Christian Wakeford:

[\[42213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ban the practice of importing real fur into the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

Fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000, and since 2002 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are existing import restrictions on seal products and cat and dog fur. Our Action Plan on Animal Welfare was clear that we will explore potential action with regard to the import of other fur from abroad.

Whilst the UK was a member of the European Union (EU), we were subject to rules on the free circulation of goods within the EU market. Building on the opportunities presented by our departure from the EU, we can now take further steps to address low welfare standards, informed by evidence and reflecting our values.

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

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

■ Hops: Coronavirus

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[41869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to support hop growers affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises the UK's proud hops growing tradition. We recognise the challenges that the sector has faced and continues to face due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

To support businesses impacted by Covid-19, the Government made available financial support under several schemes during 2020. In April 2021, the Government also launched the Recovery Loan Scheme. This is intended to help give UK businesses ongoing access to finance as they recover from the economic impact of the Covid-19. In addition to this, Defra officials have also engaged with the relevant local authorities to assist the hops sector in accessing financial support under the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant Fund.

Defra officials continue to meet regularly with the British Hop Association to discuss the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the hops industry and are working closely with them to help preserve the long-term future of the sector.

■ Moths

Ruth Jones:

[\[42119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of modern LED streetlights on the behaviour of nocturnal moths.

Rebecca Pow:

Protecting insects is a priority, and we are taking action to support them and the wider natural environment of which they are a vital component. Our commitment to setting a legally binding target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 underlines our ambition.

Defra has published or contributed to a range of national and global assessments of the pressures on insects and wider biodiversity, including on the impacts of artificial light. We welcome recently published research on the impacts of sodium and LED lighting on the local abundance and distribution of caterpillars. We will continue to work closely with researchers, NGOs and across the Government to improve our understanding of the impacts of light pollution.

The Government is taking action to ensure that light pollution is managed for wildlife and for people, through controls in the planning system, the statutory nuisance regime and improvements in street lighting.

■ Office for Environmental Protection

Ruth Jones:

[\[42120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the initial work of the Interim Office for Environmental Protection.

Rebecca Pow:

I am satisfied that the Interim Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) is fulfilling its interim functions and undertaking all necessary preparations to establish the OEP as a body corporate, ready to meet its objectives by the time the Environment Bill provisions relevant to the OEP are commenced

■ Poaching: Africa

Ruth Jones:

[\[42126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his African counterparts on tackling poaching on the African continent.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK is committed to protecting endangered animals and plants from poaching and illegal trade to benefit nature, people, the economy and protect global security.

The UK Government engages regularly with key counterparts across Africa on the illegal wildlife trade, including through our overseas missions. We are mobilising the expertise of the British military to provide professional training to Zambian park rangers in more effective and safer counter-poaching techniques. Furthermore, we engage regularly in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) to support the delivery of the Biodiverse Landscapes Fund, a new £100 million programme, that will deliver conservation, poverty reduction and climate outcomes, including tackling the illegal wildlife trade and poaching. KAZA is an area spanning five countries in southern Africa and hosting fifty percent of Africa's savannah elephants.

■ Poultry: Vacancies

Simon Jupp:

[\[42212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to tackle labour shortages in the poultry sector.

Victoria Prentis:

We are aware of the challenges that the poultry industry has encountered in recent months. Defra continues to monitor the market, and we will continue to work closely with the sector.

Defra is working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to raise awareness of career opportunities within the food and farming sectors among UK workers.

DWP is supporting Defra to develop and deliver a long-term recruitment strategy that supports the domestic workforce into both seasonal and long-term roles in the agriculture sector, including the poultry sector.

DWP has worked with Defra and key Trade Associations to develop a regional recruitment strategy that utilises DWP's Jobcentre Plus network, fosters strong local links between employers and work coaches, and gives jobseekers the skills and knowledge they need to enter the sector.

All poultry businesses are encouraged to advertise roles through DWP's Find A Job website, where they can upload and manage their vacancies. DWP does not charge for this service and it is available nationally, including Scotland and Wales.

Defra welcomes the Ministry of Justice's work on the Release On Temporary Licence (ROTL) scheme for work across a number of sectors, including the agri-food sector. The scheme aims to help prisoners gain useful skills and work experience as they approach their release.

In 2021 and beyond, food and farming businesses continue to be able to rely on EU nationals living in the UK with settled or pre-settled status. Over 5.1 million EU citizens and their families have been granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme and EU nationals who have settled status can continue to travel to the UK to do work in the poultry sector in 2021.

Defra is also working closely with the Home Office to ensure there is a long-term strategy for the food and farming workforce beyond 2021.

■ Thames Water

Ruth Jones: [\[42127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last met with the senior management of Thames Water.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State met with senior management of water companies, including Thames Water, on 20 March 2020 to discuss the industry's response to the COVID pandemic.

I have met with Thames Water management at the Thames Tideway Roundtable on 13 July 2021.

■ Veterinary Medicine: Research

Margaret Ferrier: [\[41890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support veterinary vaccine research.

Margaret Ferrier:

[41891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to introduce a one health approach between (a) veterinary and (b) human vaccine research.

Margaret Ferrier:

[41892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to increase the UK's veterinary vaccine manufacturing capacity.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK recognises the complex interdependencies between the health of people, animals, plants and the natural environment, and the need to address threats holistically – through a 'One Health' approach. There is close collaboration between animal and human health sectors to prepare and respond to disease threats, for example through the Human Animal Infections and Risk Surveillance (HAIRS) group (<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/human-animal-infections-and-risk-surveillance-group>).

The development and application of veterinary vaccines are a crucial instrument in support of disease control and such R&D forms a fundamental part of our [biosecurity research priorities](#). Over the past five years, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) has invested £177.2 million in veterinary vaccinology research and innovation including the Global Challenges Research Fund Networks in Vaccine R&D call, led by the Medical Research Council and supported by BBSRC, committing £9.6 million to support global, multisector research communities tackle key challenges facing human and veterinary vaccine R&D. The Networks foster and support an interdisciplinary One Health agenda through pump-prime funding and networking and knowledge exchange activities. BBSRC and Defra also work with European and International partners through Horizon 2020 programmes as well as through a Global Coronavirus research and innovation network jointly funded by BBSRC and Defra.

In June investment was announced for a new [Animal Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre](#) to be established at The Pirbright Institute (TPI), a strategically funded BBSRC institute, with contributions from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Gates Foundation. The Centre will develop and improve the use of veterinary vaccines for control of a number of diseases, both in the UK and Developing Countries, and will enable improvements to animal and public health directly and provide wider benefits including combating antimicrobial resistance.

The BBSRC Bioscience for Health Strategic Framework also outlines One Health as a key strategic challenge area with a vision of collaborative and coordinated approaches to combat zoonotic with a focus on prediction, prevention, response and recovery principles to improve the health and wellbeing of animals and people in their environments.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Abduljalil Abdulla al-Singace**

Wayne David: [\[45050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the Government of Bahrain on (a) the return of Abduljalil AlSingace's confiscated research to him or his family and (b) his release from detention.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor and raise the case of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace and others as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the oversight bodies.

■ **Afghanistan**

Ruth Jones: [\[42099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times he spoke directly to the Afghan Foreign Minister between 1 January 2021 and 1 August 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO was in frequent contact with the Afghan Government during this period.

■ **Afghanistan: Armed Conflict**

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[41760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support resistance to the Taliban in the Panjshir Valley by the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

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

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[41826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a humanitarian programme for people displaced by the Taliban in Afghanistan and surrounding countries.

Nigel Adams:

We stand with the people of Afghanistan to support a more stable, peaceful future for the country. Following our announcement of 18 August, total UK aid to Afghanistan this year is now £286 million, one of our largest bilateral programmes. As part of this, on 3 September we announced £30 million 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. £10 million will be 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. A further £20 million will be allocated to countries that experience a significant increase in refugees to support reception and registration facilities and provide essential services and supplies.

■ **Afghanistan: Asylum**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[45113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK passport holders and others with permission to travel to the UK have registered their interest in seeking to return to the UK following Taliban forces taking control of Kabul on 15 August 2021 with UK Embassies in (a) Pakistan, (b) Iran, (c) Tajikistan, (d) Turkmenistan and (e) Uzbekistan; and what support is being provided by consular staff to help those people to return to the UK.

Nigel Adams:

The current situation is very fluid and numbers are changing all the time and so it is hard to give an exact figure on how many British nationals and other qualifying individuals are left in country. We have evacuated over 8,300 British nationals to date. Several hundred have left the country independently, since we advised UK nationals to leave on 6 August. Rapid Deployment Teams (RDT) have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan, including British Nationals and the Afghans who supported us. An RDT also deployed to Dubai to help those in transit. We are working, in collaboration with the Home Office, to support their return to the UK through assistance on border movement, travel documentation and transport.

Layla Moran:

[\[45258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 6 September 2021, Official report, column 43, to which scheme the 500 special cases of Afghans evacuated from Kabul have been assigned.

Nigel Adams:

The 500 special cases have been welcomed into the UK as part of Operation Warm Welcome and it is intended that they will be resettled under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

■ **Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme**

Ed Davey:

[\[45039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of Afghans offered Chevening Scholar places for the 2021-22 academic year, (b) number of those scholars who were evacuated from Afghanistan and (c) number who remain in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

We cannot provide details on the number and location of Chevening scholars from Afghanistan in order to ensure their and their families' safety. Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. This includes around 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including Chevening scholars, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others.

■ **Afghanistan: Christianity****Cat Smith:**[\[41942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing to Christians in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Minister for Human Rights Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people, 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: Embassies****Lisa Nandy:**[\[45111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, who made the decision to evacuate the UK embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan; on what date that decision was made; how many staff were still working in that embassy at the time of that evacuation; and when that embassy's evacuation plan was last updated prior to being put into action in August 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The Embassy evacuation plan was kept under constant review. The decision to accelerate the evacuation of the Embassy in Kabul was made based upon a military assessment of the risk to staff and employees.

■ **Afghanistan: Females****Ruth Jones:**[\[41262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect the lives 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 to underscore 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.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[42186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the prevalence of forced marriage, (b) the status of women's rights and (c) access to education for girls under the incoming Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

We are appalled by the reports of human rights abuses in the areas controlled by the Taliban including persecution of minority groups, harsh restrictions on women, and allegations of forced marriage. The UN Security Council has called for an inclusive, negotiated political settlement, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, that upholds human rights, including for women, children and minorities. The G7 likewise made clear that the Taliban must adhere to obligations under international human rights law, including the rights of women, girls, and minority groups, and that it will be judged by its actions not its words. We have made huge gains in Afghanistan in the last twenty years on girls' education and women's rights and we will continue to work with our international partners to protect those gains.

■ Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid

Zarah Sultana:

[\[42180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to offer humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan after the takeover by the Taliban in that country.

Nigel Adams:

We stand with the people of Afghanistan to support a more stable, peaceful future for the country. Following our announcement of 18 August, total UK aid to Afghanistan this year is now £286 million, one of our largest bilateral programmes. £30 million has been made available to humanitarian partners to support neighbouring countries which experience a significant increase in refugees to provide essential services and supplies such shelters and the setting up of sanitation and hygiene facilities.

■ Afghanistan: Interpreters

Esther McVey:

[\[41859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Afghan translators were used by the UK in Afghanistan over the last 20 years.

Nigel Adams:

We are unable to provide a precise figure for the number of translators who assisted the UK in Afghanistan over the last 20 years, in order to ensure they and their families' safety. Through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), as of 28 August, 8589 Afghans who worked for us have been evacuated and are being resettled, including interpreters and their immediate families, enabling them to build new lives in the UK. The ARAP scheme is being accelerated for those staff still in Afghanistan.

■ **Afghanistan: Iran****Alan Brown:**[\[41988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what dates from June 2021 he had discussions with his Iranian counterpart about safe travel passage on onwards repatriation to the UK for Afghanistan nationals who qualify under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO has been in regular contact with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including senior officials, and supports the joint UNHCR program at the Milak border crossing providing urgent humanitarian support to displaced Afghans. All Afghans who are eligible under the ARAP scheme may make an application regardless of the country they are in.

■ **Afghanistan: LGBT People****Peter Gibson:**[\[42135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect members of the LGBT community in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Minister for Human Rights Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people. The UK also led work on the recent UN Security Council resolution, demonstrating our commitment to holding the Taliban to account on human rights. We are working urgently with neighbouring countries to ensure that at-risk Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK can secure for safe passage.

As the Prime Minister said in his statement of 6 September, we will also include Afghans who have contributed to civil society or who face a particular risk from the Taliban, for example because of their role in standing up for democracy and human rights or because of their gender, sexuality or religion. The impact of the crisis in Afghanistan on women and girls and other vulnerable groups, including religious and ethnic minorities and LGBT+ people, is of deep concern. The Taliban must respect the rights of all minority groups, both now and in the future and we will hold them to

account for their actions. The UK is urgently developing a new settlement scheme for 20,000 Afghans most at risk who will be eligible to apply. We are prioritising vulnerable groups in the UK's response.

Peter Gibson:

[\[42136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the safety of members of the LGBT community in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

We will use every humanitarian and diplomatic lever to safeguard human rights and the gains made over the last two decades. 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 terror. Minister for Human Rights Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people. 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. As the Prime Minister said in his statement of 6 September, we will also include Afghans who have contributed to civil society or who face a particular risk from the Taliban, for example because of their role in standing up for democracy and human rights or because of their gender, sexuality or religion. The impact of the crisis in Afghanistan on women and girls and other vulnerable groups, including religious and ethnic minorities and LGBT+ people, is of deep concern. The Taliban must respect the rights of all minority groups, both now and in the future and we will hold them to account for their actions. The UK is urgently developing a new settlement scheme for 20,000 Afghans most at risk who will be eligible to apply. We are prioritising vulnerable groups in the UK's response.

Peter Gibson:

[\[42137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he can take to protect members of the LGBT community in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Minister for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people. The UK led work on the recent UN Security Council resolution, demonstrating our commitment to holding the Taliban to account on human rights. The impact of the crisis in Afghanistan on women and girls and other vulnerable groups, including religious and ethnic minorities and LGBT+ people, is of deep concern. The Taliban must respect the rights of all minority groups, both now and in the future and we will hold them to account for their actions. The UK is urgently developing a new settlement scheme for 20,000 Afghans most at risk who will be eligible to apply. We are prioritising vulnerable groups in the UK's response.

■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid

Layla Moran: [\[45259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his oral contribution of 6 September 2021, Official report, column 43, whether the £30 million of support allocated to Afghanistan's neighbours is part of the £286 million in aid for the people of Afghanistan announced by the Government on 19 August 2021.

Nigel Adams:

Total UK aid to Afghanistan this year is now £286 million, one of our largest bilateral programmes. On 3 September we announced £30m (from the £286m) 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. £10 million will be 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. A further £20 million will be allocated to countries that experience a significant increase in refugees to support reception and registration facilities and provide essential services and supplies.

Layla Moran: [\[45260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his oral contribution of 6 September 2021, Official report, column 43, whether the aid for Afghanistan's neighbours is additional to the existing ODA allocations as part of the 0.5 per cent of GNI commitment.

Nigel Adams:

The referenced aid for Afghanistan's neighbours will not come from existing allocations for these countries.

■ Afghanistan: Pakistan

Alan Brown: [\[41990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what dates from June 2021 he had discussions with his Pakistani counterpart about safe travel passage on onwards repatriation to the UK for Afghanistan nationals who qualify under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Nigel Adams:

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on 6 September, he visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September. The Foreign Secretary has also had telephone conversations with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 15 and 27 August. Discussions focused on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.

■ Afghanistan: Politics and Government

Dan Carden:

[\[44431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Prime Minister's Oral Statement on Afghanistan on 6 September 2021, Official Report, column 26, by when he expects all representations made by hon. Members to have been answered.

Nigel Adams:

As Minister Cleverly set out in the Urgent Question on 9 September, where the FCDO has received cases which are to be dealt with by the Home Office and MoD under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme and the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, we will pass those on to the relevant Department, whilst also individually notifying MPs which Department their specific cases have been passed to by 16 September. The FCDO will continue to handle British National cases and will be in contact with MPs about the specific cases they have raised within 7 days, providing as much detail as possible.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[41765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps are being taken to support the processing of refugees from Afghanistan in surrounding countries given that voluntary repatriation to their home countries is the preferred long-term outcome for refugees.

Nigel Adams:

As the Prime Minister announced on 19 August, UK aid to Afghanistan will double to £286 million this financial year, of which £30 million has been made available to humanitarian partners to support neighbouring countries which experience a significant increase in refugees. This money will be used to provide essential services and supplies such as shelters and the setting up of sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Alex Sobel:

[\[42090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of the Afghan evacuees by the UK are employees of (a) non-governmental organisations and (b) charities; and what proportion of those evacuees, excluding wives and dependents, are women.

Nigel Adams:

We do not currently hold the specific data which has been requested. However, we can confirm that between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. That includes: over 8,000 British Nationals, close to 5,000 Afghans who loyally served the UK, along with their dependents, and around 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including campaigners for women's rights, human rights defenders, Chevening scholars, journalists, judges and many others. All these figures include dependants.

Lisa Nandy:

[\[45109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Afghan nationals who were called forward by his Department to Kabul airport for evacuation and who were unable to board flights have now been guaranteed a place under the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme and had their details transferred from his Department to the Home Office.

Nigel Adams:

Afghan nationals who were notified by the UK Government that they had been called forward for evacuation, but who were unable to board flights, will be offered a place under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme if they wish to come to the UK. Efforts are being made to find ways for them to travel to the UK.

■ **Afghanistan: Tajikistan**

Alan Brown:

[\[41989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what dates from June 2021 he had discussions with his Tajikistan counterpart about safe travel passage on onwards repatriation to the UK for Afghanistan nationals who qualify under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Nigel Adams:

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on 6 September, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Tajikistan on 3 September. The Foreign Secretary has also had telephone conversations with the Tajik Foreign Minister, on 2 September. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on 23 and 25 August. They held discussions with counterparts on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.

■ **Afghanistan: Turkmenistan**

Alan Brown:

[\[41986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what dates from June 2021 he has had discussions with his Turkmenistan counterpart about safe travel passage on onwards repatriation to the UK for Afghanistan Nationals who qualify under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Nigel Adams:

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on 6 September, Lord Ahmad called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan on 23 August and 3 September. They discussed securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.

■ Afghanistan: Uzbekistan

Alan Brown:

[\[41987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what dates from June 2021 he had discussions with his Uzbekistan counterpart about safe travel passage on onwards repatriation to the UK for Afghanistan nationals who qualify under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Nigel Adams:

As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement to Parliament on 6 September, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The Foreign Secretary has since had a telephone conversation with the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and the Deputy Foreign Minister on 8 September and visited Uzbekistan on 9 September. These discussions were on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities.

■ Africa: Missing Persons

Ruth Jones:

[\[42108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the numbers of people declared missing across Africa.

James Duddridge:

The International Committee of the Red Cross report that more than 44,000 people across Africa are registered as missing, with the overall number likely to be much higher, driven primarily by conflict and exacerbated by climate shocks and the pandemic.

Protecting civilians is at the core of the FCDO's work to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts around the world. This involves working bilaterally and multilaterally not only on resolution of conflict itself, but also to ensure that parties involved respect their obligations under international law, and to condemn violations of those obligations. The UK supported the adoption of UN Security Council resolution (2474) on Missing Persons in Armed Conflict in 2019 and is encouraging others to support the work of the International Commission on Missing Persons.

We also provide funds at country level for humanitarian assistance, including in Nigeria, which the International Committee of the Red Cross estimates accounts for more than half of the total number of missing persons in Africa. In addition, the UK's global core funding to the International Committee of the Red Cross supports, among other priority issues, its work on situations of the missing, upholding International Humanitarian Law and improving the capacity of its Central Tracing Agency through digitalisation of its systems.

■ Arab States: Israel**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[45068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to promote further diplomatic normalisation between Israel and Arab nations.

James Cleverly:

The UK warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Sudan. These are historic steps which see the normalisation of relations between friends of the UK. We also want to see greater coordination and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, particularly on economic initiatives, to help improve the day to day lives of Palestinians under occupation, and build increased dialogue.

■ Armed Conflict**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[44306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will make an estimate of the number of armed conflicts currently occurring across the international community.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO monitors a range of armed conflicts around the world. We draw on a number of data sources to do this. Each of these sources has different definitions and thresholds of armed conflict.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Airspace**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[41762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what safeguards will be put in place to ensure the safe passage of international flights over the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has no doubt as to our sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. All regional countries are contracting parties to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) whose objectives include ensuring the safe and secure passage of air transport.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Postage Stamps**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[41761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Press Release of the Universal Postal Union, published on 27 August 2021, UPU adopts UN resolution on Chagos Archipelago, what steps he is taking to ensure that British stamps continue to be used in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Nigel Adams:

We are disappointed by the Universal Postal Union's resolution. The UK has no doubt as to our sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814.

We are considering further the practical impact of the UPU resolution on the use of BIOT stamps for the BIOT postal service. UK stamps continue to be used for the UK military postal service, accessible to UK military and civilian contractors.

Burkina Faso: Terrorism**Mark Pritchard:**[\[41769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the Government of Burkina Faso to tackle regional terrorism.

James Duddridge:

The UK is concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso. On 11 June, I [Minister Duddridge] spoke with the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso. I [Minister Duddridge] gave my condolences for the Solhan attack on 4 June (the deadliest attack to take place in Burkina Faso since 2015) and discussed UK support to regional stability in the Sahel. Following presidential elections in Burkina Faso in 2020, I [Minister Duddridge] welcomed President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré's commitment to peace and development during his second term in office. I [Minister Duddridge] have since discussed regional insecurity and its impact on Burkina Faso with him in January this year. The UK Government is providing security assistance to the wider region. Through our deployment to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), our deployment of Chinook helicopters to the French counter-terrorism mission Barkhane, and our programmatic support for stabilisation and conflict resolution, the UK is committed to building long-term peace and stability in the Sahel. We also provide humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable in the region, including to some of those affected by conflict in Burkina Faso.

Coronavirus: Vaccination**Caroline Lucas:**[\[41807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the news story by the Prime Minister's Office, UK to donate 100 million coronavirus vaccine doses, published on 11 June 2021, how many of the 100 million doses have been delivered (a) in total and (b) via Covax; and if he will set out a timetable for the planned delivery of the outstanding doses by June 2022.

Wendy Morton:

As the Prime Minister announced at the G7 Summit in Cornwall, the UK will donate at least 100 million COVID-19 vaccines over the next year. 30 million of those will be donated by the end of 2021, and 80% will go to COVAX, which remains best-placed for allocating vaccines to where they will be most effective.

To date, over 9 million vaccine doses have been sent to developing countries, with more expected in September. Of those, 6.2 million will go through COVAX. This is beyond our commitment to donate 5 million doses by September 2021. Decisions on which vaccines will be shared will be based on the continued reliability of supply chains, regulatory restrictions, and advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

■ English Language: Assessments

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[41888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the level of British Council funding on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), particularly in relation to UK-Canada disability and arts partnership programmes.

Nigel Adams:

The government remains committed to the British Council. As the Integrated Review made clear, the Council is one of the vital instruments of our influence overseas. We agreed a 2021/22 Spending Review settlement totalling £189 million, a 27% increase on funding for 2020/21. We are also providing loan support of up to £245 million, including a £100 million loan to support restructuring efforts and help rebuild commercial surpluses. The Council will continue to operate in over 100 countries promoting the English language, UK arts and culture, and education.

■ Ethiopia: Human Rights

Hilary Benn:

[\[41666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation facing the Oromo people in Ethiopia.

James Duddridge:

We are concerned by incidences of ethnic violence in Ethiopia including in the Oromia region, and especially on the Oromo border with the Amhara region. The Government of Ethiopia, regional governments and community leaders on all sides must be clear that they do not support ethnic-based violence and discrimination, and on the importance of respecting human rights and safeguarding human life. The Foreign Secretary and I have both raised the importance of respect for human rights - I did so most recently with the Minister of Peace in July. The elections of 21 June also took place in challenging and problematic conditions with a restricted political environment, including the detention of opposition members, harassment of media representatives and parties facing difficulties in freely campaigning. We call on the government and all stakeholders in Ethiopian society to ensure that a meaningful, broad-based national dialogue process takes place and to commit to peaceful solutions. This is needed to enable Ethiopia's democratic development and to reduce conflict across the country.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[45233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 37556 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Redundancy, whether he has plans for compulsory redundancies as a result of factors aside from the merger of FCO and DFID.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary said on 18 June 2020, there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger between FCO and DFID.

■ France

Ruth Jones:

[\[42102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times he spoke directly to the French Foreign Minister between 1 January 2021 and 1 August 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary speaks regularly to French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, bilaterally, in multilateral fora such as G7 and NATO Foreign Ministers, and at E3 (UK-France-Germany) level. The Foreign Secretary saw Foreign Minister Le Drian for bilateral meetings on 18 February in Paris, on 4 May in London, and most recently in Paris on 26 July, where they also signed the UK-France Maritime Security Treaty. The Foreign Secretary last spoke with Foreign Minister Le Drian by telephone, on 21 August.

■ Germany

Ruth Jones:

[\[42101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times he spoke directly to the German Foreign Minister between 1 January 2021 and 1 August 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and his German counterpart, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, have spoken directly at least seven times between 1 January and 1 August 2021. In addition, they are likely to have spoken to one another in the margins of multilateral meetings.

■ Hassan Mushaima

Wayne David:

[\[45051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to the Government of Bahrain to ensure that Hassan Mushaima (a) receives food appropriate to his dietary requirements, (b) is granted full access to his medical records and (c) is immediately released from prison.

James Cleverly:

Responsibility for the provision of dietary and medical care to Hassan Mushaima lies with the Government of Bahrain, who have made clear that access to medical care for those in detention is guaranteed by the Constitution of Bahrain. We continue to monitor and raise the case of Hassan Mushaima and others, as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the oversight bodies.

■ **Israel: Arrest Warrants****Andy Slaughter:**[\[41750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the decision by the International Criminal Court of 5 February 2021 to extend its jurisdiction to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, whether the Government has agreed to give advance warning to the Israeli Government (a) of any plans to arrest Israelis on their arrival in the UK and (b) in the event that a request for an arrest warrant is issued against an Israeli citizen.

James Cleverly:

The UK is a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and we respect the independence of the Court. In this instance, we do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction as the UK does not currently recognise Palestinian statehood.

■ **Israel: Palestinians****Ruth Jones:**[\[42106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made for the implications for his policies of the recent meeting between President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Defence Minister, Benny Gantz.

James Cleverly:

We welcome the efforts of Israeli and Palestinian authorities to work towards a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. That is why we will continue to support steps to increase understanding and dialogue between the parties that can help create the conditions for meaningful negotiations.

Dr Philippa Whitford:[\[44363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to the Government of Israel on the ending of policies and practices which inhibit a covid-19 response in the occupied Palestinian territories including the blockade and closure of Gaza.

James Cleverly:

Cooperation is key to tackling Covid-19. The British Embassy Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General Jerusalem are in regular contact with both parties and continue to urge them to coordinate on vaccine access.

■ Madagascar: Food Supply

Mick Whitley:

[\[42139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support communities in Madagascar suffering from food insecurity and at risk of famine as a result of climate breakdown.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis in southern Madagascar, which is driven by multiple factors including climate shocks and the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods. The UK is working closely with the UN, Government of Madagascar and other donors to ensure aid reaches those in need. In 2021, the UK has allocated £5 million to UN humanitarian agencies to provide life-saving food assistance, nutrition and health interventions, access to safe water and to reinforce humanitarian system coordination in southern Madagascar. This UK funding will reach 250,000 people, including the provision of food assistance to 132,000 people. In addition, the UK is a core contributor to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund which has allocated approximately £5.78 million to the international response this year.

■ Malawi: Climate Change

Patrick Grady:

[\[45176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding the Government allocated to the Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience programme in Malawi in each of the last five financial years; and how much the Government plans to allocate to that programme in each of the next three financial years.

James Duddridge:

The Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience project is one of the investments supported by the Building Resilience and Adapting to Climate Change programme in Malawi. This programme began in July 2018 and is due to end in 2023. £4.2 million was allocated to the Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience in financial year (FY) 2018/19, £17 million in FY2019/20, £12.9 million in FY2020/21. The planned allocation for FY2021/22 is £3 million. Allocations for future years will depend on the outcome of the Spending Review.

■ Mali: Armed Forces

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[45277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many members of Mali's security forces the UK has helped to train since 2013; and what the cost of that training has been.

James Duddridge:

The UK is committed to long-term peace and security in Mali and the wider region, including through training of Mali's security and defence forces. Our training is focussed on gender sensitisation, compliance of international humanitarian law, and

protection of civilians. We also support the reduction in threats from serious and organised crime and corruption, including through capacity building of security forces. Following the military coups in August 2020 and May 2021 we temporarily suspended training of the security forces. We do not have easy access to figures from 2013. We did not have a UK diplomatic presence in Mali until 2015, with our conflict, stability and security programming starting shortly after. Since Financial Year 2018/19 we have trained around 150 security personnel at a cost of circa £850k.

■ Members: Correspondence

Lisa Nandy: [\[45110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason he was unable to meet his commitment to answer all emails from hon. Members received by 30 August 2021 relating to Afghanistan by the end of 6 September 2021; and what new deadline he has set for answering those emails.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary undertook that FCDO would reply to all MPs who wrote in about Afghanistan cases before 31 August by Monday 6 September. This was done on 5 September with a letter from Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon to all those Parliamentarians who had sent cases to the FCDO. This letter outlined the action that we are taking to progress cases that have been sent to us, as well as setting out the relevant contact routes that are applicable, now that the evacuation phase is over.

■ NATO

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[41763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) strengthen the importance of NATO since the recent withdrawal from Afghanistan and (b) encourage NATO members to contribute to future NATO missions.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary, at a NATO ministerial summit in Brussels earlier this year, took the opportunity to reiterate the UK's unwavering support for NATO as the bedrock of transatlantic security, and to support proposals that will strengthen the Alliance's response to a whole range of existing and emerging threats. This sits alongside the importance of working with non-NATO partners to tackle rising global challenges, including by engaging with European states such as Sweden and Finland, or Indo-Pacific ones like Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

■ Overseas Aid: Drugs

Hilary Benn: [\[41663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of recent reductions in UK aid on the use of donated medicines in developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK government continues to be a major donor to international health organisations and programmes, including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, and COVAX, which fund essential medicines in developing countries. UK funded health programmes continue to strengthen health systems to deliver medicines to the most vulnerable people in some of the poorest countries in the world. Additionally, in June the Prime Minister pledged that the UK will share 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses with developing countries within the next year of which 30 million will be delivered by the end of 2021. Throughout our investments, we support the safe handling and use of donated medicines in line with UK legislation and regulatory requirements and the requirements of recipient country governments.

■ Pakistan**Ruth Jones:**[\[42100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times he spoke directly to the Pakistani Foreign Minister between 1 January 2021 and 1 August 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary had telephone conversations with Foreign Minister Qureshi on 15 and 27 August and visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September. Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, visited Pakistan from 23-24 June and met Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi. Officials at the British High Commission in Islamabad also engaged regularly with the Government of Pakistan, at Ministerial and official level.

■ Palestinians: Overseas Aid**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[45062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2020-21 Memorandum of Understanding between his Department and the Palestinian Authority, whether his Department undertook an assessment in 2020-21 of whether there had been a breach of the commitments in that memorandum by the Palestine Authority.

James Cleverly:

Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority (PA) includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle any language and actions that could incite violence or hatred. We have a regular dialogue with the PA in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence, including by promoting a more positive portrayal of each other. We continue to assess the PA's commitment to peace in line with our Partnership Principles and we assess that the PA continues to demonstrate a credible commitment to our agreements.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[45069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish his Department's most recent Partnership Principle Assessment with the Palestinian Authority.

James Cleverly:

We do not publish Partnership Principles Assessments. We have an active dialogue with the Palestinian Authority (PA) on the issues identified through these channels and we assess that the PA continues to demonstrate a credible commitment to our agreements and the 'partnership principles'.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Alan Brown:

[\[41972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that people in Afghanistan with refugee family 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.

■ South Africa: Corruption

Andrew Bridgen:

[\[41878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to the South African Government to investigate corruption in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK's Integrated Review sets out the UK Government's commitment to fighting corruption and illicit finance as threats to democratic values and open societies around the world. We are fully committed to supporting South Africa's fight against corruption, which President Ramaphosa has identified as one of his priorities. We work closely with the South African authorities including through our law enforcement agencies to facilitate intelligence sharing, evidence gathering and the recovery of criminal proceeds.

Under the UK Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions regime, the UK imposed sanctions against Ajay Gupta, Atul Gupta, Rajesh Gupta and Salim Essa in May 2021 for their roles in serious corruption which caused significant damage to the South African economy. As a long-standing friend of South Africa, the UK will continue to partner closely with the South African authorities, business and civil society on a shared agenda of security, economic and social issues.

■ Uganda: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[42109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the political and security situation in Uganda.

James Duddridge:

The UK is a long-standing partner of Uganda. Our approach is to support Uganda to become more democratic and prosperous, and to continue to play a positive regional role, through our diplomacy, aid, trade, investment and defence co-operation. We engage as a critical friend, and have raised concerns about the political climate in Uganda following the 2021 elections, including the treatment of opposition candidates and their supporters and restrictions on civil society and media freedom. I spoke with former Ugandan Foreign Minister, Sam Kutesa, on 16 April 2021, met the Ugandan High Commissioner on 21 June 2021 and wrote to the new Ugandan Foreign Minister, Jeje Odongo, to outline these concerns. Our High Commission in Kampala and I have urged Uganda to meet its human rights commitments, including at the UN Human Rights Council, and to increase efforts to build strong and independent institutions to strengthen democracy.

■ UN Secretariat

Ruth Jones:

[\[42105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times he spoke directly to the UN Secretary General between 1 January 2021 and 1 August 2021.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary spoke to the UN Secretary-General on three occasions within the date range specified. On 11 January they spoke during the UN Secretary-General's virtual visit to the UK to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the first UN General Assembly and UN Security Council meetings [PQ 180599]. They next spoke when the Foreign Secretary travelled to Geneva to participate in the UN Secretary-General convened Cyprus Settlement talks that were held between 27-29 April. Their third meeting was on 12 June in Carbis Bay during the G7 summit.

■ USA

Ruth Jones:

[\[42103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times he spoke directly to the US Secretary of State between 1 January 2021 and 1 August 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary regularly speaks with the US Secretary of State on a variety of issues of mutual concern.

■ USA: Cuba**Zarah Sultana:**[\[42178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to encourage the US Administration to end the economic blockade on Cuba.

Wendy Morton:

The UK opposes the US embargo against Cuba. We consistently vote in support of the annual United Nations General Assembly Resolution calling for an end to the embargo. The UK considers unilateral secondary sanctions, such as the activation of Titles III and IV of the Helms Burton Act, to be contrary to international law. We have made our position on this clear, and regularly engage US officials on this issue through our Embassy in Washington, as well as with the US Embassies in Havana and London. Most recently, officials in the Latin America Department raised this with the US State Department on 11 August.

■ USA: Hurricanes and Tornadoes**Ruth Jones:**[\[42107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the effect of Hurricane Ida; and what humanitarian assistance his Department is providing to US authorities in response to that Hurricane.

Wendy Morton:

Ahead of COP26, the UK is working closely with the US on combatting climate change, and its links to the increasing frequency of severe weather events due to the rise in the average global temperature, as the most recent Working Group contribution to the sixth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change outlines. We hope that this close collaboration will continue through our upcoming Presidency. No request for humanitarian assistance was made to the UK from the US authorities following Hurricane Ida.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abortion: Drugs****Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[44244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of removing the regulations that allow for home use of both pills for early medical abortion on (a) waiting times for an abortion, (b) gestation at the time of abortion, (c) the distance a women has to travel to access abortion services and (d) the capacity and ability of service providers to provide timely care.

Helen Whately:

The Government's public consultation on whether to make permanent the temporary measure allowing for home use of both pills for early medical abortion up to 10 weeks gestation for all eligible women asked questions on accessibility, the impact on the provision of abortion services and socioeconomic considerations. The consultation has now closed and we are considering all evidence submitted and plan to publish our response later this year.

Caroline Nokes:[\[44328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made on the effect that home use of both pills for early medical abortions has had on women in abusive domestic situations for whom leaving their home for the length of time needed to attend an in-clinic appointment would be unsafe.

Helen Whately:

The Government's public consultation on whether to make permanent the temporary measure allowing for home use of both pills for early medical abortion up to 10 weeks' gestation for all eligible women asked questions on the impact on the provision of abortion services for women and girls accessing these services with particular regard to safety. The consultation has now closed and we are considering all evidence submitted and plan to publish our response later this year.

Sarah Olney:[\[44420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the provision of pills for home abortions is controlled to prevent those pills from being (a) supplied for sale and (b) to people who are in the later stages of an abortion and for whom the pills are not suitable.

Helen Whately:

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has issued clinical guidelines for healthcare professionals called 'Coronavirus infection and abortion care'. The guidance sets out the circumstances where women should be asked to attend a clinic for an ultra-sound scan. However it states that "most women can determine the gestational age of their pregnancy with reasonable accuracy by last menstrual period (LMP) alone". The guidance includes a decision aid for clinicians to use to help determine if an ultra-sound scan is required. This includes detailed questions to identify gestational age.

The best way to assure the safety of medicines is for the clinic to supply medicines obtained through the regulated supply chain, appropriately labelled for individual patients to be safely used only by those patients. The pills are only supplied following a robust consultation.

■ Antimicrobials

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[42152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the devolved administrations on the potential merits of expanding the NHSE&I/NICE innovative subscription model for anti-microbial treatments across the UK.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: The Government continues to meet with the devolved administrations to discuss progress of the novel purchasing project being conducted by NHS England and NHS Improvement and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. It is hoped that all parts of the United Kingdom will benefit from the success of the pilot programme when the planned innovative antimicrobial purchasing subscription model is launched in early 2022.

■ Autism and Hyperactivity

Zarah Sultana:

[\[42175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the length of time for people to receive ADHD and ASD assessments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In 2021-2022 we are investing £2.5 million as part of the NHS Long Term Plan commitment to test and implement the most effective ways to reduce autism diagnosis waiting times for children and young people. We are investing £10.5 million through the COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Plan to address waiting times for children and young people, proactively identify those at risk of crisis and reduce waits for adults. In the NHS Long Term Plan we committed to working with local authority children's social care, education services and expert charities to develop packages to support neurodivergent children, including children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and their families, throughout the diagnostic process. To enable the system to address this, five-year funding allocations are conditional on improving services like these in line with Long Term Plan targets.

■ Blood Tests: Bottles

Helen Hayes:

[\[43597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve resilience in NHS supply chains for blood testing equipment.

Edward Argar:

We have secured tens of millions of additional blood tubes, including importing additional supplies from the European Union and the United States of America and have extended sourcing activity to increase diversity in the supplier base. Regular reviews are held with suppliers to monitor the supply pipeline and processes are in place to prevent over ordering and to support effective mutual aid between service providers.

Grahame Morris:

[\[44291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will increase the capacity of NHS stores to enable the holding of a greater supply of each product in the context of the shortage of blood collection tubes.

Edward Argar:

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

Grahame Morris:

[\[44292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to suspend the rationing of blood tests as a result of the shortage of blood collection tubes.

Edward Argar:

In a letter dated 26 August issued by NHS England and Improvement to the National Health Service, it highlights that the position will improve from the middle of September and that all non-urgent use must be halted until 17 September 2021. In the last two weeks of August the NHS has been supplied with approximately 87% of its pre-disruption requirement on the fastest moving product lines and with the availability of new product it is expected this will increase over the first weeks of September to support resumption of services by the middle of September.

Patient safety is the top priority and we are working closely with NHS England and the devolved administrations to minimise any impact on patient care and return to a normal service as soon as possible.

Navendu Mishra:

[\[44457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the blood bottle shortage across the UK.

Edward Argar:

We have secured tens of millions of additional blood tubes, including importing additional supplies from the European Union and the United States, which are now in National Health Service use, and there continues to be stock in place to ensure clinically urgent testing continues. Patient safety is my top priority and we are working closely with NHS England and the devolved administrations to minimise any impact on patient care and return to a normal service as soon as possible.

■ Cancer

Grahame Morris:

[\[43483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) steps his Department has taken and (b) recent progress has been made towards increasing cancer survival rates.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: The Government remains committed to the National Health Service Long Term Plan ambition to increase survival rates, so that an additional 55,000 people survive their cancer for 5 years or more each year by 2028.

We continue to focus on delivering earlier diagnosis, which will help to improve survival rates, through projects such as our Targeted Lung Health Check programme and implementation of Rapid Diagnostic Centre pathways.

NHS England and Improvement invested an additional £150m in imaging and endoscopy equipment in 2020-21. The £325 million capital funding from the 2020 Spending Review in diagnostics will also help to speed up diagnostics and improve patient outcomes.

The NHS is also working to improve survival outcomes by introducing cutting-edge new treatments. The pandemic has allowed us to accelerate activity in some key areas such as the adoption of new technologies and treatment methods, and we will continue to look for opportunities to further increase our efforts.

Based on the latest data available up to 2017, one-year survival rates for all cancers combined are at a record high in the UK. Between 2003 and 2018, the one-year survival for all cancers combined increased from 63.6% to 73.9%. Between 2003 and 2014, the five-year survival for all cancer combined increased from 45.7% to 54.6%.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Helen Hayes:****[42023]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Cancer Research UK Cancer Patient Survey 2021, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for cancer (a) testing, (b) screening and (c) treatment.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: All screening services are now operational and providers are expected to work above pre-pandemic capacity levels to focus on maintaining and increasing invitation rates.

The National Health Service is establishing 44 community diagnostic hubs across the country, to improve both the capacity of diagnostic services and the patient experience. We project that these hubs will provide nearly 3.5 million more tests across the country by 2022-23. Additional capacity is being provided to cancer services through the establishment of dedicated cancer and surgical hubs, with many services now offering weekend services and longer weekday hours. A further £2 billion has been invested through the elective recovery fund to improve activity.

■ Cancer: Mortality Rates

Grahame Morris:

[\[43487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding is being made available to help increase cancer survival rates.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: This is being supported by £325 million of investment in NHS diagnostics. In July 2021, the National Health Service announced a further £20 million made available to Cancer Alliances to accelerate cancer diagnosis and enable management of high referral volumes. This is being supported by £325 million of investment in NHS diagnostics. The NHS Long Term Plan also sets out further plans for the transformation of cancer services and to increase cancer survival rates.

■ Cancer: Staff

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[45143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allocate funding to the clinical oncology workforce.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[45144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the shortfalls in the clinical oncology workforce as identified in the Royal College of Radiologists' report, Clinical oncology: UK workforce census report 2020, published in July 2021.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made.

As of February 2021, the number of full time equivalent clinical oncologists has increased by 20.5% since February 2015 – an increase of 250 clinical oncologists working in the National Health Service. Health Education England funded an extra 50 places in clinical oncology and an extra 36 in medical oncology in 2021.

The next Spending Review will set out further details of the Government's spending plans for non-NHS budgets for future years, which includes funding for the NHS workforce.

■ Carers

Emma Hardy:

[\[41177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2021 to Question 29882 on Carers, how many adult carers are employed with (a) no formal qualifications, (b) NVQ level 3, (c) BTEC level 2, (d) BTEC level 3 and (e) Bachelor degree and above; and what estimate his Department has made of the number of informal carers who are involved in adult social care.

Helen Whately:

The latest published data shows that 1.2 million adults are employed in direct care jobs in the sector. Within this workforce around 50% hold a social care relevant qualification, including BTECs and NVQs. This is broken down as follows:

- 2% have entry or Level one qualifications;
- 25% have Level two qualifications;
- 19% have Level three qualifications;
- 4% have Level four qualifications or above (which includes Bachelor degrees at level six).

The Department does not hold further breakdown of this information by qualification type or to Level six specifically.

Data from the latest published United Kingdom Census in 2011 puts the number of unpaid carers, which includes care provided to ill or disabled people of any age, at 6.5 million, of which 5.4 million are in England.

■ Clinical Commissioning Groups**Stephen McPartland:**[\[41866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his plans are for clinical chairs of the Clinical Commissioning Groups once those Groups are amalgamated into Integrated Care Systems.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have published a human resources framework, co-developed with stakeholders, which sets out principles and guidance to support local organisations implement a safe and effective transition of staff from clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to integrated care boards (ICBs). Whilst staff below board level in CCGs are protected by an 'employment commitment', this does not apply to senior 'board level' roles which includes those in the current CCG governing bodies. The framework recognises the need to retain clinical leadership talent wherever possible as this will be central to ICB decision making and has set out a talent approach.

A member nominated by primary medical care providers will have a mandatory seat on every ICB and when designing and developing the new arrangements, NHS England has been clear that they should involve strong clinical leadership at every level.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing**Rachael Maskell:**[\[45192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 35761 on Coronavirus: York, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of local contact tracing compared to the NHS Test and Trace service in

order to understand (a) best practice in contact tracing and (b) how future funding for contact tracing can best be deployed to detect and control covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

No specific assessment has been made.

NHS Test and Trace and local authorities already work within a joint framework focused on preventing, identifying and managing local outbreaks and engaging with local communities to support effective testing, contact tracing and self-isolation. Within this framework, local public health teams have more control through community-led testing, expanded local tracing partnerships and the sharing of data, insight and analysis used to identify clusters of new infections and potential local outbreaks.

During the financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22, the Government has so far provided £2.1 billion of funding through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund which provides funding to local authorities in England to help reduce the spread of coronavirus and support local public health.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[44336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will launch an investigation into Dante Labs for alleged failure to provide covid-19 PCR test results in line with advertised timescales.

Jo Churchill:

While we currently have no plans to investigate Dante Labs, we are working with the organisation to understand a potential drop in performance on test turnaround times.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Mr Nicholas Brown:

[\[36530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his policy to ensure that in any booster vaccine programme third doses of covid-19 vaccines are prioritised for people who are immunosuppressed in (a) Newcastle upon Tyne and (b) other areas with a number of cases.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recognises that some individuals who are severely immunosuppressed due to underlying health conditions or medical treatment may not achieve the same full immune response to the initial two dose COVID-19 vaccination course as those who are not immunosuppressed. The committee has therefore advised on 1 September that as a precautionary measure those with severe immunosuppression at or around the time of their first or second dose of COVID-19 vaccination should receive a third dose. The aim is to raise the level of immunity in these individuals closer to the level of immunity as the non-immunosuppressed achieve from two doses in Newcastle upon Tyne and other areas.

The Government has accepted this advice, which will be applied at a national level. Severe immunosuppression at the time of vaccination is defined using guidance and timings outlined at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/third-primary-covid-19-vaccine-dose-for-people-who-are-immunosuppressed-jcvi-advice/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation-jcvi-advice-on-third-primary-dose-vaccination>

The purpose of the separate potential booster programme is to maximise protection in those who are most vulnerable to serious COVID-19 ahead of the winter months. The JCVI published interim advice on a potential Covid-19 booster vaccination programme on 30 June 2021, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jcvi-interim-advice-on-a-potential-coronavirus-covid-19-booster-vaccine-programme-for-winter-2021-to-2022/jcvi-interim-advice-potential-covid-19-booster-vaccine-programme-winter-2021-to-2022>

Final decisions on the timing and scope and cohort eligibility of any COVID-19 vaccine booster programme will be confirmed once the JCVI has provided their final advice.

It is expected that severely immunosuppressed individuals will become eligible for a booster dose as part of any routine booster programme from around six months after their third dose, pending further advice.

Janet Daby: [41249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of mandatory covid-19 vaccinations for all home carers.

Helen Whately:

The Government has launched a consultation on vaccination as condition of deployment in health and social care settings.

Kate Osborne: [42173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish guidance for medical exemptions for mandatory covid-19 vaccinations for those who work in care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: We will shortly publish further guidance on vaccination as a condition of deployment in care homes. This will provide further detail around medical exemptions and information on how individuals can check their exemption status.

Richard Fuller: [44282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 July 2021 to Question 31551, when UK residents vaccinated against covid-19 while overseas with a (a) Pfizer, (b) Oxford-AstraZeneca and (c) Moderna vaccine are able to be certified as vaccinated by the UK.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Work is underway to determine which non-Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency authorised vaccines we will recognise with confidence to enable United Kingdom residents vaccinated abroad to demonstrate their vaccination status. A solution will be rolled out in England as a pilot from the end of September.

■ **Dementia****Rachael Maskell:**[\[44393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 29 June 2021 to Question 21282 on Dementia: Diagnosis, what additional steps he plans to take to (a) improve dementia diagnosis rates and (b) provide support to people who are at an early stage of dementia.

Helen Whately:

NHS England and Improvement has set out its priorities with respect to dementia in a regional delivery plan for 2021-22. £17m has been made available by Government this financial year and is being directed to increase capacity at a local level to address a rising backlog of appointments in memory assessment services following the pandemic and support services to achieve the target rate for dementia diagnosis rate.

This funding is also being used to support partnership working between memory assessment services, primary care, primary care network social prescribing and care coordination teams and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations, which will improve access to personalised pre and post diagnosis support including those people at the early stage of dementia waiting for assessment and after they have been diagnosed.

We will be setting out our plans on dementia for England for future years in due course which will include a focus on improving the dementia diagnosis rates and experience.

■ **Dementia: Research****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[43598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to double research funding on dementia.

Edward Argar:

Plans for additional funding for dementia research are subject to Spending Review settlements. We will be setting out our plans on dementia for England for future years in due course.

Dr Philippa Whitford:[\[45142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken towards delivering research funding to support the dementia moonshot.

Helen Whately:

Plans for increasing funding for dementia research and delivering a moonshot are subject to Spending Review settlements. We will be setting out our plans on dementia for England for future years in due course.

■ Dentistry: Workplace Pensions**Zarah Sultana:**[\[42184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility to NHS pensions for dental nurses working in dental practices that offer both private and NHS dental treatment.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Pension Scheme is an occupational pension scheme designed for staff engaged primarily in the delivery of NHS services.

The majority of National Health Service dental services are contracted via a provider-performer dentist, with dental practices operating as private businesses. As a result, practices will engage dental nurses and other dental care professionals as required for both their private and NHS business needs. As a result, it is difficult to identify staff as being primarily engaged in the delivery of NHS services and for this reason dental practice staff are unable to join the scheme.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Coronavirus**Fleur Anderson:**[\[31556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the roles to which (a) George Pascoe-Watson, (b) Lord Feldman and (c) Lord O'Shaughnessy were appointed to assist his Department with the response to the covid-19 outbreak were (i) consultancy or (ii) temporary civil service roles; and whether the (A) Civil Service Code and (B) Code of Conduct for Special Advisers applied to those appointees in those roles.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 July 2021]: George Pascoe-Watson, Lord Feldman and Lord O'Shaughnessy were Ministerial advisors and the Civil Service Code applied to them in these roles.

■ Disability: Children**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[44246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including in his Department's bid to the Treasury for the upcoming spending review recommendations for funding for (a) covid-19 recovery funds for disabled children's health and care services, (b) a sustainable level of long-term investment in disabled children's health and care services and (c) a disabled children's innovation fund.

Helen Whately:

The forthcoming Spending Review will set out the Government's spending plans for health and social care for future years. 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. The Government has allocated more than £6 billion in un-ringfenced funding directly to councils in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to support them with the impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including for children's social care. We have also invested £6.6 billion from March to September 2021 to help National Health Service recovery and an additional £2 billion funding to the NHS in 2021-22 to reduce elective waiting times for patients, including disabled children.

■ DNACPR Decisions**Vicky Foxcroft:****[42011]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July 2021 to Question 28267, on DNACPR Decisions, whether the terms of reference and meeting summaries of the Ministerial Oversight Group have now been published.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The terms of reference and first meeting summary note have been published at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/ministerial-oversight-group-on-do-not-attempt-cardiopulmonary-resuscitation-dnacpr-decisions>

■ Doctors: Complaints**Alex Sobel:****[42087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of complaints submitted to the General Medical Council were upheld for (a) BAME NHS doctors and (b) all NHS doctors in the last 12 months; and what steps he is taking to ensure that processes and procedures within the General Medical Council do not discriminate against ethnic minorities.

Helen Whately:

The General Medical Council (GMC) has a number of processes in place to support the fairness and transparency of its investigation process and its fitness to practise decisions. We continue to work with the GMC to ensure it provides robust assurance about its processes.

■ Doctors: Registration**Esther McVey:****[43506]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many temporary registered doctors there have been since March 2020; and how many of those doctors have been used by the NHS.

Helen Whately:

The General Medical Council (GMC) granted temporary emergency registration to 34,837 doctors between March and April 2020 in response to the pandemic. The GMC used an opt-out model for granting temporary registration, so the vast majority of eligible doctors were issued temporary registration at that point. To 2 September 2021, 605 doctors who were not included in the original cohorts have been granted temporary registration.

The Department does not hold the information on how many of these doctors were subsequently employed within the National Health Service. Doctors were employed both directly by the NHS, but also through agencies, and in private sector providers.

■ **Eating Disorders: Mental Health Services**

Jonathan Ashworth:[\[41879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of eating disorder (a) beds and (b) services commissioned by NHS England have been delivered by the private sector in each year since 2010.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: The information requested for the financial years which are available is shown in the following table.

FINANCIAL YEAR	INDEPENDENT SECTOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EATING DISORDER BEDS ¹ AS A PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SUCH BEDS COMMISSIONED BY NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT ²		INDEPENDENT SECTOR ADULT EATING DISORDER PROVIDERS AS A PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SUCH SERVICE PROVIDERS COMMISSIONED BY NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT	
	INDEPENDENT SECTOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EATING DISORDER BEDS ¹ AS A PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SUCH BEDS COMMISSIONED BY NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT ²		INDEPENDENT SECTOR ADULT EATING DISORDER PROVIDERS AS A PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SUCH SERVICE PROVIDERS COMMISSIONED BY NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT	
2017/18	76%	40%	55%	26%
2018/19	74%	40%	50%	29%
2019/20	78%	41%	55%	29%
2020/21	78%	41%	55%	29%
2021/22	78%	43%	55%	29%

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement

Notes:

¹ Children with an eating disorder may also be admitted to other children and young people's mental health service beds with the same therapeutic benefit.

² NHS England and NHS Improvement commissions in-patient beds and clinical commissioning groups commission community-based services.

Helen Hayes:

[42040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of children and young people waiting for (a) urgent and (b) routine treatment for eating disorders as at 3 September 2021.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Data for 3 September 2021 is not yet available.

Helen Hayes:

[42041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 30 March 2021 to Question 173104, what monitoring his Department currently undertakes of waiting times and demand for NHS eating disorder treatments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

For children and young people, the standard is 95% of children with an eating disorder will receive treatment within one week for urgent cases and within four weeks for routine cases. This standard contains information on the number of children and young people who have accessed or are waiting for treatment following a routine or urgent referral for a suspected eating disorder, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/cyped-waiting-times/>

For adults, a four-week waiting time standard for adult community mental health services, including eating disorder services, has been piloted and evaluated. NHS England and NHS Improvement launched a public consultation on the standards, which concluded on 1 September 2021. NHS England and NHS Improvement will analyse the consultation responses to inform a recommendation on whether and how to implement any new standards in due course.

■ Health Professions: Migrant Workers

Rob Roberts:

[45286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the level of overseas applicants for clinical positions in relation to demand.

Helen Whately:

Information on the number of overseas applicants to clinical positions is not collected centrally.

Health Professions: Vacancies**Rob Roberts:**[\[45287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the number of clinical vacancies across the NHS; and what steps he is taking to increase recruitment accordingly.

Helen Whately:

The latest data for June 2021 shows that there are over 38,900 nursing and midwifery vacancies almost 9,700 doctor vacancies. Some of these vacancies will be filled by bank and agency staff.

We are recruiting 50,000 more nurses in this Parliament and supporting record numbers of people to enter medical and nursing training programmes. Alongside this the NHS Retention Programme is continuously seeking to understand why staff leave, resulting in targeted interventions to support staff to stay in the National Health Service.

Health Services and Social Services: Finance**Mr Mark Harper:**[\[45067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the New Resource DEL spending, published on page 30 of Command Paper 506, Building Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care, if he will provide a breakdown of that spending by (a) health and (b) social care, per year.

Edward Argar:

The forthcoming Spending Review will set out the Government's spending plans for health and social care for future years.

Health Services: Foreign Nationals**Zarah Sultana:**[\[42182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of suspending NHS overseas visitors charging regulations during the covid-19 outbreak.

Zarah Sultana:[\[42183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a Government inquiry into the (a) economic and (b) social impact of the application of the NHS overseas visitors charging regulations during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Government has no plans to suspend the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015, nor hold an inquiry into their impact during the pandemic.

The Regulations include important exemptions designed to protect the vulnerable or public health and no charge can be made to an overseas visitor for the diagnosis or, if positive, treatment of COVID-19. Exemptions from charge also apply to any National Health Service care received by asylum seekers, refugees and victims of modern slavery.

■ Home Care Services: Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[43558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review covid-19 isolation requirements for domiciliary care visit workers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: Adult social care guidance has been updated in line with wider changes brought into effect from 16 August 2021. In line with national changes to self-isolation rules, additional measures include the redeployment of staff, which includes domiciliary care workers, for up to 10 days following contact with a person that is COVID-19 positive. This is to minimise close contact with people who are deemed high risk to COVID-19. We will continue to review isolation requirements in accordance with the latest clinical advice as it emerges.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[44283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timescale is for hospitals relaxing covid-19 restrictions on visiting.

Edward Argar:

National hospital visiting restrictions have been removed and visiting is now subject to the discretion of local National Health Service trusts and other bodies.

■ Hospitals: Waiting Lists**Rachael Maskell:**[\[45205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to waive all fines and charges for hospital trusts as those trusts deal with patient backlogs in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

National Health Service hospital trusts have been asked to prioritise elective recovery, to deal with patient backlogs. While no formal decision has been made on policy regarding fines and charges, a pragmatic approach will continue to be taken to ensure that patients get the treatment they need.

■ Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Diagnosis

Stella Creasy:

[40901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce waiting times for people seeking a diagnosis for (a) Crohn's disease, (b) colitis and (c) other inflammatory bowel conditions.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: We have invested £325 million in National Health Service diagnostic equipment to improve clinical outcomes, while £1 billion is dedicated to tackling wider elective backlogs across the NHS.

Additional diagnostic capacity is also being delivered through the creation of new community diagnostic hubs, which allow for the separation of urgent and elective diagnostic tests. These hubs provide screening and testing more quickly and effectively, supporting healthcare professionals to diagnose diseases and conditions such as Crohn's disease, colitis and other inflammatory bowel conditions.

■ Long Covid: Health Services

Caroline Lucas:

[44290]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether treatments for medical conditions related to long covid will be exempt from the NHS Charging Regulations; how many people considered not ordinarily resident for the purposes of NHS charging have accessed long covid services to date; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

Under the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015 no charge can be made to an overseas visitor for the diagnosis or, if positive, treatment of COVID-19. However, this exemption does not cover hospital treatment of any secondary or subsequent illnesses which arise from the initial COVID-19 infection, including 'long' COVID-19. Healthcare providers have a duty to assess what treatment for COVID-19 is exempt or chargeable, based on the views of clinicians.

Data on the number of overseas visitors seeking access to services in relation to treatment of 'long' COVID-19 is not held centrally.

■ Lord Feldman

Angela Rayner:

[31421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what declaration of interests was made by Lord Feldman in his capacity as an unpaid adviser to his Department between March and May 2020; and whether he used a private email account to conduct business relating to that advisory role.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 July 2021]: Lord Feldman signed a volunteer agreement on his appointment to the Department. As part of this agreement, he was required to

complete a declaration of interests. There is clear guidance around personal email usage and Government business is conducted in line with that guidance.

■ Lung Cancer: Screening

Jim Shannon:

[\[43519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the planned timescale is for the report of the SUMMIT trial into low dose CT scans for the detection of lung cancer.

Edward Argar:

The current planned timescale for blood test and key data for the SUMMIT trial is expected by 2023, with an estimated publication date in 2024. However, the full SUMMIT trial is expected to run until 2030 as it will include long-term participant outcomes, with publications after this date.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[41676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve departmental response times to correspondence from hon. Members.

Edward Argar:

In 2020 the Department received 31,509 cases from hon. Members compared to 10,467 in 2019; the increase was overwhelmingly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have taken steps to improve efficiency through the end-to-end correspondence process and have doubled the number of staff in the Department's correspondence unit temporarily to cope with the extra demand.

Mr John Baron:

[\[45045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 1 June 2021 and chase up correspondence of 29 June, 29 July and 23 August regarding constituent with reference JB32656.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 9 September 2021.

■ Mental Health Services: Finance

Justin Madders:

[\[41915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding has been allocated to reducing waiting times for mental health treatments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

While we have not specifically made an allocation for reducing waiting times for mental health treatment, the NHS Long Term Plan invests at least an additional £2.3 billion a year into mental health services by 2023/24. This will ensure an additional

345,000 children and young people and 380,000 more adults have timely access to quality mental health support.

We are also providing around an additional £500 million in 2021/22 to support people's mental health in 2021/22 and to address waiting times for mental health services.

Justin Madders:

[\[41916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding has been allocated to the training and recruitment of mental health practitioners.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In 2021/22 Health Education England is investing a further £111 million in the mental health workforce. Along with existing committed funding to support the NHS Long Term Plan ambitions for mental health, this is a total of £261 million in this financial year. The next Spending Review will set out further details of the Government's spending plans for workforce budgets in future years.

■ **Mental Health Services: Staff**

Justin Madders:

[\[41914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the adequacy of staff available to provide mental health therapies on the NHS.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Ministers regularly engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including a recent roundtable with the Royal Colleges, including the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Departmental officials also hold regular discussions with mental health stakeholders.

■ **Mental Health: Young People**

Bim Afolami:

[\[42076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to improve young people's mental health as part of the recovery from the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are providing an additional £79 million in 2021/22 for children and young people's mental health services to allow around 22,500 more children and young people to access community health services, 2,000 more to access eating disorder services, and a faster increase in the coverage of mental health support teams in schools and colleges.

We are also providing £13 million to ensure young people aged 18 to 25 years old are supported with tailored mental health support, helping bridge the gap between children's and adult services.

These investments are in addition to the commitments of the NHS Long Term Plan, through which mental health services will receive an extra £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24, allowing 345,000 more children and young people access to National Health Service-funded mental health services.

■ **Motor Neurone Disease: Research**

Tony Lloyd:

[\[41671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing spending on targeted research on motor neurone disease ahead of the 2021 Spending Review.

Edward Argar:

There are no plans for specific discussions. The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). It is not usual practice to ring-fence funding for particular topics or conditions. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including motor neurone disease. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. We are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia and neurodegeneration at all stages, including medical and care interventions.

Cat Smith:

[\[41943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will increase the funding allocated to research on motor neurone disease.

Edward Argar:

We are currently working on ways to significantly boost further research on dementia and neurodegeneration, including motor neurone disease (MND). The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). It is not usual practice to ring-fence funding for particular topics or conditions. The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including MND. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money, and scientific quality.

■ **NHS Property Services**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[43476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to integrate NHS property services as part of the Integrated Care Partnerships.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[43477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to integrate NHS property services with health and social care providers.

Edward Argar:

The 2021 Health and Care Bill makes no proposals for legislative changes to NHS Property Services itself. However, the proposed creation of integrated care boards and integrated care partnerships gives NHS Property Services the opportunity to develop more collaborative and strategic working relationships at the local level working in partnership with local healthcare systems, for example supporting the development and implementation of estates strategies.

■ **NHS Trusts: Finance****Rachael Maskell:**[\[45207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the Elective Recovery Fund being distributed according to a needs-based analysis.

Edward Argar:

No formal assessment has yet been made.

Allocation of the £2 billion provided for elective recovery will be kept under regular review.

■ **NHS: Energy****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[41655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NHS facilities are transitioning to be powered by more sustainable forms of energy.

Mr Barry Sheerman:[\[41656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to engage with environmental charities and industry leaders to ensure that hospitals and other NHS facilities become more sustainable.

Edward Argar:

'Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service', published in October 2020, sets out that National Health Service organisations should be powered by more sustainable forms of energy. The NHS has started this transition by asking all its hospitals to switch over to 100% purchased renewable energy.

NHS England and NHS Improvement and NHS trusts engage extensively with a variety of environmental charities and environmental leaders, industry and professional bodies to deliver the interventions set out in 'Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service'.

■ **NHS: Medefer****Justin Madders:**[\[41921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many referrals were made to Medefer in each month of 2020.

Justin Madders:

[\[41922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the referrals sent to Medefer have been (a) resolved by the virtual service and (b) re-referred to an in-person NHS trust.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **NHS: Overtime**

Liz Twist:

[\[15354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the (a) amount of overtime worked and (b) cost of that overtime worked by NHS staff throughout the course of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 June 2021]: The amount of overtime worked is not held centrally. The total value of overtime worked by National Health Service staff working in the hospital and community health sector between March 2020 and December 2020 is £1,340 million.

■ **NHS: Pay**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[41855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to take steps to reward NHS staff who have served on covid-19 wards beyond the 3 per cent pay rise announced in July 2021.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[41856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to (a) increase the pay rise for NHS staff and (b) introduce a financial bonus for those staff who served on covid-19 wards in the event that short-term economic growth and tax receipts are higher than forecast.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[41857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that service on covid-19 wards is considered in future decisions on NHS pay.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[41858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to engage with proposals from NHS trade unions for an NHS pay rise above the three per cent announced in July 2021; and what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility and fairness of proposed pay rise figures from those unions.

Helen Whately:

The Government looked to the independent Pay Review Bodies for a pay recommendation for National Health Service staff. The Government has accepted the

NHS Pay Review Body and Review Body for Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration's recommendations in full.

Once implemented, all NHS staff within the two Review Bodies' remit groups for this year will receive a 3% pay uplift, backdated to April 2021. Additional payments are not being considered.

■ NHS: Staff

Grahame Morris: [\[43485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the NHS People Plan 2020/2021, what additional funding will be required to (a) expand the NHS workforce and (b) ensure that education and training is fit for the future.

Grahame Morris: [\[43486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding will be made available to (a) expand the NHS workforce and (b) ensure that education and training is fit for the future as outlined in the NHS People Plan 2020/2021.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: The next Spending Review will set out further details of the Government's spending plans for National Health Service workforce education and training budgets for future years.

■ Pregnancy: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [\[44412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of bringing forward pregnant women's second doses of the covid-19 vaccine before their third trimester.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Currently, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends an interval of eight weeks between doses of all the available COVID-19 vaccines; this includes pregnant women. On 14 May 2021, in response to the increasing rates of infection of the Delta variant, the Government amended the interval of second doses for the most vulnerable cohorts who were offered a vaccine in phase one of the programme, from 12 weeks to an eight-week gap. The eight-week dose interval was applied to all eligible cohorts from 6 July.

It should be noted that current evidence shows that a longer dose interval produces a better immune response. As such, the JCVI has advised against reducing the dose interval further in order to maximise the effectiveness of the vaccination programme. The JCVI regularly reviews its advice in relation to COVID-19 vaccinations, taking into account new data and evidence on the effectiveness of the programme and the ongoing epidemiological situation .

■ **Pregnancy: Employment**

Ian Murray:

[\[43481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's guidance that employers should allow pregnant women past 28 weeks gestation to work from home or be suspended on paid leave where that is not possible, as set out in the Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees published on 20 July 2021, remains in place.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for pregnant employees' published on 20 July 2021, remains in place.

■ **Prescriptions: Fees and Charges**

Mick Whitley:

[\[42144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of increasing the qualifying age for free prescriptions to the state retirement age on the numbers of people rationing medicines they have been prescribed.

Jo Churchill:

A specific assessment has not been made.

Mick Whitley:

[\[42145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of increasing the qualifying age for free prescriptions to the state retirement age on the number of hospital admissions in England.

Jo Churchill:

A full assessment has not been made.

Mick Whitley:

[\[42146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of ending prescription charges for people with long-term health conditions.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no such assessment.

Mick Whitley:

[\[42147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the public health effects of the (a) Welsh and (b) Scottish Government's decision to end prescription charges.

Jo Churchill:

We have made no such assessment as the decision is a matter for the devolved administrations.

Mick Whitley: [\[42148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential additional expenses that might be incurred by healthcare providers in England as a result of people not following their medicine regime in the event of the qualifying age for free prescriptions being increased to the state pension age.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made.

Mick Whitley: [\[42149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect of increasing the qualifying age for free prescriptions to the state pension age on levels of poverty (a) nationally and (b) by constituency.

Jo Churchill:

No such assessment has been made.

■ Primary Health Care: Research

Martyn Day: [\[42010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of expanding clinical research capacity in primary care settings; and what plans he has to support GPs in delivering clinical research for complex conditions such as diabetes.

Edward Argar:

On 23 March 2021 we published the vision for the future of United Kingdom clinical research delivery. This aims to create a digitally enabled and pro-innovation clinical research environment, which is more efficient, resilient and has research embedded across all health and care settings, including primary care, as a core part of effective patient care. As set out in our phase one implementation plan, published on 23 June 2021, we are expanding flexible workforce and delivery models for primary care through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR offers a package of support and training for clinical research delivery in primary care and the NIHR Clinical Research Network's Primary Care Research Strategy aims to increase the capacity of general practitioner (GP) practices to engage in research and support and incentivise GPs to deliver clinical research.

■ Prisoners: Coronavirus

Ellie Reeves: [\[43638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of prison inmates have been (a) offered a covid-19 vaccine and (b) vaccinated against covid-19.

Nadhim Zahawi:

All eligible prisoners in England have been offered a COVID-19 vaccine and according to the latest available data, 44% are now fully vaccinated with two doses. This includes 80% of those over 50 years old and 37% of the under 50 year old population.

■ Respite Care**Rachael Maskell:**[\[15312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing respite care for carers.

Helen Whately:

We are working with local authorities, in collaboration with Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure, where possible, the safe resumption of respite services. We also provided £1.49 billion via the Infection Control Fund, which has been used to support the safe reopening of day and respite services. In addition, we have allocated over £2 billion this year to the Better Care Fund which local authorities can access to fund social care services in their areas including respite services.

■ Social Services**Mr Mark Harper:**[\[45064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 35 of Command Paper 506: Building Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care, what the Government's timetable is for publishing the White Paper on adult social care.

Helen Whately:

We will work with care users, providers and other partners to co-develop these plans and publish further detail in a white paper for reform later this year.

■ Social Services: Disability**Zarah Sultana:**[\[42179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to consult (a) disabled people and (b) representatives of disability rights organisations to obtain their views on reforming adult social care.

Helen Whately:

'Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care', was published on 7 September, committing to investing an additional £5.4 billion over three years.

In developing the proposals set out in the Plan, we discussed priorities for reform with a wide range of stakeholders, including people with disabilities. We will continue to work with care users, providers and other partners, including disabled people and disability-led organisations, to co-develop more detail on our plans for reform of adult social care. Further detail will be published in a white paper later this year.

■ Social Services: Finance**Mr Mark Harper:** [\[45065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 36 of the policy paper, Building Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care, published in September 2021, how that funding will be allocated between the objectives noted in paragraph 37 on (a) introducing a cap on personal care costs, (b) providing financial assistance to those without substantial assets, (c) delivering wider support for the social care system and (d) improving the integration of health and social care systems.

Helen Whately:

We will set out more detail on our plans for reform of adult social care in a white paper later this year.

■ Social Services: Wages Councils**Grahame Morris:** [\[45100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will establish a wage council to determine pay levels in the care sector.

Helen Whately:

We have no current plans to do so.

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.

■ Travel: Coronavirus**John Howell:** [\[37416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made in the introduction of mutually-recognised vaccine certificates within Europe.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: The United Kingdom and European Union are aligned in the technical approach to COVID-19 status certification. We are actively engaging other states on a bilateral basis and multilaterally through organisations including the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Health Organization to support this work. The certification app in France now allows scans the code from the NHS COVID Pass and work continues to set up similar arrangements elsewhere.

■ Travel: Quarantine**Sir Alan Campbell:** [\[40617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the Government is allowing travellers from the USA who have been double vaccinated against covid-19 to enter the UK without quarantining but not those double vaccinated travellers from Canada.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 6 September 2021]: From 2 August, passengers that have been fully vaccinated with vaccines authorised by the European Medicines Agency in European countries and Food and Drug Administration in the United States of America have been able to travel to England without quarantine, or a day eight test. Decisions related to this policy are based on the latest risk assessment from the Joint Biosecurity Centre. We are working on expanding the number of people who can enter the United Kingdom more easily, including through engaging with international partners. We will provide an update in due course on how we will approach vaccinated individuals from other countries, including Canada.

■ Trodelvy**Mick Whitley:**[\[42140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department can take to accelerate the approval of the drug Sacituzumab Govitecan, marketed as Trodelvy, by the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is aware of the importance of Trodelvy and is participating in several new schemes designed to speed up its availability.

Earlier this year, a licence application for Trodelvy in metastatic triple negative breast cancer was filed in the United Kingdom as part of Project Orbis. The United States approval is being considered and the MHRA is currently evaluating the application for Trodelvy.

Mick Whitley:[\[42141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the National Institute for Health Care Excellence on accelerating the publication of its advice on whether Sacituzumab Govitecan, marketed as Trodelvy, is a clinically and cost-effective use of NHS resources.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for scheduling the development of technology appraisal guidance on individual medicines in discussion with the manufacturer. Following discussion with Gilead, the manufacturer of sacituzumab govitecan, NICE has been able to accelerate its appraisal and now expects to issue guidance in June 2022, with draft guidance expected in April 2022.

In view of the challenge for the health system presented by the more rapid approval of Project Orbis drugs, NHS England and NHS Improvement and NICE have agreed a set of principles to allow potential interim access to drugs licensed through this route ahead of NICE's guidance.

Mick Whitley:

[\[42143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will meet with people affected by metastatic triple-negative breast cancer to discuss the potential of the drug Sacituzumab Govitecan, marketed as Trodelvy, to improve (a) the quality of life and (b) the prognoses of people diagnosed with that condition.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: We have no current plans to do so. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is currently appraising Trodelvy (Sacituzumab govitecan) for the treatment of metastatic triple negative breast cancer and expects to publish guidance for the National Health Service in June 2022.

HOME OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Immigration

John Healey:

[\[44194\]](#)

To ask the Home Department, how many successful Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applicants and their families that are in the UK have (a) been allocated housing and (b) are still waiting to be allocated housing.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: The Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme (ACRS) will provide protection for people at risk identified as in need.

The government has committed to welcome around 5,000 people in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years. We will work with the United Nations and aid agencies to identify those we should help.

The scheme is not yet open yet, further details will be announced in due course.

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[41868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of the pilot scheme for 30,000 seasonal agricultural workers in 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The pilot scheme is subject to ongoing evaluation activity and we will make an assessment of it prior to a decision whether to extend its provisions into future years.

■ Antisocial Behaviour

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[42221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's strategy is for reducing anti-social behaviour; and what steps she is taking to ensure that that strategy is (a) joined-up, (b) multi-agency and (c) holistic.

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'). Local areas decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances.

Home Office [statutory guidance](#), which was updated this year, supports all local agencies in using these powers and in taking the multi-agency approach that is needed to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour in a way that takes account of the needs of the victim and the wider 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'.

■ Arson**Steve Reed:****[45130]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the number of arson investigations undertaken by local authorities in England in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects data on arson offences recorded by the police and the outcomes of resulting investigations of the offences. The data for the police forces in England is published on the Home Office website at the address below:

Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Data by local authority is not published.

■ Asylum**Ian Blackford:****[41894]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to expedite decisions on asylum applications, including appeals made by Afghan nationals.

Chris Philp:

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. Claims by Afghan nationals will be considered in the same way as claims from any other nationality; we do not believe it is appropriate to prioritise claims from one nationality over another as many claimants, irrespective of nationality, are potentially vulnerable and no one is expected to leave the UK while they have a claim outstanding.

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 that 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 while we consider the situation.

■ Asylum: Accommodation Centres

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[41944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to bring into force (a) sections 27-31 or (b) sections 36 of the Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 in respect of accommodation centres for persons in the UK who seek to or have registered asylum claims.

Kevin Foster:

The New Plan for Immigration published by the Home Office included plans to set up Reception Centres to provide basic accommodation for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute.

As part of these plans consideration is being given to commencing some of the measures set out in the Nationality Immigration and Asylum 2002 which relate to supporting asylum seekers in accommodation centres.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[43550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to commence specific sections within Part 2 of the Nationality Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: The New Plan for Immigration, published by the Home Office on 24 March 2021, included plans to set up Reception Centres to provide basic accommodation for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute.

As part of these plans consideration is being given to commencing some of the measures set out in the Nationality Immigration and Asylum 2002 which relate to supporting asylum seekers in accommodation centres.

The locations for accommodation centres have not yet been determined. Any proposals to establish accommodation centres in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be discussed with the devolved governments.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[43551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to consult Ministers in the devolved Administrations before making any arrangements for the provision of accommodation centres in their respective nations (a) pursuant to s16 Nationality Immigration Act 2002 and (b) generally.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: The New Plan for Immigration, published by the Home Office on 24 March 2021, included plans to set up Reception Centres to provide basic accommodation for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute.

As part of these plans consideration is being given to commencing some of the measures set out in the Nationality Immigration and Asylum 2002 which relate to supporting asylum seekers in accommodation centres.

The locations for accommodation centres have not yet been determined. Any proposals to establish accommodation centres in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be discussed with the devolved governments.

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Tim Farron:

[\[41789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when his Department plans to publish a new Afghanistan country and policy information note.

Chris Philp:

We aim to publish a new country policy and information note as soon as possible.

Ian Blackford:

[\[41900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing Afghan nationals in the UK to submit further submissions on asylum applications online.

Kevin Foster:

In March 2020, to protect claimants and Home Office staff, we made changes to the further submissions process to allow for representations to be made remotely. It was always the intention of the Home Office to re-start the process of requiring further submissions from failed asylum seekers to be made in person as this helps to ensure people maintain contact with the Home Office and enables identity to be checked.

In order to make this process more accessible, we have recently increased the number of locations people can lodge submissions, with Glasgow coming on line in mid-August 2021, in addition to the previous locations of Liverpool and Belfast.

Ian Blackford:

[\[41901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan applicants for asylum (a) have received 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.

Ian Blackford: [41902]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to ensure that Afghan nationals are not evicted from asylum accommodation.

Ian Blackford: [41903]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of whether there is a viable route of return to Afghanistan for the purposes of applications for support under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Afghan nationals who have an asylum claim or appeal which has not yet been decided are eligible to receive support under section 95 of the 1999 Act if they would otherwise be destitute. Furthermore, failed asylum seekers may be supported under section 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (1999 Act) if they would otherwise be destitute and meet other conditions set out in the Immigration and Asylum (Provision of Accommodation to Failed Asylum-Seekers) Regulations 2005.

Regulation 3(2)(c) provides, subject to the individual being destitute, support may be provided where there is no "viable route of return" to the individual's country of origin. However, this is not considered to be relevant to the current situation in Afghanistan, where the relevant issue is the safety of individuals if they were to return to the country, rather than the practicalities of travelling there.

Failed asylum seekers who consider they would be at risk of harm on return to Afghanistan because of the recent changes in the country are able to lodge further asylum submissions and would therefore be eligible to receive support under Regulation 3(2)(e) of the 2005 Regulations, subject to meeting the destitution criteria.

There are no plans to change the policy so Afghans may not be evicted from accommodation provided under section 95 or 4(2) in any circumstances. Like others supported under the provisions, their support may be discontinued in a number of circumstances, including where it appears they are no longer destitute, where they are no longer living in the accommodation provided to them and where they are granted refugee status and therefore become eligible to take up employment or apply for mainstream benefits.

Anne McLaughlin: [41951]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish a new Country information and policy note on Afghanistan.

Chris Philp:

We aim to publish a new country policy and information note as soon as possible.

Alan Brown:

[\[41973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to expedite decisions on asylum applications, including appeals, made by Afghan nationals.

Chris Philp:

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. Claims by Afghan nationals will be considered in the same way as claims from any other nationality; we do not believe it is appropriate to prioritise claims from one nationality over another as many claimants, irrespective of nationality, are potentially vulnerable and no one is expected to leave the UK while they have a claim outstanding.

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 that 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:

[\[41981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to not evict Afghan nationals from asylum accommodation.

Alan Brown:

[\[41982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of whether there is currently a viable route of return to Afghanistan for the purposes of applications for support under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; what steps the Government is taking to create safe passages for Afghans seeking asylum; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

Failed asylum seekers may be supported under section 4(2) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 if they would otherwise be destitute and meet other conditions set out in the Immigration and Asylum (Provision of Accommodation to Failed Asylum-Seekers) Regulations 2005.

Regulation 3(2)(c) provides that, subject to the individual being destitute, support may be provided where there is no “viable route of return” to the individual’s country of origin. However, this is not considered to be relevant to the current situation in Afghanistan, where the relevant issue is the safety of individuals if they were to return to the country, rather than the practicalities of travelling there.

Failed asylum seekers who consider that they would be at risk of harm on return to Afghanistan because of the recent changes in the country are able to lodge further asylum submissions and would therefore be eligible to receive support under Regulation 3(2)(e) of the 2005 Regulations, subject to meeting the destitution criteria.

There are no plans to change the policy so that Afghans may not be evicted from accommodation provided under the 1999 Act in any circumstances. Like others supported under the provisions, their support may be discontinued in a number of circumstances, including where it appears they are no longer destitute, where they are no longer living in the accommodation provided to them and where they are granted refugee status.

The UK’s new resettlement scheme will offer a route welcoming Afghans most at risk who have been forced to flee the country, prioritising resettling women, girls and children to the UK. This scheme delivers on the Government’s commitment in the New Plan for Immigration to create safe and legal routes for those in fear of persecution and oppression in their home country. Further details on the scheme will be published in due course.

Additionally, the Government’s family reunion scheme allows Afghans granted protection to bring their partner and children under 18 to the UK if they formed part of their family unit before they fled their country.

Peter Gibson:

[42138]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to allow members of the LGBT community in Afghanistan to seek asylum in the UK.

Chris Philp:

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. However, there is no provision within our Immigration Rules for someone to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge. Whilst we acknowledge the increasingly complex situation in Afghanistan, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

While we do not allow asylum claims from abroad, all asylum claims that are lodged from within the UK, including those from Afghan nationals that are based on sexual orientation or gender identity, will be carefully considered on their individual merits in

accordance with our international obligations. Those who need protection will normally be granted five years' limited leave, have full access to the labour market and mainstream benefits, and can apply for settlement after five years.

We do not remove asylum seekers who have had to leave their countries because their sexuality or gender identity has put them at risk of persecution and no one who is found to be at risk of persecution or serious harm in Afghanistan will be expected to return there. Enforced returns of those who have been refused asylum and have exhausted all rights of appeal are also currently paused while we consider the situation.

The UK's new resettlement scheme will, however, offer a route welcoming Afghans most at risk who have been forced to flee the country, prioritising resettling women, girls and children to the UK. Further details on the scheme will be published in due course.

Zarah Sultana:

[42181]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to offer asylum to civilians fleeing from Afghanistan following the Taliban's recent ascent to power in that country.

Chris Philp:

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. However, there is no provision within our Immigration Rules for someone to be allowed to travel to the UK to seek asylum or temporary refuge. Whilst we acknowledge the increasingly complex situation in Afghanistan, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from the very large numbers of people overseas who might like to come here. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

While we do not allow asylum claims from abroad, all asylum claims that are lodged from within the UK, including those from Afghan nationals, will be carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations. Those who need protection will normally be granted five years' limited leave, have full access to the labour market and mainstream benefits, and can apply for settlement after five years.

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.

The UK's new resettlement scheme will, however, offer a route welcoming Afghans most at risk who have been forced to flee the country, prioritising resettling women, girls and children to the UK. Further details on the Scheme will be published in due course.

Neil Coyle:

[\[43537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to review and expediate all outstanding (a) asylum claims and (b) asylum appeals made by Afghan nationals currently living in the UK.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: 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. Claims by Afghan nationals will be considered in the same way as claims from any other nationality.

We do not believe it is appropriate to prioritise claims from one nationality over another as many claimants, irrespective of nationality, are potentially vulnerable and no one is expected to leave the UK while they have a claim outstanding.

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 that 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 while we consider the situation.

■ Crime: Rural Areas

Paul Blomfield:

[\[41850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of appointing a Wildlife and Rural Crime Coordinator for England.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is committed to driving down both wildlife and rural crime. To help deliver this, we provide funding for the police's National Wildlife Crime Unit and fully support the National Police Chiefs' Council's Rural Affairs Strategy, which supports safer rural communities and provides a better rural focus in policing. Delivery of the Strategy is supported by the Government's recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers over the next three years to ensure that the public are protected against crime, including rural crime.

It is the responsibility of Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables, who understand the priorities of their communities, to ensure that resources, including these new officers, are deployed accordingly.

■ Cybercrime

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[45052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has with the National Cyber Security Centre to tackle growing cyber crime in the next five years.

Damian Hinds:

As technology develops, so too do opportunities for cyber criminals to target the UK. The arrival of 5G and the Internet of Things will create multiple new vulnerabilities, including inside people's homes. 'Deep Fake' technology provides opportunities for fraud and identity theft or for exploitation and extortion. We need to confront these crimes and develop and improve technological safeguards so that citizens never become victims.

As we made clear in the Beating Crime Plan published earlier this year, we are working across government to deliver improvements to the UK's cyber resilience and ensure we stay ahead of cyber criminals. We have invested £195 million over the last five years to establish a specialist cyber law enforcement network to disrupt and prosecute cyber criminals and support victims in response and recovery. We are developing a campaign to confront the growing threat of ransomware and to disrupt cyber criminals based overseas.

We will publish a new National Cyber Security Strategy later this year. The Strategy will drive significant improvements in the UK's response to cybercrime. It will strengthen the Law Enforcement response and drive greater collaboration with the National Cyber Centre and the National Cyber Force

■ Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre

Kate Osborne:

[\[45283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's planned timescale is for Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre to start holding women who are detained under immigration powers.

Chris Philp:

The contract to operate services at Derwentside immigration removal centre (IRC) was awarded to Mitie Care & Custody from 4 June 2021 for 2 years. We expect that the IRC will start holding women who are detained under immigration powers in the autumn.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victims

Helen Hayes:

[\[43594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the HMICFRS report, entitled A duty to protect: Police use of protective measures in cases involving violence against women and girls, published on 24 August 2021, what steps she is taking to improve protections for the victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: Tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a top priority for this Government and we are committed to taking action to improve protections for the victims of domestic abuse.

Earlier this year we passed the landmark Domestic Abuse Act which will bolster the response to domestic abuse on every level. The Act will provide further protections to the millions of people who experience domestic abuse and strengthen measures to bring perpetrators to justice, as well as transform the support we give to victims, ensuring they have the protection they deserve. For the first time in history there will be a general purpose legal definition of domestic abuse which incorporates a range of abuses beyond physical violence, including emotional, coercive or controlling, and economic abuse.

In addition, we recently published a new Tackling VAWG Strategy which sets out our commitment to working with the National Police Chiefs' Council to appoint a National Policing Lead on VAWG who will work to transform the way policing responds to these crimes and ensure effective coordination nationally. The new lead will report on progress to the Home Secretary-chaired National Policing Board.

The Strategy also includes commitments to: launch a communication campaign with a focus on targeting perpetrators and harmful misogynistic attitudes, educating young people about healthy relationships and ensuring victims can access support; provide a £5 Million 'Safety of Women at Night' fund, and work across Government to improve data, and in turn improve understanding, of these crimes.

We are considering the findings and recommendations of this report and will work closely with the College of Policing, National Police Chiefs' Council, HMICFRS and VAWG stakeholders to ensure officers understand all the protective measures available to them.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[42220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce drug misuse in communities.

Kit Malthouse:

Drugs can devastate lives, ruin families and damage communities. This Government's approach to them remains clear - we must prevent drug misuse in our communities and support people through treatment and recovery.

In January, the Government announced a £148m new investment to cut crime and protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs. This includes;

- £80 million for drug treatment services right across England to give more support to offenders with drink and drug addictions, which can fuel crime - this represents the largest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years. This money increases the number of treatment places for prison leavers and offenders diverted into tough and effective community sentences.

- £28m for Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) which is trail-blazing a whole-system response to combatting drug misuse in some of the areas hardest hit in England and Wales. In July 2021, we announced an expansion of this programme taking the total amount invested to £59m in this pathfinder programme which is set to run until March 2023. The programme focuses on co-ordinated law enforcement activity, alongside expanded diversionary programmes (such as Out of Court Disposal Orders) and enhanced treatment and recovery provisions.

- £40m dedicated investment for 2021/22 to tackle drugs supply and county lines and surge our activity against these ruthless gangs. This investment has allowed us to expand and build upon our successful County Lines Programme, established in November 2019.

The £40 million of new money to tackle county lines and drugs supply brings the total invested to £65 million since November 2019. The funding has already seen more than 1,100 lines closed, over 6,300 arrests, over £2.9 million in cash and significant quantities of drugs seized, and more than 1,900 vulnerable people safeguarded.

On 27 July, the UK government published its initial response to Dame Carol Black's independent review of drugs setting out a clear cross-government commitment to this agenda, including plans to publish a long-term drug strategy by the end of the year.

The strategy will build on the £148m package and will present our whole of government approach to drive down drug supply and demand, including support for people through treatment and recovery, and an even tougher response to criminal supply chains and the demand that fuels these illegal markets.

■ Immigration

John Redwood:

[41592]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many outstanding cases her Department is considering for (a) asylum and (b) permission to be an economic migrant living and working in the UK in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Kevin Foster:

a) The Home Office publishes data on asylum and resettlement in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'.

Data on the number of asylum applications currently awaiting a decision, either an initial decision or pending further review, are published in table Asy_D03 of the [asylum and resettlement detailed datasets](#). Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbooks. The latest published statistics relate to data up to the end of June 2021.

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

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

(b) This information requested is routinely published as part of UKVI Transparency data.

The current data is available for Quarter 2 of 2021 and can be found in the attached link:

[Visas and Citizenship data: Q2 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Data for Q3 2021 will be published in the next transparency data release.

■ Immigration Controls: Coronavirus

Liz Saville Roberts:

[45228]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 41108, how travellers without access to the internet are able to complete the Passenger Locator Form.

Chris Philp:

All passengers must complete the Passenger Locator Form online, however, once completed they can print off their finished form to show carriers before departing to the UK.

Passengers may seek assistance, from family, friends or another third party, to complete on their behalf.

There are dedicated helplines for members of the public who are encountering issues with completing the PLF form. Whilst these helplines can provide advice, they cannot complete the form on behalf of the passenger.

The contact telephone number from within the UK is 0800 678 1767 and is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am to 5pm. These calls are free of charge.

The contact telephone number when outside the UK is 0044 207 113 0371 and is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am to 5pm. These calls are charged dependant on the network provider.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

Sarah Champion:

[\[43528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps have been taken to expedite the biometric processing of eligible applications to the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy; and what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues and relevant officials on biometric processing in third countries.

Victoria Atkins:

Officials are working with the authorities in countries neighbouring Afghanistan to ensure that biometric enrolment of those eligible to apply under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy scheme can be carried out in as rapid and efficient manner as possible.

Cabinet colleagues and officials have been regularly updated.

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[45288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions her Department has had with representatives of Bexley Council on support and accommodation for Afghan families in that borough.

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.

The need for suitable accommodation to support those we welcome is pressing. We need the help of every Council across the country to step up to offer accommodation and support for these families, so that we can swiftly help them into permanent, safe homes and enable them to start rebuilding their lives and integrating into our communities.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Helen Hayes:

[\[42029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support digitally excluded people to make late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Helen Hayes:

[\[42030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme who were unable to access in person support when making their application as a result of the covid-19 outbreak have reasonable grounds to submit a late application to the scheme.

Helen Hayes: [42036]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether inclusion in one of the categories that her Department has assessed as vulnerable persons, is reasonable grounds to be eligible for late application to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Helen Hayes: [42037]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether periods of (a) bereavement and (b) destitution will be treated as reasonable grounds for a late application to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, there remains scope, indefinitely, for a person eligible for status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to make a late application to the scheme where there are reasonable grounds for their failure to meet the deadline applicable to them.

As the Government has made clear, the guidance published on 1 April is not exhaustive and we will take a pragmatic and flexible approach to considering late applications to the EUSS in light of the particular circumstances of each case. This will include where the person is vulnerable and cases of bereavement, destitution or inability due to COVID-19 to access support in person.

There remains a wide range of support available for applicants, including from 72 organisations across the UK grant-funded by the Home Office to help vulnerable people apply to the EUSS. Additional support is also available for those who do not have the appropriate access, skills or confidence to apply online through [Assisted Digital](#), which can offer assistance over the telephone.

Helen Hayes: [42031]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance has been issued to her officials on interpreting reasonable grounds for late applications to the EU Settlement Scheme; and what assessment she has made of how that guidance will change over time.

Helen Hayes: [42032]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance has been issued to her officials on interpreting reasonable grounds for late applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme for people who only become aware of their undocumented status in future years.

Helen Hayes: [42038]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there is any time constraint on applications to the EU Settlement Scheme for people who have reasonable grounds for late submission.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, there remains scope, indefinitely, for a person eligible for status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to make a late

application to the scheme where there are reasonable grounds for their failure to meet the deadline applicable to them.

The Home Office published non-exhaustive guidance on 1 April 2021 on what may constitute such reasonable grounds, to underpin a flexible and pragmatic approach to considering late applications to the EUSS in light of the circumstances of each case. This includes, for example, where a person establishes, when they first apply to work or study in the UK, an application to the scheme was not made on their behalf years earlier when they were a child by a parent, guardian or Local Authority. The latest version of the guidance is available at pages 30 to 48 here:

[EUSS casework guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-and-asylum/eu/eu-settlement-scheme/eu-settlement-scheme-casework-guidance).

The guidance makes clear applicants will be given the benefit of any doubt in considering whether, in light of information provided with the application, there are reasonable grounds for their failure to meet the deadline applicable to them under the EUSS, unless this would not be reasonable in light of the particular circumstances of the case.

Any change in approach will be reflected in a revision of the guidance.

Helen Hayes:

[42033]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether applicants to the EU Settlement Scheme who have been granted pre-settled status will be able to access comprehensive guidance and legal safeguards when applying for settled status in the future.

Helen Hayes:

[42035]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to allow people with pre-settled status to transfer to settled status as soon as their limited leave to remain runs out, provided they can give evidence that they are still living in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

In line with the Citizens' Rights Agreements, a person granted pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme can apply for settled status as soon as they qualify for it, generally after they have completed five years' continuous residence in the UK.

They will have access to comprehensive guidance and their rights will continue to be protected until the outcome of their application for settled status, including any appeal process against refusal.

■ Lancashire County Council and Liverpool City Council: Criminal Investigation

Damien Moore:

[36746]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the total cost of Operation Sheridan.

Damian Hinds:

The Home Office does not hold this information. Management of operations is a matter for individual police forces.

■ **Members: Correspondence****Mr John Baron:**[\[45046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 9 June 2021 and follow up correspondence of 7 July, 9 August and 23 August regarding his constituent with reference JB32767.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 9 September 2021.

Mr John Baron:[\[45047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay of 24 June, 22 July and 20 August 2021 on the matter of a constituent with reference JB32959.

Chris Philp:

I apologise for the delay. UK Visas and Immigration, MP Account Management team responded on 9 September 2021.

Afzal Khan:[\[45262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to provide a substantive response to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Manchester Gorton of 29 July 2021 regarding Mr Sharafat Ali.

Kevin Foster:

A response was sent on 9 September 2021.

■ **Migrant Workers: Shipping****Karl Turner:**[\[44314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many seafarers have been granted leave to enter the UK to join vessels working in UK territorial waters under the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017 to date.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: The Home Office does not hold readily available data on the number of overseas nationals working in the offshore industry in the UK from 2017 to date.

The Government is committed to making the UK a global leader in green energy and supporting the offshore windfarm sector is a key part of this commitment.

The information about the concession is published online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/offshore-wind-workers-immigration-rules-concession-2017>(opens in a new tab).

■ Migrant Workers: Wind Power

Karl Turner:

[44315]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the (a) employers and (b) construction and maintenance projects that have utilised the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017, to date.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: The Government has no plans to publish information on individual companies or their work.

The information about the concession is published online at:

[Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017: July 2021 update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/offshore-wind-workers-immigration-rules-concession-2017).

■ Migrants: Health Services

Sarah Owen:

[42157]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to Answer of 27 May 2021 to Question 6486, how many refunds of the Immigration Health Surcharge have been received by health and social care workers following the Prime Minister's announcement on ending the charge for health and social care workers in May 2020.

Kevin Foster:

Since the Prime Minister's announcement, the Home Office has made thousands of refunds to eligible customers working in the health and care sector. This covers both refunds and reimbursements under the schemes operated by the Home Office and Department of Health and Social Care respectively. We continue to consider the best way to publish data on the health and care worker exemption.

■ Passports: Dual Nationality

Paul Blomfield:

[41847]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to enable dual UK and EU citizens to travel to the UK on an EU member state passport without having to further prove their UK citizenship.

Kevin Foster:

British citizens have a right of abode in the UK and do not require leave to enter.

Border Force Officers examine all arriving passengers to establish whether they are British citizens, whether they require leave to enter or if they are exempt from immigration control.

Where the passenger claims to be British, but does not hold any evidence of British citizenship, the officer will conduct all relevant checks to satisfy themselves the passenger is British

When dual nationals who are eligible to use e-gates travel to the UK, they will enter via the e-gates without being 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.

■ Police: Batley and Spen

Kim Leadbeater: [42216]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers served the Batley and Spen constituency in each year since 2010.

Kim Leadbeater: [42217]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the 20,000 additional police officers will serve the Batley and Spen constituency.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is committed to recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers by March 2023. At 30 June 2021, 9,814 additional officers had been recruited as a result of the Police Uplift Programme in forces in England and Wales.

At 30 June 2021, West Yorkshire Police had recruited 504 additional officers against an allocation of 507 additional officers for years one and two of the Police Uplift. Allocations for year three are yet to be announced. The deployment of police officers across police forces is a local decision for operationally independent Chief Constables.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin. However, data are collected at Police Force Area (PFA) level only, and information on officer numbers in specific constituencies are not held centrally.

The latest in this statistical series covers the situation in both full time-equivalent (FTE) and headcount terms as at 31 March 2021, and can be found here: [Police workforce, England and Wales: 31 March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005761/open-data-table-police-workforce-280721.ods)

Data broken down by PFA, and going back to 2007, and can be found in the accompanying Open Data Tables here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005761/open-data-table-police-workforce-280721.ods

While the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin remains the key measure of the size of the police workforce, as part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme, the Home Office also publishes a quarterly update on the number of

officers (headcount terms only) in England and Wales, also broken down by PFA.
Data are available here:

[Police Officer uplift statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-statistics)

■ Police: Recruitment

Kim Leadbeater:

[42218]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the police officer recruitment process encourages applicants from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Kit Malthouse:

The Police Uplift is a once in a generation opportunity to attract a broad range of talent, cultures and backgrounds to a career in policing and is a core ambition in our drive to recruit 20,000 additional police officers.

The police officer workforce is now more diverse than ever before. The latest data shows the highest proportion of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic and female officers since records began.

Through the Police Uplift Programme we are supporting all forces with a variety of attraction and recruitment strategies, whilst delivering a national campaign designed to reach diverse audiences. Sharing best practice, engagement with police staff associations, upskilling recruitment teams and enhanced data capture are just some of the efforts being made to improve police diversity.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Caroline Lucas:

[41809]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Afghan nationals without military links under the UK resettlement schemes will be eligible for indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

On Monday 6th September, the Prime Minister announced that those arriving through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be granted immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain, allowing them to benefit from full rights and entitlements and providing them with the certainty and stability they need to build their life here.

This is consistent with the leave granted to those arriving through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

Ian Blackford:

[41896]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on mental health support for people arriving under the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the launch of a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. Subsequently, on 31 August, the Government announced 'Operation Warm Welcome' to ensure that all those relocated to the UK can access the vital health, education, and support into employment they need to fully integrate into society.

The Home Office has been working across Government to ensure that those evacuated from Afghanistan are well supported in all their needs. This includes engagement with the Department for Health and Social Care where we are having ongoing conversations around health provision regarding England as well as local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups working with people directly. We are working with the devolved administrations in their actions to welcome Afghan people as well.

Ian Blackford:**[41898]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to expand eligibility to refugee family reunion for Afghan refugees in the UK to sponsor their (a) adult dependent children, (b) parents and (c) siblings.

Chris Philp:

The Government's refugee family reunion policy allows 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. Afghan nationals recognised as refugees or with humanitarian protection in the UK, including those who will be resettled here under the new Afghanistan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, can sponsor qualifying family under this route. In the year ending June 2020, over 200 Afghan nationals came to the UK under the family reunion policy, including 130 children.

There are separate provisions in the Rules to allow extended family to sponsor children to come here where there are serious and compelling circumstances. Refugees can also sponsor adult dependent relatives living overseas to join them where, due to age, illness or disability, that person requires long-term personal care that can only be provided by relatives in the UK.

Our policy makes clear that there is discretion to grant visas outside the Immigration Rules, which caters for extended family members in exceptional circumstances.

There are additional safe and legal routes for people to come to the UK should they wish to join family members here, work or study. They would need to meet the requirements of the relevant Immigration Rule under which they were applying to qualify for a visa.

Ian Blackford:

[\[41899\]](#)

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.

Alan Brown:

[\[41974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether people arriving in the UK under the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme will be granted indefinite leave to remain.

Victoria Atkins:

On Monday 6th September, the Prime Minister announced that those arriving through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be granted immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain, allowing them to benefit from full rights and entitlements and providing them with the certainty and stability they need to build their life here.

This is consistent with the leave granted to those arriving through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

Alan Brown:

[\[41975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on mental health support for people arriving under the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans. Subsequently, on 31 August, the Government announced 'Operation Warm Welcome' to ensure that all those relocated to the UK can access the vital health, education, and support into employment they need to fully integrate into society.

We are working across Government to ensure that Afghan people who have been evacuated under Op Pitting or who have come to the UK through the ARAP and

ACRS schemes, are well supported in all their needs. This includes engagement with the Department for Health and Social Care, where we are having ongoing conversations around health provision. We are continuing to work with other Departments as part of urgently opening this route - further details will be announced in due course on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Alan Brown:

[41976]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to expedite decisions on family reunion applications made by Afghan refugees in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has already taken steps to prioritise any outstanding Family Reunion applications made by Afghan refugees in the UK.

The Home Office will not routinely expedite Afghan cases, as to do so would discriminate against other nationalities who may face similar risks, but we will consider cases on an individual basis to assess, in line with the existing approach on applications for Family Reunion, whether the risks presented mean the case should be expedited.

Alan Brown:

[41977]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to expand eligibility to refugee family reunion for Afghan refugees in the UK to (a) sponsor their adult dependent children, (b) sponsor their parents and (c) sponsor their siblings.

Chris Philp:

The Government's refugee family reunion policy allows 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. Afghan nationals recognised as refugees or with humanitarian protection in the UK, including those who will be resettled here under the new Afghanistan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, can sponsor qualifying family under this route. In the year ending June 2020, over 200 Afghan nationals came to the UK under the family reunion policy, including 130 children.

There are separate provisions in the Rules to allow extended family to sponsor children to come here where there are serious and compelling circumstances. Refugees can also sponsor adult dependent relatives living overseas to join them where, due to age, illness or disability, that person requires long-term personal care that can only be provided by relatives in the UK.

Our policy makes clear that there is discretion to grant visas outside the Immigration Rules, which caters for extended family members in exceptional circumstances.

There are additional safe and legal routes for people to come to the UK should they wish to join family members here, work or study. They would need to meet the requirements of the relevant Immigration Rule under which they were applying to qualify for a visa.

Ruth Jones:

[\[42096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the devolved Administrations on the resettlement of Afghan refugees.

Victoria Atkins:

As the Minister for Afghan resettlement, I met with counterparts from the Devolved Administrations on 6th September to discuss plans and the help provided across the United Kingdom.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster also met with First Ministers on 27 August to discuss issues relating to Afghanistan.

The Government will continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations on the design and delivery of the ACRS, which will welcome up to 5,000 people at risk in the coming year, in addition to Afghan citizens under the ARAP scheme.

Ruth Jones:

[\[42097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the funding required to provide refuge in the UK to people fleeing the Taliban in Afghanistan.

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, including levels of funding, will be made available in due course.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[42154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to establish a five year funding support scheme for local authorities to enable the resettlement of refugees from Afghanistan.

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, including levels of funding, will be made available in due course.

Dan Jarvis:

[43521]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghans relocated under Operation Warm Welcome are being rehoused in each local authority in England.

Chris Philp:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: A significant cross-government effort is under way, dubbed 'Operation Warm Welcome', to ensure Afghans arriving in the UK receive the vital support they need to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education and integrate into their local communities.

Regarding how many Afghans are being rehoused in each local authority, the Home Office does not publish a breakdown of these statistics. Many Afghans still remain in quarantine and bridging hotels pending securing permanent accommodation.

Dan Jarvis:

[44350]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential impact of the time taken to implement the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme on the mortality rate in Afghanistan.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: The UK's military evacuation from Afghanistan concluded on 28 August, the largest since the Second World War. Our armed forces and Civil Service staff worked around the clock to evacuate over 15,000 people.

At the same time, the Government has worked at pace to develop and launch a new and bespoke resettlement scheme, announced on 18 August, which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable Afghans in its first year, rising to 20,000 over the long-term – one of the most generous schemes in British history.

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

The UK has a proud history of welcoming those in need and has resettled over 25,000 people in need of protection since 2015. We look forward to welcoming thousands more in the years to come, supporting them to begin new lives in safety here in the United Kingdom.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Speed Limits

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[42219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce the number of speeding incidents conducted by drivers of high performance rental vehicles.

Kit Malthouse:

Excess speed is still a major cause of death and serious injury on our roads. Anyone who breaks the speed limit should expect to face proper sanction. The enforcement of speeding offences, including those conducted by drivers of high-performance rental vehicles, is an operational matter for the discretion of Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners. Forces will deploy available resources according to local pressures and priorities.

The Government's THINK! campaign plays a vital role in reducing deaths and serious injuries on the road through changing the attitudes and behaviours that can lead to casualties. To have the greatest impact, THINK! activity focuses on those at greatest risk – male drivers aged 17-24, who are four times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the road compared with drivers aged 25 and over.

Alongside this, the Government's Roads Policing Review is enabling the Home Office, the Department for Transport, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the National Police Chiefs' Council to work together to increase capability and capacity to improve road safety.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

John Redwood:

[\[41593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what further steps her Department plans to take to arrest people who take money from people seeking to cross the Channel illegally in unsuitable boats.

Chris Philp:

The Government stands resolute in its commitment to tackle Organised Immigration Crime (OIC). We continue to pursue the Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) who facilitate illegal travel to the UK and who exploit vulnerable migrants, knowingly putting people in life-threatening situations.

We are committed to prosecuting those who profit from dangerous and unnecessary Channel crossings in small boats. We are working with national and international partners in these investigations, and are continuing to improve the intelligence co-operation that underpins them. The multi-agency NCA-led OIC Taskforce is the UK government's 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.

We also pursue those involved in the financial flows that support this activity. Using criminal powers in the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, an individual can be prosecuted for money laundering offences if sufficient evidence is obtainable and CPS agree to charging, or civil powers within the same act permit the action to be taken against the money concerned. Both these approaches are used to undermine the financial flows supporting small boat and wider clandestine smuggling, both in the UK and with foreign partners.

We are working with NCA and social media companies to agree a joint action plan to tackle content advertising illegal OIC services on online platforms, including content relating to small boat crossings.

Additionally, 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.

The Government will continue to work tirelessly to stop the criminal networks facilitating OIC and protect the lives of those they wish to recklessly exploit.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: Housing**

John Redwood:

[\[41591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on providing hotel accommodation or more permanent homes for migrants arriving without permits.

Chris Philp:

Migrants who enter the UK unlawfully are not eligible to mainstream housing assistance. When someone applies for asylum, if they are destitute, they are provided with support and accommodation for the period that their claim is under consideration.

■ **Windrush Generation: Compensation**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[41324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce waiting times for claimants of the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Priti Patel:

Since April 2019 the Scheme has offered or paid more than £34 million in compensation to members of the Windrush generation. On 21 July the Home Office (HO) published the latest set of data on the Scheme which covers the period to the end of June 2021. During the month of June, the HO paid out £2.4 million in

compensation. More than £26 million in compensation has been paid across 776 claims.

In December we overhauled the Scheme and the changes have had an immediate effect on the speed and value of offers of compensation. Since the end of December, we have paid more than eight times the total amount paid previously.

However, the HO recognises that there is more still to do to speed up the time between submission and decision on claims. On 21 July the HO published a redesigned primary claim form which is easier for people to complete, and refreshed caseworker guidance which sets out clearly how caseworkers should apply the balance of probabilities and gather evidence to ensure claimants are only asked to provide the minimum information necessary. Together, these should reduce the time taken to process claims and improve peoples' experiences of applying to the Scheme.

The HO is also recruiting more case workers. Since the end of April, casework FTE has been increased by seven caseworkers and a team of 14 experienced caseworkers onto the scheme from elsewhere in the HO. The HO is in the process of recruiting a further 15 caseworkers and plan to hold a large reserve list so vacancies created through attrition can be filled more quickly.

The HO is also directing resources to where it is needed most to maximise final decision output. In addition, we are improving the evidence-gathering process, including by revising the data-sharing agreements with other government departments.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ **Big Ben: Repairs and Maintenance**

Alan Brown:

[\[40982\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what recent estimate the Commission has made of the date of completion of the refurbishment of the Elizabeth Tower.

Sir Charles Walker:

Summer 2022 is the current date for the completion of the conservation project.

■ **Central Lobby: Repairs and Maintenance**

Alan Brown:

[\[40985\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the estimated cost is of the upgrade works to the doors of Central Lobby.

Sir Charles Walker:

The estimated cost to upgrade the doors of Central Lobby is £3.8m.

■ Palace of Westminster: Repairs and Maintenance

Alan Brown: [\[40979\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the cost was of the encaustic tiles replacement programme.

Sir Charles Walker:

The project is closing now, and the expected cost is £11.8m.

Alan Brown: [\[40980\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the cost was of the refurbishment of the trial restoration of the section of cloisters close to St Stephen's Chapel.

Sir Charles Walker:

The cost for refurbishment of the trial restoration of the section of cloisters close to St Stephen's Chapel was £1.4m.

Alan Brown: [\[40981\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the estimated cost is of the refurbishment of the remaining sections of cloisters close to St Stephen's Chapel.

Sir Charles Walker:

We do not have a cost yet, as we are at the early stages of the business case process.

Alan Brown: [\[40984\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the estimated cost is of the river terrace stone restoration programme.

Sir Charles Walker:

The river terrace stone restoration programme has approved funds of £4.6m.

■ Parliamentary Estate: Lifts

Alan Brown: [\[40983\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the estimated cost is of the lift refurbishment programme.

Sir Charles Walker:

The lift programme is split into two phases.

Phase 1: £5.05m will refurbish 11 lifts in the Palace of Westminster that were identified as a priority (forecast completion 2022).

Phase 2: Has an estimated cost of £35.9m. This would refurbish 42 lifts in the Palace of Westminster and 15 lifts on other parts of the Estate. Please note – this is an estimated cost. In addition, it is still to be determined how many of these lifts will be delivered as part of this Programme or delivered as part of R&R.

The programme will deliver a full electrical and mechanical refurbishment to the lifts so that they continue to be safe to use. This will also ensure that they are compliant with current standards and legislation, including fire safety.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Council Housing: Asbestos

Steve Reed:

[45131]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the number of asbestos checks undertaken by councils in England in each of the last five years.

Luke Hall:

The Department does not collect the data requested.

There is no requirement for local authorities to report to central government on how they manage asbestos in their own buildings but local authorities are of course expected to comply as dutyholders under the relevant legal requirements.

The Health and safety Executive publishes a range of guidance for employers about working with asbestos and how to comply with relevant legislation. This is set out under the [Control of Asbestos Regulations \(CAR\) 2012](#) with further guidance available on HSE's website [HSE: Asbestos - health and safety in the workplace](#).

■ Empty Property

Colleen Fletcher:

[45136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the number of empty residential properties in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that empty residential properties in those areas do not fall into disrepair and can return into productive use.

Christopher Pincher:

As of October 2020, there were 268,385 long-term empty properties in England, 1,661 in Coventry and 28,740 in the West Midlands. Figures are not collected at parliamentary constituency level

Local authorities have powers and strong incentives to tackle empty homes. Through the New Homes Bonus, they receive the same amount for bringing an additional empty home back into use over a baseline threshold as building a new one

Billing authorities in England also have the power to charge up to 100% extra council tax - on top of the standard bill - on properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for at least two years, up to 200% extra on properties that have been empty for at least five years, and up to 300% extra on properties that have been empty for at least 10 years

In certain circumstances, local authorities can exercise powers to take over the management of long-term empty homes in order to bring them back into use in the private rented sector. Local authorities can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) when a property has been empty for more than two years, subject to the production of evidence that the property has been causing a nuisance to the community and evidence of community support for their proposal

Grant funding is also available through the Affordable Homes Programme to bring empty homes back into use. Empty properties must not be existing social housing owned by the Registered Provider or by another Registered Provider

It is for local housing authorities to decide when to use their powers to deal with empty properties, and they have the flexibility to focus on locally determined priorities and allocate their resources accordingly.

■ Golf

Steve Reed:

[\[45134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the number of municipal golf courses that have been in operation in England in each of the last ten years.

Luke Hall:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

■ Holocaust Commission

Sir Peter Bottomley:

[\[41612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reasons the Government has not announced funding for implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 Holocaust Commission other than the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Luke Hall:

The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation will continue to consider all the recommendations made in the Commission's report and the best way to deliver them.

■ Homelessness

Dr Kieran Mullan:

[\[42209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of social outcomes contracts in supporting people who are homeless.

Luke Hall:

MHCLG has supported and delivered three social outcome contracts for people who are homeless and assessed the effectiveness of these.

The first was the London Homelessness Social Impact Bond (SIB) (2012-15) which encouraged innovative approaches to support entrenched to 830 rough sleepers in

London. The impact evaluation of the programme compared results for the intervention group with those of a well-matched comparison group. One of the key findings was that the programme had significantly reduced rough sleeping over a two-year period. After two years, the mean number of rough sleeping contacts was 9.2 for the intervention group, compared to 13.9 for the comparison group. It is estimated that this resulted in around 3,900 rough sleeping episodes being avoided over two years as a result of the intervention. The evaluation also found that the individuals supported by the intervention were significantly more likely than the comparison group to completely desist from sleeping rough, enter long-term accommodation and, among non-UK nationals, have a confirmed reconnection.

The second was the 3-year Fair Chance Fund (Jan 2015 - Dec 2017) SIB which supported 1,910 homeless young people (18-24 years old) to improve accommodation, education, and employment outcomes.

From October 2017 to March 2021, the department also funded a £11.2 million rough sleeping SIB, targeting the most entrenched rough sleepers with multiple complex needs. Our data shows that around 1,700 deeply entrenched rough sleepers have been supported through this programme. MHCLG has worked with local authorities to produce reports to illustrate learning and key lessons.

MHCLG have assessed the learning from these programmes which has developed our understanding of interventions and support services that work for the most vulnerable people who sleep rough. This will continue to be considered in future delivery programmes, and any SIB programmes which the department undertakes.

■ Housing: Carbon Emissions

Stephen Morgan:

[\[42085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of the National Housing Federation's defining net zero for social housing: discussion paper, and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government welcomes the National Housing Federation discussion paper for its members on defining net zero for social housing and we look forward to seeing the outcome of the Federation's decarbonisation project.

The Social Housing White Paper committed to a review of the Decent Homes Standard, which will consider how the standard can work to support better energy efficiency and the decarbonisation of social homes. Part One of the review is underway and is due to conclude this Autumn.

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), for which the manifesto committed £3.8 billion over 10 years, will support local authorities and housing associations to improve the energy performance of social rented homes. Following the launch of the SHDF Demonstrator in October 2020, £62 million has been

awarded so far, covering over 2,300 social homes, to test innovative approaches to retrofitting at scale. Bidding for the first wave of the fund opened in August 2021.

■ **Local Government: Meetings**

Richard Fuller: [\[41792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the call for evidence on whether local authorities and parish councils may meet remotely on a permanent basis, which closed on 17 June 2021.

Luke Hall:

The Department is reviewing the responses to the consultation and will respond in due course. However, any permanent change would require legislation, and would depend upon Parliamentary time being available.

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

Sir Peter Bottomley: [\[41607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the annual (a) operating and (b) maintenance costs of the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Luke Hall:

Ahead of the public inquiry in 2020, running costs including maintenance costs were estimated at around £6 million. Estimates will be kept under review as the programme proceeds.

Sir Peter Bottomley: [\[41608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on what date the estimated cost of the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre was increased from £100 million to £102 million; for what reasons that estimated cost changed; and if he will place the detailed costing in the Library.

Luke Hall:

The overall cost was estimated at £102 million in December 2018. As set out in the answer to Question UIN253497 on 21 May 2019, additional funding is to cover the revised entrance pavilion, the Memorial courtyard and surrounding landscaping, and to take account of VAT incurred on the overall project costs.

Sir Peter Bottomley: [\[41609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much and what proportion of the private funding required for the creation of the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre has been raised as of 2 September 2021.

Luke Hall:

A fund-raising campaign is being led by an independent charity, led by Foundation member Gerald Ronson CBE, who has committed to securing pledges of at least £25 million.

Sir Peter Bottomley:[\[41610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether it is his policy that work will begin on constructing the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre only when the private funding required has been raised in full.

Luke Hall:

Funding arrangements will be in place before main construction begins.

Sir Peter Bottomley:[\[41611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what organisation he plans to (a) own and (b) manage the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what his timetable is for setting up that organisation.

Luke Hall:

We are considering various operating models and a decision will be made in good time before the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre opens.

Sir Peter Bottomley:[\[41613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the wording was of the recommendation of 13 January 2016 by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation relating to the location of the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and if he will place the minutes of the relevant part of that meeting in the Library.

Luke Hall:

The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation recommendation of 13 January 2016 was “*in principle to siting a memorial in the Gardens (without prejudice to the site of a learning centre)*”.

■ Regulator of Social Housing: Powers**Catherine West:**[\[42055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment has been made of the adequacy of the Regulator of Social Housing's investigatory powers.

Christopher Pincher:

In November 2020, the Department published 'The Social Housing White Paper: the Charter for Social Housing Residents'. This White Paper followed a consultation seeking views on social housing regulation, and set out a programme of transformative change to improve the experience of people living in social homes.

The most important step we will take will be to work with the Regulator of Social Housing to create a strong, proactive consumer regulatory regime, strengthening the formal standards against which landlords are regulated, requiring them to be

transparent about their performance so they can be held to account, to put things right when they go wrong and to listen to tenants through effective engagement. The Regulator of Social Housing will be given stronger powers to proactively monitor and drive compliance with consumer standards, as well as regular inspection of the largest landlords and new tenant satisfaction measures to help assess landlord performance on issues like repairs and complaints handling. We are committed to implementing the reforms laid out in our Charter for Social Housing Residents, and will look to legislate as soon as practicable.

■ Social Rented Housing

Catherine West:

[\[42056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish the Social Housing White Paper.

Eddie Hughes:

Our [Social Housing White Paper](#) - 'A charter for social housing residents' - was published on 17 November 2020.

The changes set out in the White Paper will improve the lives of social housing residents in England. The Charter sets out clearly what residents should expect of their landlord.

The package delivers a transformation of social housing redress and of the regulatory regime, creating proactive consumer regulation and rebalancing the relationship between landlord and tenant. It will ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly and fairly, improve the quality of social homes and empower tenants.

■ Tenants: Pets

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[41733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will issue guidance on whether a landlord could require a relevant person to enter into a contract of pet insurance as an alternative to complying with a no pets clause in a tenancy agreement.

Eddie Hughes:

The Tenant Fees Act prohibits most fees beyond rent and a deposit capped at 5 weeks rent where total annual rent is less than £50,000. As such, a landlord cannot require that a tenant take out insurance for a pet.

Regarding pet ownership, the Government recommends the deposit cap is used as a maximum, rather than the default. Charging a deposit of four weeks rent provides leeway to expand to five weeks in situations such as where the tenant owns a pet. This approach should therefore accommodate private renters who wish to keep pets, without the need for pet insurance, or a separate pet deposit.

■ Urban Areas: Coronavirus

Bim Afolami:

[\[42074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to help town centres and high streets recover from the effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

This Government is fully committed to supporting the businesses and communities that make our town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak. Our package of support for businesses through this period totals over £352 billion including business grants, the coronavirus loan schemes and Job Retention Scheme, as well as deferral of income tax payments. This builds on major investment and action from Government to level up opportunity and prosperity across all areas of the country, including through the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, the £220 million UK-wide Community Renewal Fund and the £3.6 billion Towns Fund

Our ambition is to ensure that town centres continue to flourish now and in the future. Therefore, on 15 July, Government published the Build Back Better High Streets Strategy. The Strategy sets out Government's long-term plan to support the evolution and regeneration of all high streets across every part of the UK into thriving places to work, visit and live. The plan sets out how we intend to support places to achieve this vision, focussing on five key priorities: breathing new life into empty buildings; supporting high street businesses; improving the public realm; creating safe and clean spaces; and celebrating pride in local communities

We know the pandemic has significantly impacted the hospitality and retail sectors. We have therefore launched the first-ever hospitality strategy to support the reopening, recovery and resilience of England's pubs, restaurants, cafes and nightclubs. It is a forward-looking strategy for a sector that contributes significantly to the economy and plays a leading role in high streets and city centres across the country. The retail sector remains a key part of the high street. Physical retail will remain an important route to consumers, we continue to work with the sector on its long-term strategic needs to ensure businesses are profitable, resilient, innovative, and support local economies in socially and environmentally responsible ways.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-pacific Partnership

Emily Thornberry:

[\[45075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has (a) sought and (b) received legal advice on the potential effect of the (i) health and social care levy and (b) increase in dividend tax rates announced on the 7 September 2021 on the UK's exposure to Investor State Dispute Settlement claims under the provisions of Chapter 9 of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, including the currently suspended provisions of that chapter.

Greg Hands:

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

■ **Department for International Trade: Welsh Government****Ruth Jones:**[\[43661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she last met Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Greg Hands:

The Minister of State for Trade Policy leads on the engagement with the Devolved Administrations, including chairing the Ministerial Forum for Trade. The most recent forum took place on 14th July 2021, at which Minister Vaughan Gething from the Welsh Government and I discussed issues relating to the UK's international trade agenda.

■ **Exports****Emily Thornberry:**[\[43444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much was spent by her Department on end of year bonus payments for members of staff involved in export support roles in (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19, (d) 2019-20 and (e) 2020-21.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade sets aside 1.3% of its paybill for bonus payments in line with Civil Service rules, half of this will be for end of year bonuses and will be attributable to staff supporting exports. We do not hold a breakdown by role type. Information on performance related pay at the Department is published under Transparency data returns.

■ **Imports: Malaysia****Emily Thornberry:**[\[40773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the proportion of the increase in imports projected to come from Malaysia to the UK as a result of the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership which will be produced in factories and plantations using forced labour.

Greg Hands:

On 22nd June 2021, the Government published a Scoping Assessment setting out the predicted impact of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) membership on trade with the region.

The UK is committed to ensuring that more trade supports an environment where workers' rights are upheld, including working towards the eradication of modern slavery in global supply chains. The UK is playing a leading role in tackling modern slavery and is the first country to require businesses to report on how they are preventing modern slavery in their global supply chains. As more countries introduce their own legislation, the Government is working closely with partners to harmonise approaches and promote responsible business conduct.

■ Iron and Steel: Safeguard Measures

Emily Thornberry:

[40763]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when the Trade Remedies Authority will make a decision on the appeal of previous steel safeguard recommendations; and what representations she has made to the Trade Remedies Authority on that appeal.

Greg Hands:

On 7th September, the Trade Remedies Authority (TRA) announced a reconsideration of its recommendation on the UK's steel safeguard measure. Further information can be found on the TRA page at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/trade-remedies-authority>

The TRA is an independent body and the Department cannot pre-empt the outcome of this reconsideration process. The Secretary of State cannot make unsought representations to the TRA. Interested parties should engage directly with the TRA to ensure their views are considered as part of this process.

■ Shipping: Freight

Andrew Rosindell:

[40721]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has made of trends in the level of increase in shipping cost for exports from the UK in each of the last 12 months.

Graham Stuart:

The high demand for container freight which has driven a rise in export shipping costs over the last 12 months is thought to be caused by changes in consumer spending during the Covid-19 pandemic. This global "container surge" is affecting not only the UK but container prices across international markets. High prices are predicted to continue through 2021 though markets are expected, eventually, to adjust.

■ Trade Agreements

Emily Thornberry:

[45076]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to hold consultations on (a) new free trade agreements with (i) the Mercosur countries and (ii) the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and (b) enhanced free trade agreements with (A) Turkey and (B) Israel.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[45077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to publish the objectives and scoping assessments for (a) new free trade agreements with (i) India, (ii) the Mercosur countries and (iii) the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and (b) enhanced free trade agreements with (A) Turkey, (B) Israel, (C) Canada and (D) Mexico.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

At the start of new free trade agreement negotiations, HM Government plans to publish its outline approach, including negotiating objectives and a scoping assessment. Having undertaken consultations on our proposed deals with India, Canada and Mexico, we plan to undertake further consultations in due course.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Emily Thornberry:

[\[45073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to include commitments to (a) Paris Agreement temperature goals and (b) a hierarchy clause regarding Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the UK-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

Greg Hands:

The UK's ambitious trade deal with Australia includes a substantive chapter on the environment, which includes commitments to work together on climate change and reaffirms both Parties' commitments to upholding all their obligations under the Paris Agreement.

The deal does not stop the UK from fulfilling obligations under multilateral environmental agreements. The UK is committed to implementation of all its domestic and international obligations on climate change and the environment. The deal protects regulatory sovereignty on the environment and climate, in a manner consistent with all other trade agreements, going beyond most in its specificity of climate change law.

■ Trade Agreements: New Zealand

Emily Thornberry:

[\[45074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to include commitments to (a) Paris Agreement temperature goals and (b) a hierarchy clause regarding Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the UK-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.

Greg Hands:

The UK is seeking an ambitious trade agreement with New Zealand, including a comprehensive environment chapter which supports climate ambition, and provisions which maintain the UK's and New Zealand's right to regulate for environment and climate change purposes.

The UK expects the agreement to set new precedent on a range of climate and environment issues, and establish a clear basis upon which the UK and New Zealand can cooperate to ensure trade and environment policies are mutually supportive.

Negotiations are still live and so it would be inappropriate at this stage to disclose the details of individual articles of text.

JUSTICE

■ Cremation and Funerals

Damien Moore:

[\[42091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of the Competition and Markets Authority on its review into supply of services by funeral directors at the point of need and the supply of crematoria services; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

The Government's response to the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) market investigation of funeral director and crematoria provision was published on 7 April 2021. The Government engaged with the CMA both before and after publication, primarily on the CMA's recommendation on improving the effectiveness of the funeral sector's self-regulation; and also on the CMA's monitoring of the provision of pricing information by both funeral directors and crematoria.

■ Cycling UK: Dangerous Driving

Patrick Grady:

[\[41938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he has had with Cycling UK on the findings of its report into the law on exceptional hardship pleas in dangerous driving cases.

Chris Philp:

The Justice Secretary has had no such discussions with Cycling UK.

This is because road traffic offences are generally the responsibility of the Department for Transport, including driving disqualifications and the law on exceptional hardship pleas. The Ministry of Justice does however retain an interest in general criminal law and on offences that result in death or serious injury.

■ Domestic Abuse: Legal Aid Scheme

Mr David Lammy:

[\[44173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many domestic abuse survivors have had an application for legal aid denied in each year since 2010.

Chris Philp:

Legal aid is available to obtain an injunction to protect survivors of domestic violence. This is not subject to any upper means limit; applicants cannot be found financially ineligible for this form of support.

Save for the above, whether someone is a survivor of domestic violence is not recorded for types of legal aid for other categories of law, eligibility for which would be subject to the applicable means and merits tests.

■ Ministry of Justice: Listed Buildings**Tim Loughton:****[45034]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, 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.

Chris Philp:

The MoJ 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 MoJ does not collect or collate data on the property value.

■ Olney Prison: Firearms**Ms Lyn Brown:****[44270]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September to Question 36597 on Olney Prison: Firearms, whether the firearm discovered was functional.

Ms Lyn Brown:**[44271]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September to Question 36597 on Olney Prison: Firearms, if he will published the information his Department holds on how the firearm entered HMP Olney.

Chris Philp:

The firearm was found to be a starting pistol, however it is unclear whether it could be modified to achieve functionality. As stated in the answer of 6 September, no ammunition was found with the firearm.

It has not yet been discovered how the pistol was conveyed into the prison. In the immediate aftermath of the intelligence-led discovery of the weapon, specially trained Dedicated Search Teams were used to search areas of the prison. An investigation was commissioned by the Prison Group Director to establish how the pistol may have been conveyed into the prison and the Security, Order and Counter Terrorism Directorate supported the prison in assessing vulnerabilities and mitigating risks.

■ Prison Officers: Labour Turnover

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: June 2021, published on 19 August 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the (a) increase in the leaving rate for Band 3-5 prison officers and (b) fall in the proportion of Band 3-5 prison officers in post with 10 years or more of experience on the (i) speed and (ii) success of reintroduction of key worker schemes in prisons in England and Wales.

Alex Chalk:

Having experienced staff is vital to ensuring prisons remain safe, secure and decent. HMPPS recognises the importance of retaining staff and is committed to improving retention. We want prison officers to stay and progress their careers and as such have improved our induction processes to ease transition into the job, provide care and support for our staff and offer additional training. Work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service continues, and this should provide development and promotion opportunities for our experienced staff.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted upon key worker delivery across the prison estate, with reduced Key Work and Case Management resulting from the introduction of restricted regimes under the Exceptional Delivery Models (EDMs). We are committed to ensuring that key work is reinstated fully across the male closed estate when safe to do so, and as part of recovery work and we are gradually introducing regular, quality Key Work sessions in a safe and flexible way, through the regime levels, across the male closed and women's prison estate.

We will continue to closely monitor the reintroduction of key work, including the impact of resourcing on this.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce quarterly: June 2021, published on 19 August 2021, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the (a) increase in the leaving rate for Band 3-5 prison officers and (b) fall in the proportion of Band 3-5 prison officers in post with 10 years or more of experience on (i) safety in custody and (ii) rehabilitation of prisoners.

Alex Chalk:

Having experienced staff is vital to ensuring prisons remain safe, secure and decent and support prisoners to lead crime free lives when they are released. HMPPS recognises the importance of retaining staff and is committed to improving retention. We want prison officers to stay and progress their careers and as such have improved our induction processes to ease transition into the job, provide care and support for our staff and offer additional training. Work to develop clear career paths and professionalise the service continues, and this should provide development and promotion opportunities for our experienced staff.

Keeping our staff safe is of utmost importance. As such we are taking action to improve prison safety and security, alongside reforms to overhaul the system to focus on the rehabilitation of offenders. This includes the rolling out of PAVA (a synthetic pepper spray), Rigid Bar Handcuffs and Body Worn Video Cameras to prison officers across the estate which protect our staff and prisoners as they provide high-quality evidence to support prosecutions. We are also currently developing a new Safety Skills training package which will be delivered to new and existing staff.

As part of the Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model we have introduced a personal key worker for every prisoner. Key workers provide regular personalised support to prisoners to address issues which may lead to violence or self-harm at an early stage. We continue to upskill staff in effective use of ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork) and CSIP (Challenge, Support and Intervention Plan), the case management models for reducing suicide and self-harm and violence in prisons.

In the 12 months to March 2021, the number of assaults decreased 40% from the 12 months to March 2020. Prior to the pandemic there was an overall reduction of 8% in assault incidents in the 12 months to March 2020.

■ Prison Officers: Recruitment

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Recruitment diversity statistics June 21, published on 19 August 2021, what steps he is taking to reduce disparities in the Relative Rate Index between (a) candidates from BAME backgrounds and white candidates, (b) disabled candidates and non-disabled candidates and (c) female candidates and male candidates.

Alex Chalk:

HMPPS is targeting prisons where there is disparity between the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workforce population and the local working population through using an enhanced recruitment approach to help increase representation. This includes community engagement to boost knowledge of careers within HMPPS, delivering recruitment attraction events through digital platforms and allocating a “buddy” for candidates from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to support them through the recruitment process. Additionally, the HMPPS Race Action Programme (RAP) will build on the ambitions of Lammy recommendations 28 and 29 and enhance regional recruitment activity by engaging third sector ethnic minority organisations and supporting community outreach.

We are working to understand why more male applicants are successful in the prison officer role compared with their application numbers, including considering factors such as length of the recruitment and onboarding process, degree of training and fitness commitment, availability of flexible working options and routes back for those coming back to work after raising a family. Female applicants are more likely to be successful at Operational Support Grade, however we have established an internal conversion route to support employees into the role of a prison officer.

The MoJ is signed up to Level 3: Disability Confident Leader and are therefore committed to having inclusive and accessible recruitment for candidates with disabilities. We are doing more to ensure we are removing barriers by offering and implementing reasonable adjustments to allow disabled applicants to be considered for a job on an equal basis with non-disabled applicants. This includes giving the applicant the ability to provide more detail on their reasonable adjustments at application stage, greater engagement with external disability stakeholders and specific guidance for vacancy managers when undertaking recruitment campaigns.

■ Prisoners' Release: Housing

Ellie Reeves:

[43639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the suitability of housing arrangements for inmates who do not have housing upon leaving prisons.

Alex Chalk:

Having stable accommodation can prevent offenders committing further crimes. To ensure offenders are not homeless upon release, HMPPS has developed a Community Accommodation Service (CAS) so that people leaving prison can access suitable accommodation. CAS brings Approved Premises (AP), Bail Accommodation and Support Service (BASS), and a new provision of transitional accommodation together under the auspices of one accommodation system.

As a whole system, CAS enables accommodation to be provided that is suitable to an offender's risk level and circumstances. AP house high-risk offenders with a strict curfew and CCTV inside and out to monitor behaviour. BASS provides accommodation to those released on bail or Home Detention Curfew without otherwise suitable accommodation. These combine with the new provision of temporary accommodation and support for those leaving prison at risk of homelessness, introduced in July. Initially launched in five probation areas in England, the service will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year and will provide up to 12 weeks of temporary accommodation and will be supported into long-term settled accommodation before the end of that 12-week period.

■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[41777]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the paper entitled Effectiveness of psychological interventions in prison to reduce recidivism: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials, published by Lancet Psychiatry in September 2021, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of (a) commissioning of offending behaviour programmes, (b) use of completion of offending behaviour programmes as evidence of reduced risk, (c) use of completion of offending behaviour programmes as evidence of sentence progression and (d) other findings of that paper.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[41778]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the paper entitled Effectiveness of psychological interventions in prison to reduce recidivism: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials, published by Lancet Psychiatry in September 2021, what steps he is taking to increase the (a) number and (b) proportion of prisons in England and Wales that include therapeutic communities.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[41779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the paper entitled Effectiveness of psychological interventions in prison to reduce recidivism: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials, published by Lancet Psychiatry in September 2021, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of that paper's conclusion that (a) continuation of care upon release and (b) addressing the (i) accommodation, (ii) employment and (iii) financial difficulties after release that contribute to recidivism risk, may be important in ensuring that offending behaviour programmes have a rehabilitative effect.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[41780]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the paper entitled Effectiveness of psychological interventions in prison to reduce recidivism: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials, published by Lancet Psychiatry in September 2021, what progress has been made with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service impact evaluations of accredited offender behaviour programmes.

Lucy Frazer:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) keeps abreast of any research and reviews relevant to our rehabilitative work and will consider the Lancet Psychiatry paper as we would with any published study. Programmes that follow Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR) and Cognitive-Behavioural Treatment (CBT) principles have been shown to be linked to a reduction in reoffending. There is considerable research highlighting the importance of RNR in promoting effective interventions, and evidence to support the use of CBT programmes that include the teaching of skills to reduce offending.

Therapeutic communities (TC) are part of the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) pathway, a joint venture with NHS England and Improvement. There are currently no plans to increase the number of prisons that operate TCs. The evidence and principles behind TC are at the heart of the OPD pathway which operates across prisons and probation. The Pathway continues to look for opportunities to invest in provision within available resources.

In July, this Government published the Beating Crime Plan which announced plans to tackle some of these key drivers of reoffending. This includes launching a £20m scheme across five probation regions to provide temporary accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness. As set out in the Beating Crime Plan, we are also encouraging prison leavers to turn their backs on crime by securing employment. The

Prison Service's New Futures Network continues to broker partnerships between prisons and employers to improve employment opportunities for prisoners and prison leavers and we are increasing the number of DWP Prison Work Coaches across the estate, which means that prior to release, prisoners can access advice and support on employment and benefits. The Civil Service is also leading by example with the goal of recruiting 1,000 prison leavers by the end of 2023.

This is all part of wider investment this Government announced earlier this year: £70 million package to tackle some of these key drivers of repeat offending and £80 million on expanding drug treatment services in England to address offenders' substance misuse issues, divert them on to effective community sentences and reduce drug-related crime and deaths. This £80 million will bolster the continuity of care for substance misuse treatment for prison leavers and we will continue to work closely with NHS England on rolling out RECONNECT services for those leaving prison to ensure that they engage with community health services.

We are committed to evaluating the current suite of accredited offender behaviour programmes and have a number of evaluations underway or being scoped. Where there is a sufficient number of people who have completed the programme and the necessary data is available to construct a meaningful comparison group, to help attribute any change to the intervention, the aim is to conduct good quality offending and reoffending impact studies to assess whether the programme is effective. We will be keeping the future direction of travel on accredited programmes under review using the best evidence.

Ellie Reeves:

[\[43640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to tackle the challenges faced by charities when participating in the Transforming Rehabilitation procurement process.

Ellie Reeves:

[\[43641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of grants for charities that are participating in the Transforming Rehabilitation partnership programme.

Alex Chalk:

Voluntary sector organisations are a key partner for the Probation Service. We are committed to increasing their role in rehabilitating offenders as part of the new unified model for probation. In doing so, we have sought to learn lessons from the approach taken under the previous Transforming Rehabilitation model for probation (which ceased on 25 June). The procurement process for the new Dynamic Framework for commissioning rehabilitative services has been designed to make it easier for charities and other third-sector organisations to access funding from Government.

An initial £195 million has been awarded to 26 organisations across England and Wales over the next three to four years, to provide vital support services that help reduce reoffending, such as employment and housing advice; and this includes over

£45m awarded to organisations providing services tailored to female offenders to address their specific needs and the underlying causes of their crimes as part of the Government's pledge to see fewer women go to prison.

Around two-thirds of the funding for the 110 contracts awarded so far has been awarded to registered charities or voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations. These are fixed price contracts with a volume cap (with volume bands applying only in larger contracts) to mitigate financial risk to suppliers as a result of volume movement. In addition, many lead organisations are using the specialist skills of smaller organisations to help deliver services, with another 50 organisations, mostly in the voluntary sector, named in their supply chains.

In addition, we commissioned Richard Oldfield to carry out an independent review of the Dynamic Framework. His report recognised the enormous effort that has gone into establishing the Dynamic Framework to enable the unified service to deliver Commissioned Rehabilitative Services and the success of awarding all 110 contracts for day one of our new unified Probation Service with around two-thirds of contracts going to charities and VCSEs. The report made various recommendations to further simplify the process for potential providers and to facilitate the participation of smaller charities in particular, including wider use of grants.

We accept this recommendation and want to promote greater use of grants. We have committed to provide the Probation Service's regional commissioning teams with clear guidance to help make grants the presumptive choice for funding commissioning intentions that meet specified criteria. We are currently developing the criteria but anticipate it will be a combination of award value, as recommended in the report, and type of requirement / service.

We will continuously review our processes to identify ways to improve future commissioning and procurement.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to COVID-19: National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services, as updated on 18 August 2021, how the factors of (a) vaccination coverage, (b) immunity through previous infection and (c) low clinical risk, stated as contributing to low risks in prisons where covid-19 infection is present, will be measured; and who will have access to information about those factors for each prison.

Alex Chalk:

Covid-19 continues to present a unique set of challenges that we must address to maintain services in custody and the community. We are working very closely with public health authorities to ensure our approach is based on the best scientific advice available. We have well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks and infectious diseases.

The National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services sets out how decisions on progression between the various Regime Stages are taken. Ministers set national parameters, but decisions on the most appropriate stage for each individual establishment are taken locally, based on a holistic assessment of data, and overseen by the operational prison command structure. The assessment includes information supplied by local NHS healthcare teams on vaccination coverage and known health conditions in the prison, alongside local risk factors such as age demographics, community prevalence and staffing levels. All decisions are supported by advice and guidance from Public Health England and Wales.

■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Leeds, published on 11 August 2021, what steps he is taking to help ensure that where force is misused by a member of prison staff in a way that may amount to a crime against a prisoner, that potential crime is reported to the police by prison authorities.

Alex Chalk:

HMPPS expect that staff will conduct their duties lawfully and professionally, making legitimate and informed decisions to inform their actions. We take improper use of force seriously and have policies in place to address it, should it occur.

The HMPPS Operational Policy Sub-board is responsible for the governance of operational policy, including that which details how staff misconduct and discipline is to be investigated.

The policy states that if evidence of a possible criminal offence comes to light during an internal investigation, or if an allegation of a criminal offence is made against a member of staff, the lead investigator should liaise with the manager who commissioned the investigation regarding the necessity for referral to the police.

The crime can also be reported to the police by prisoners themselves, a fact of which they are made aware. Annex H of the Prisoner Complaints Policy Framework, re-issued on 3 November 2020 prescribes the text of the information leaflet provided to prisoners. It details that prisoners may write to the Chief Officer of the local police force if they have evidence that a criminal offence may have been committed.

■ Prisons: Drugs

Mr David Lammy:

[\[44184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many incidents of confiscation of the legal high known as spice there were in prisons in England and Wales in each year since 2010.

Chris Philp:

The [HMPPS Annual Digest](#) for the relevant years, where available, contains information in relation to the number of drug finds on the prison estate. The digest contains all available data on drug type and class.

The Government takes seriously the conveyance of drugs into prisons, including psychoactive substances. In April 2021 we published a National Prisons Drugs Strategy to reduce drug misuse in our prisons, in order to increase safety for both staff and prisoners, and contribute towards ensuring that prisons are places of opportunity and change for prisoners.

In September 2016, HMPPS became the first prison service in the world to introduce innovative mandatory drug tests for psychoactive substances. We have made it a criminal offence to possess psychoactive substances in prison and trained more than 300 sniffer dogs specifically to detect these drugs.

In August 2019, the Government committed to invest £100 million in prison security in an ambitious new Security Investment Programme. One of the aims of the Programme was to reduce the quantity of drugs entering the prison estate.

Since then, we have installed 73 X-ray body scanners across the prison estate and to date have had over 9000 positive indications. The roll out of Enhanced Gate Security (EGS), replicating the tough measures used in airport screening, has resulted in hundreds of illicit items being prevented from entering prisons.

■ Prisons: Gender Recognition**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[41734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 April 2021 to Question 183091 on Prisons: Gender Recognition, how many biologically (a) male, and (b) female prisoners have obtained a Gender Recognition Certificate while incarcerated in each of the last five years.

Andrew Rosindell:[\[41735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 22 April 2021 to Question 183091, whether reporting of incidents involving a prisoner who is biologically male and who has a Gender Recognition Certificate, report that prisoner's involvement as that of a female/woman; and whether that prisoner's transgender status is recorded.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) do not hold data on how many people hold, or receive, a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) in custody. Prisoners are not legally obliged to disclose this. We are actively pursuing ways to improve data relating to gender and gender identity, whilst also continuing to respect the legal rights and privacy of those who hold GRCs.

HMPPS systems record the legal gender of prisoners. For transgender prisoners, this is in line with the Gender Recognition Act 2004, which states that when someone holds a GRC, their gender becomes for all purposes their acquired gender. Where

required for statistical purposes, data on the characteristic of gender reassignment is obtained via a separate matching exercise, using information from the annual collection of data on transgender prisoners.

Further information on how we support and manage transgender offenders can be found in 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender', available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-care-and-management-of-individuals-who-are-transgender

■ Prisons: Legionnaires' Disease

Ms Lyn Brown: [41781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisons have (a) experienced an outbreak of Legionnaire's Disease and (b) detected legionella bacteria within their water, ventilation or other systems, in each of the last five years.

Ms Lyn Brown: [41782]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to prevent the spread of legionella bacteria within prisons in England and Wales.

Ms Lyn Brown: [41783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) prison staff, (b) prisoners and (c) visitors to prisons are fully informed about the (i) risks, (ii) symptoms, (iii) causes (iv) and care available in cases where legionella bacteria are present within prison systems.

Alex Chalk:

In the last five years, there have only been three cases of legionnaires detected in prisons. These have been in HMP Lincoln in 2017, HMP Parkhurst in 2016 and recently, in HMP Wealstun.

There is a comprehensive planned preventative maintenance programme in place which ensures the FM service providers carry out the relevant maintenance inspections and checks to detect the presence of and prevent the spread of legionella bacteria. A regular water sampling testing regime is in place to monitor potential bacteria. If high readings are detected, we would shut down the system to chlorinate the affected water infrastructure system and retest to ensure the water is safe to use. This is also supported by annual Statutory & Mandatory Compliance (SMC) standards audit which monitors the performance of the FM service providers.

We would notify the residents and staff that the system is isolated and drained down (this is done immediately) so risk to health is minimal. The system is taken out of use until it is re-tested and the system is clear of bacteria.

In the case of HMP Wealstun, some readings of legionella bacteria were detected during routine water sampling, as part of preventative maintenance checks. All the affected systems have been isolated and treated in accordance with our standard procedures.

■ Probate: Standards**Sir Desmond Swayne:****[44159]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the time taken to grant probate; and what plans he has to improve that service.

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.

Further information regarding how HMCTS is collaborating with service users to enhance the service can be found at

<https://insidehmcts.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/06/collaborating-is-key-to-enhancing-probate-users-experience-of-using-myhmcts/>

■ Probation: Staff**Ms Lyn Brown:****[41776]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Probation Officer recruitment annex: June 2021, published on 19 August 2021, what his planned timetable is for releasing updated statistics for required staffing levels following the unification of the probation service.

Alex Chalk:

The next publication date of the HMPPS workforce statistics is 18 November 2021 and will include an updated Probation Recruitment Annex. This publication will include data up to 30 September 2021. It will cover data on Full Time Equivalent of Band 4 probation Officers in post in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, the required staffing levels, and the difference between required staffing and staff in post. It will also include the headcount and Full Time Equivalent number of Trainee Probation Officers, and also of Staff who have successfully qualified on the PQiP training course but are waiting to take up a substantive Probation Officer post, or are not in a Probation Officer post for other reasons. It is planned to include target staffing levels and the difference between required staffing and staff in post. The

Probation Service would expect the required staffing to change over time in response to implementation of future operating models, responding to COVID related impacts and changes in the Probation caseload.

■ **Wealstun Prison: Legionnaires' Disease**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the (a) causes of the presence of legionella at HMP Wealstun and (b) lessons to learn from the experience at that prison.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether cases of (a) Legionnaires' disease and (b) Pontiac fever have been recorded at HMP Wealstun.

Alex Chalk:

During routine water sampling, as part of preventative maintenance, some readings of legionella bacteria were traced at HMP Wealstun. All the affected systems have been isolated and treated. The Facilities Management provider is currently investigating the reasons for the presence of legionella at the prison and will produce a report, which will include lessons learnt from this incident.

There are no recorded cases of legionnaires' disease or Pontiac fever in HMP Wealstun.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Children: Poverty**

Ruth Jones:

[\[42121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland Executive in tackling child poverty.

Mr Robin Walker:

Welfare and employment are devolved matters in Northern Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Executive's Child Poverty Strategy, published in March 2016 and extended by the Executive until 2022, sets out its vision to eradicate child poverty in the future. The aims of the strategy are to reduce the number of children in poverty and reduce the impact of living in poverty on children.

In line with commitments in the New Decade, New Approach agreement, the Northern Ireland Executive is also developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy that aims to address inequalities and obstacles that directly affect the everyday lives of the most vulnerable people in society and will bring focus to identifying and addressing the issues, barriers and disadvantages that undermine equality of opportunity.

There is no doubt that the Executive is committed to combating poverty via the Anti-Poverty and Child Poverty strategies and it has already appointed an Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel which provided an initial report in December 2020.

This work aligns with the Government's long-term ambitions to tackle poverty through a reformed welfare system that works with the labour market to encourage people to move into work wherever possible and we are wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes.

Over the past years, the UK Government has invested £2 billion in the New Decade, New Approach financial package; over £600m to the City and Growth Deal programme; and £400m in the New Deal for Northern Ireland to bring prosperity across Northern Ireland, and thereby helping to reduce poverty.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Listed Buildings

Tim Loughton:

[\[45037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 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.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Northern Ireland Office publishes details of heritage assets held by the Department in the Annual Report and Accounts. From the 20-21 Annual Report and Accounts:

(a) The properties classified as heritage assets held by the Department comprise of Hillsborough Castle and its surrounding estate;

(b) The most recent valuation is £70.4m, consisting of £64.6m for the buildings and £5.8m for the land;

(c) The Department derives no annual income from the Castle.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Afghanistan

Ruth Jones:

[\[42098\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how many times he has discussed Afghanistan with the NATO Secretary General in 2021.

Boris Johnson:

I have discussed Afghanistan in all of my conversations with the NATO Secretary General in 2021.

■ Hakainde Hichilema

Ruth Jones:

[\[42110\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he has plans to meet President Hichilema of Zambia.

Ruth Jones:

[\[42111\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether he has plans to meet President Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe in 2021.

Boris Johnson:

Details of my official meetings will be announced in the usual way.

■ **Mia Mottley**

Ruth Jones:

[\[42114\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he last spoke to Prime Minister Mottley of Barbados.

Boris Johnson:

I recently wrote to Prime Minister Mottley to assure her of the UK's commitment to tackling Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and to thank her for her work in this area. Furthermore, my Rt Hon friend the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, and Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister of State for the Caribbean, speak to Ministerial colleagues in Barbados regularly. The most recent such call was on 18 March this year. The UK High Commissioner to Barbados is also in close contact with the Government of Barbados including Prime Minister Mia Mottley. They last met on 24 August 2021.

SCOTLAND

■ **Scotland Office: Listed Buildings**

Tim Loughton:

[\[45035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, 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.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland has no properties classified as heritage assets.

TRANSPORT

■ **Bridges: Newcastle upon Tyne**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[41875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what safeguards there are for the maintenance of the Swing Bridge in Newcastle; and what funding is provided (a) to or (b) through the Port of Tyne for that purpose.

Rachel Maclean:

The Port of Tyne has various responsibilities towards the maintenance of the Swing Bridge, and these are a matter for the Port on an operational, management and financial basis.

■ **Bridges: Warburton**

Charlotte Nichols: [\[42188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether legislation is required to allow Peel Ports to increase the toll on the Warburton Toll Bridge.

Rachel Maclean:

The Rixton and Warburton Company is in the process of putting together a Transport and Works Act order to update the current legislation to facilitate the numerous changes the company is looking to make.

The Secretary of State is not currently in receipt of an application to increase the toll and we would not expect one until the legislative matters have been resolved.

■ **Bus Services: Electric Vehicles**

John Redwood: [\[41596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of the public service bus fleet is electric.

Rachel Maclean:

As of March 2020, two per cent of buses used by local operators in England were electric.

The latest data on the proportion of buses used by local bus operators is from the Department for Transport Annual bus statistics: year ending March 2020 which was published in October 2020. Information on buses used by bus operators by fuel consumption type, including electric buses, is provided in table (BUS0609b).

The Annual bus statistics: year ending March 2021 are due to be published in Autumn 2021.

■ **Bus Services: Passengers**

John Redwood: [\[41595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average seat occupancy is on public service buses in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Rachel Maclean:

The table below shows average bus occupancy¹ on local bus services by metropolitan area status and country in Great Britain, annually from 2004/05

Year								NUMBER
	London	English metropolitan areas	English non-metropolitan areas	England	Scotland	Wales	Great Britain	England outside London
2004/05	16.6	9.8	7.5	10.1	9.0	7.6	9.8	8.3
2005/06	18.3	9.7	7.3	10.4	9.2	7.3	10.0	8.2
2006/07	18.8	9.9	7.9	10.8	9.2	7.6	10.4	8.6
2007/08	20.3	10.3	8.5	11.6	9.1	7.8	11.0	9.1
2008/09	19.9	10.7	8.8	11.8	9.8	8.2	11.3	9.5
2009/10	19.6	11.0	8.6	11.7	10.0	7.6	11.3	9.4
2010/11	19.5	10.5	8.5	11.5	10.0	8.1	11.1	9.2
2011/12	19.7	10.1	8.6	11.6	9.5	8.9	11.2	9.2
2012/13	19.9	10.1	9.1	11.9	9.0	8.3	11.3	9.4
2013/14	20.6	10.2	9.4	12.3	8.9	8.4	11.6	9.7
2014/15	20.5	10.4	9.3	12.2	8.6	8.4	11.6	9.7
2015/16	19.8	10.2	9.0	11.9	8.4	8.4	11.3	9.4
2016/17	19.3	10.7	8.9	11.9	8.2	9.0	11.3	9.5
2017/18	20.2	10.5	9.1	12.2	8.2	8.8	11.5	9.5
2018/19	20.0	10.6	9.9	12.6	8.0	8.8	11.8	10.1
2019/20	18.7	10.8	10.6	12.8	7.6	8.8	11.8	10.7

¹ Calculated as passenger miles (table bus0302) divided by vehicle miles (table BUS0203).

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

Bim Afolami:

[42078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support is being provided to local authorities to help with the funding and provision of rural bus services.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government recognises the importance of transport for rural areas and is committed to improving access to services that provide vital connectivity.

To support local bus services in England outside London, £200 million of Bus Services Operator's Grant (BSOG) has been paid by the Department directly to operators so far during the pandemic. £43 million of BSOG is committed directly to local transport authorities (LTAs) so that they can subsidise socially necessary bus services, of which Hertfordshire County Council received £1,211,630 in the 2020-21 funding period.

On top of this, to improve current bus services, or restore lost services where needed, the Government has paid an extra £30 million to LTAs in 2020/21. Hertfordshire County Council met the funding requirements and received an allocation of £401,174.

Additionally, in March 2021 we awarded funding to 17 pilot projects through the £20 million Rural Mobility Fund scheme to trial innovative, demand-responsive solutions to transport challenges that rural and suburban areas often face.

■ Cars: Global Positioning System**Hilary Benn:**[\[41665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to make the fitting of GPS trackers on all new cars compulsory.

Rachel Maclean:

Before new road vehicles can be placed on the market and registered, manufacturers must obtain type approval to the relevant technical requirements. The technical requirements are established at an international level and currently do not require the fitting of GPS trackers on new cars. There are no plans to amend these requirements.

The Department for Transport will be consulting during the autumn on legislation to introduce a new GB type approval scheme for road vehicles. This will include a Call for Evidence on possible new measures to introduce into the GB scheme in the future.

■ Commuters: Greater London**John Redwood:**[\[41597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made a comparative assessment of the average number of people commuting into London in the morning peak in (a) 2021 and (b) 2019.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department collates and publishes a wide range of data on transport usage. However, this is not in all cases broken down to precise time, mode and geographical

specification. Recent data from the Rail Delivery Group suggests that rail commuting is currently 33% of pre-pandemic levels.

■ **Cross Country Railway Line: Passengers**

Dr Luke Evans:

[42165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to (a) encourage passenger growth and (b) support passenger capacity on the (i) Birmingham to Leicester and (ii) Birmingham to Derby via Tamworth railway routes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The rail industry has launched the “Get back on track” advertising campaign to attract passengers back to the railway. CrossCountry also has its own advertising campaign. Passenger demand is increasing across the network which is to be welcomed.

In May 2021, all contractual train services were reinstated on the CrossCountry Class 170 routes including between Birmingham and Leicester and Nottingham. Investment by the DfT has provided six additional carriages for these routes. As a result there are more services on the Birmingham - Leicester – Stansted and the Nottingham – Cardiff routes, which are now formed of three rather than two carriages.

■ **Department for Transport: Listed Buildings**

Tim Loughton:

[45033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, 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.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As part of the Government’s Transparency Agency information about Department for Transport properties is published on the data.gov.uk website:

<https://data.gov.uk/dataset/epimstransparency>

Information on the properties classified as heritage assets, value of those properties and income derived from those properties can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ **Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Telephone Services**

Sir Robert Neill:

[43472]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of the availability of call handlers at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Rachel Maclean:

Throughout the pandemic the DVLA’s contact centre has actively managed its operation and flexed the services for customers in line with the available resources.

This has included procuring the use of an additional building to increase the number of staff able to take calls within the social distancing guidelines. Remote working has been increased with staff handling email, webchat, social media and more recently telephone customer contacts.

■ Driving Instruction: Recruitment

Kerry McCarthy: [\[45058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many vocational driving examiners are employed by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency as at 8 September 2021; and how many such examiners have been recruited in 2021 to date.

Rachel Maclean:

As at 8 September 2021, 279 vocational driving examiners are employed by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

The DVSA is currently undergoing an external campaign to recruit more vocational driving examiners. This year, the DVSA has trained eleven existing members of staff to become vocational driving examiners.

■ Driving Licences: Applications

Jim McMahon: [\[42058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many applications to the DVLA have been lost by the DVLA in the last 12 months.

Jim McMahon: [\[42059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many applications there are in the backlog of applications to the DVLA.

Jim McMahon: [\[42060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people have been working on applications to the DVLA in each of the last 12 months.

Rachel Maclean:

The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and social distancing measures coupled with industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union has led to delays for customers who make paper applications. There are currently around 1.5m paper applications awaiting processing at the DVLA. It is important to note that in normal circumstances, given that the DVLA receives around 300,000 items of mail each week, there are usually around 400,000 items awaiting processing. It is estimated that one third of the current backlog is directly attributable

to the PCS strike action. No figures are available for the number of applications to the DVLA that have been lost.

The DVLA continues to look into opportunities to reduce the backlog and has been developing additional new online services and recruiting additional staff. The DVLA is exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to house more staff to work predominantly on driver's medical casework and queries. This will be surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

It is not possible to provide figures for the number of people working on applications as most DVLA operational roles require staff members to carry out a range of tasks, which includes processing applications. The number of people working at the DVLA also fluctuates daily because of factors including leave, working patterns and other absences.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[42162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the work of the DVLA to improve paperwork turnaround times during summer 2021 for (a) HGV and (b) car driving licences.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[42163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support the DVLA to be contactable by applicants seeking updates on (a) HGV and (b) car driving licence applications.

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[42164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the ability of the DVLA to improve the six week turnaround time for (a) HGV and (b) car driving licences.

Rachel Maclean:

The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and social distancing measures coupled with industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union and the current increased demand for DVLA services has led to delays for customers.

The DVLA is currently prioritising applications for HGV driving licences as these cannot currently be made online.

The DVLA continues to explore opportunities to reduce turnaround times for paper applications and has introduced additional online services and recruited additional staff. The DVLA is exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to house

more staff. This will be surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

Paper driving licence applications are currently taking between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example, if medical investigations are needed.

The DVLA has a number of channels of communication in order for applicants to seek updates on their driving licence applications. As well as the contact centre, email and webchat services are available. The DVLA also uses a Notify service for customers applying for an HGV driving licence which sends an email confirming receipt of their application. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

Bill Wiggin: **[43405]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the DVLA organises applications based on the colour of the envelopes they were sent to them in.

Bill Wiggin: **[43406]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the DVLA is taking steps to improve its identification of applications and reduce the need for applicants to specify the colour of the envelope.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) does not organise applications according to the colour of the envelope.

As the DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day, it is not possible to locate a specific application unless it has been sent using one of Royal Mail's tracked services. For urgent cases where the application has not been sent using one of these services, DVLA officials will request further information in order to help locate the application. The information requested can include the type of application, the date it was sent, the postcode it was sent to and the type of envelope used, including the colour if applicable. This information is requested purely to assist in locating the urgent application and assist customers.

Sir Robert Neill: **[43471]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce licensing backlogs at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Rachel Maclean:

The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day and industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union has led to delays for customers.

Throughout the pandemic DVLA has also been working with a significantly reduced number of staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements. The current increased demand for the DVLA's services has also contributed to delays with paper applications.

Paper driving licence applications are currently taking between six and ten weeks to process. There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example if medical investigations are needed. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found [here](#).

The DVLA continues to explore opportunities to reduce turnaround times and has introduced new online services and recruited additional staff. The DVLA is exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to accommodate more staff to work predominantly on drivers' medical casework and queries. This will be surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

■ **Electric Scooters: Pilot Schemes**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[42166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what initial assessment he has made on the progress of the e-scooter trials taking place across the UK.

Rachel Maclean:

We are running e-scooter trials in 32 areas to assess their safety and wider impacts.

E-scooter trials will run until 31 March 2022. This is an extension to the original deadline of 30 November 2021. It takes into account the slower start to trials as a result of the pandemic and will allow us more time to gather evidence as restrictions ease.

We have put in place a national monitoring and evaluation programme and data continues to be collected from the e-scooter trials. An interim report summarizing findings from the data collected so far will be published in autumn 2021, with a final report due in spring 2022.

■ **Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Qualifications**

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[41670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to extend the validity of Driver Certificate of Professional Competence theory tests in response to the delays in obtaining access to the practical section of the Driver Certificate for Professional Competence.

Rachel Maclean:

The requirement to undertake a driving theory test and the case studies test before a practical driving test and the practical demonstration test is set out in legislation. This specifies a two-year duration for the theory test and the case studies test. This duration is for road safety reasons to ensure the learners knowledge is current.

Ensuring new drivers have current relevant knowledge and skills is a vital part of the preparation for new drivers. It is important that lorry drivers understand, and can react appropriately, to the potential risks which are present when interacting with other road users, particularly vulnerable road users such as cyclists, pedestrians, and motorcyclists. It is also important they understand how a vehicle is loaded and unloaded safely, how to couple and un-couple a trailer and the consequences for road safety. This also tests their understanding of drivers hours rules which are in place to ensure drivers take regular breaks and rests and do not continue driving when tired.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Vacancies

Andrew Rosindell: [\[44226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the shortage of road haulage drivers on UK supply chains.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has regular discussions with the road haulage industry on the HGV driver shortage and its impact on supply chains. We are working across government and with the industry to address the driver shortage, which is an issue affecting many countries worldwide.

The Government has already taken firm action, including through training for jobseekers, additional funding for apprenticeships, and taking measures to increase lorry driver testing capacity to bring new drivers into the industry as soon as possible.

■ London Underground: Trains

Andrew Rosindell: [\[41739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 33171 on London Underground: trains, what the planned timescale is for the implementing the proposals on driverless trains.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[41740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 July 2021 to Question 33171 on London Underground: trains, whether his Department has plans to incorporate provisions for the work on driverless trains in future carriage assembly contracts.

Rachel Maclean:

The Extraordinary Funding and Financing Agreement of 1 June 2021, between the Government and the Mayor of London, committed the Department for Transport and Transport for London (TfL) to produce a full business case for the Waterloo & City Line and the Piccadilly Line. As set out in the Agreement, TfL will make progress towards the implementation of driverless trains on at least one Underground line to Grade-of-Automation 3 (driverless, but with an on-board attendant, similar to the Docklands Light Railway), subject to a viable business case. The implications for

future carriage assembly contracts will be a matter for TfL as the business cases progress.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Registration**

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[41812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the DVLA on the issuing of V5C documents for classic cars in need of restoration.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has well-established processes in place for dealing with applications from keepers of classic vehicles that have been restored. This may include an inspection to ensure that the vehicle exists in its entirety and has the required identification features stamped in to identify the vehicle as original. The DVLA may also seek the advice of independent experts in the field. A vehicle registration certificate will be issued when appropriate.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Testing**

Ben Lake:

[\[42073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to introduce a decibel limit as part of the MOT test.

Rachel Maclean:

The MOT already includes a non-metered check of exhaust noise. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) oversees authorised garages to ensure MOT standards are correctly applied. The DVSA has no plans to implement a dB limit and a metered check of it, primarily due to the practical challenges of such a check, but this is kept under review as technology changes.

■ **Parking: Pedestrian Areas**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[41851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2021 to Question 34070 on Pavement Parking, when the result of the Government's consultation on pavement parking is planned to be published.

Rachel Maclean:

We are giving careful consideration to the large volume of responses to this consultation and will publish the outcome as soon as possible.

Peter Aldous:

[\[41852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Government's response to his Department's consultation entitled Pavement parking: options for change, published in August 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

We are giving careful consideration to the large volume of responses to this consultation and will publish the outcome as soon as possible.

■ **Railways: Fares****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[42051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of rail fares in England; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of taking steps to reduce rail fares in real terms.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

No decision has been made on national rail fares for 2022. The Government is considering a variety of options and we will announce our decision in due course.

■ **Railways: Passengers****John Redwood:**[\[41594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the current level of seat occupancy is on the railway.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As published on Gov.uk, the week ending 06 September, rail passenger numbers were at 60% of the equivalent week in 2019.

■ **Roads: Repairs and Maintenance****Bill Wiggin:**[\[41686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how the Pothole Action Fund was spent in 2018.

Bill Wiggin:[\[41687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how the Pothole Action Fund was spent in 2019.

Bill Wiggin:[\[41688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how the Pothole Action Fund was spent in 2020.

Bill Wiggin:[\[41689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding was provided to each county to spend on roads in 2018.

Bill Wiggin:[\[41690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding was provided to each County to spend on roads in 2019.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding was provided to each county to spend on roads in 2020.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will consider an award for the local authority that repairs the most potholes.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has for the ongoing maintenance of roads in Herefordshire.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent advice his Department has given to Herefordshire Council on repairing roads.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the average amount that local authorities pay out for vehicle repairs from pothole damage each year.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the amount Herefordshire Council paid out for claims for potholes in 2018.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the amount Herefordshire Council paid out for claims for potholes in 2019.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the amount Herefordshire Council paid out for claims for potholes in 2020.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many local authorities have asked the Government to take back responsibility for the contracts for repairing roads.

Bill Wiggin: [\[41700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what incentives his Department provides to encourage the private sector to create innovative new methods of repairing and maintaining road surfaces.

Rachel Maclean:

Local highway authorities, including Herefordshire County Council, have a duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highways network in their area. Local highways teams, including private contractors, are accountable to the local authority they are working for.

Whilst the Government does not intervene in highway maintenance decisions, to support local highway maintenance, the Department paid £1.346 billion in 2018/19, £926 million in 2019/20, and £1.526 billion in 2020/21 through formula allocated funding, including the Pothole Fund. This funding was provided to all eligible local highway authorities in England, outside London. The Department has not been approached by any authority with regards to DfT assuming responsibility over parts of their respective local road networks.

The Department endorses 'Well-managed highway infrastructure: A Code of Practice' by the UK Roads Liaison Group. This guidance takes an integrated, risk-based approach to managing highway infrastructure. The Department also worked with the Association of Directors, for Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport to publish 'Potholes: a repair guide' which offers practical advice to highway authorities.

Well-planned maintenance to prevent potholes and other defects forming on the roads is vital; Councils that do this effectively get better value for every pound spent. The Department has no current plans to reward the local authority that repairs the most potholes as this could discourage a more effective preventative approach, linked to highway asset management best practice.

Highway maintenance activities cover a wide range of granular works, and there is no specific requirement for Councils such as Herefordshire to demonstrate how they spend their share of funding, including the Pothole Action Fund. The Department also has made no estimate of the amount Herefordshire Council paid out for claims for potholes in 2018, 2019, and 2020. The matter of insurance and dealing with any compensation claims due to possible defects, including potholes, on the highway network is entirely a matter for Herefordshire Council as the relevant highway authority, who have delegated statutory responsibility for managing and maintaining their roads as set out in the Highways Act 1980 (as amended).

Whilst the Department for Transport encourages local highway authorities to be innovative it is not for Government to intervene or endorse any specific commercial product as it is entirely their decision as to which products to use. In 2019 DfT provided £22.9 million for the ADEPT Live Labs programme, to help develop innovative approaches across communications, materials, energy solutions, and mobility on the local highway network.

Bill Wiggin:

[41701]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Highways England press release, New resurfacing technology a UK first, published on 4 August 2016, for what reasons that article was withdrawn from the Government website in 2017.

Rachel Maclean:

The article was owned and published by National Highways, so its removal is a matter for them. The second Road Investment Strategy, published in March 2020 commits National Highways to maintaining and upgrading the road surface across its network through its renewals programme, while investing in the latest road

resurfacing technologies through a Designated Fund for Innovation and Modernisation.

■ **Thameslink Rail: Season Tickets**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[43674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with Thameslink on providing reimbursements to rail passengers who have purchased a (a) flexible, (b) monthly and (c) annual season ticket and have been affected by the reduced weekday timetable from 26 July 2021.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The introduction of a reduced weekday timetable from 26 July 2021, and further amended on 6 September, is a temporary measure in response to COVID-19 related challenges. The recently published timetable has considered passenger usage and anticipated demand levels which are still significantly below pre-pandemic levels. There will be no additional compensation for season ticket holders unless their journey is delayed, as services are still available for passengers to use. If passengers are delayed, based on the published timetable, then they can claim delay repay from 15 minutes as usual.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[43424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will publish in full the criteria used to inform the categorisation of countries in the covid-19 traffic light system.

Robert Courts:

Decisions on Red, Amber or Green List assignment and associated border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) risk assessments of countries and territories, alongside wider public health factors. Key factors in the JBC risk assessment of each country and territory include genomic surveillance capability, COVID-19 transmission risk and variant of concern transmission risk. A summary of the JBC methodology is published on gov.uk, alongside key data that supports Ministers' decisions

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[43423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of replacing covid-19 PCR tests with lateral flow tests for people arriving from amber list countries.

Robert Courts:

Testing remains a vital part of our borders regime to protect public health and prevent the importation of variants of concern. As only PCR tests can be used to identify

variants of concern, they are required for tests on arrival in the UK. However, lateral flow tests can be used for pre-departure testing if they meet minimum performance standards.

The government keeps all measures under the review and the next formal review will take place by 1 October.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[45093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what type of covid-19 test someone should take on day 2 of arrival back in the UK from a green or amber list country in the event that, prior to travelling, they have contracted and recovered from covid-19 in the previous 90 days; if he will set out the rationale for the type of test required; and if he will make a statement.

Robert Courts:

The UK does not accept recent recovery from Covid-19 as proof of immunity. All passengers are currently required to take a PCR test on arrival in the UK, as PCR tests ensure that positive results can be genomically sequenced to prevent the importation of variants of concern. The government will continue to review the testing measures in place, with the next Checkpoint review taking place later this month.

■ Travel: Safety

Theresa Villiers:

[\[43421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to accelerate the safe reopening of international travel to more destinations.

Robert Courts:

The Government continues to explore expanding our approach of opening up to other countries, where it is safe to do so and will work with international partners as we progress towards a safe, sustainable and robust return to international travel.

The government keeps all measures under the review and the next formal review will take place by 1 October.

■ Travel: USA

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[45148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made by the US-UK taskforce to reopen travel between the two nations.

Robert Courts:

Prime Minister Johnson and President Biden made clear the importance of bringing about the return of safe trans-Atlantic travel as soon as possible. The Government continues to work closely through the joint UK-US Experts' Working Group to develop meaningful options to ensure the return of safe and sustainable international travel.

The US maintains the executive order 212f limiting travel from a number of countries, including the United Kingdom. The reopening of transatlantic travel to fully vaccinated

US passengers travelling to the UK from amber countries reflects the government's clear ambition to work closely together to share best practice and influence reforms to empower trans-Atlantic recovery.

TREASURY

■ Azure Services: Loans

Jessica Morden:

[\[41755\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to review the validity of and remediation for loans taken by customers of Azure Services Ltd and Barclays Partner Finance prior to 1 April 2014.

John Glen:

This question has been passed on to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The FCA will reply directly to the Honourable member by letter. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

■ Bank Services: Third Sector

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[41661\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the banking sector on (a) the availability of banking services to the third sector and (b) improving accessibility for charities to open bank accounts.

John Glen:

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been unprecedented demand for banking services, this accompanied with working restrictions due to social distancing has meant banks have faced significant capacity pressures which has limited their ability to meet demand for bank accounts, among other things.

Banks continue to work hard to meet this demand. Ultimately, the decisions about what products are offered and to whom remain commercial decisions for banks and building societies. While I recognise the important role of the third sector, I hope you can appreciate that it would be inappropriate for the Government to intervene in these decisions.

■ Banks

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[43599\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of (a) bank branch closures and (b) cashpoints in England.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[43601\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number of (a) bank branch closures and (b) cashpoints in England.

John Glen:

Decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial issue for banks and building societies. The Government does not intervene in these decisions or make direct assessments of banks' branch networks.

However, the Government also firmly believes that the impact of branch closures should be understood, considered, and mitigated where possible so that all customers, wherever they live, continue to have appropriate access to banking services.

In September 2020, the Financial Conduct Authority published guidance setting out its expectation of firms when they are deciding to reduce their physical branches or the number of free-to-use ATMs. Firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of a planned closure on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements. Alternative options for access might include the Post Office, and the Post Office Banking Framework allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

LINK (the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network) has commitments to protect the broad geographic spread of free-to-use ATMs and is held to account against these commitments by the Payment Systems Regulator. LINK has committed to protect free-to-use ATMs more than one kilometre away from the next nearest free ATM or Post Office, and LINK's members have made £5 million available to fund ATMs at the request of communities with poor access to cash.

More broadly, the Government recognises that access to cash remains important to millions across the UK and has committed to legislating to protect access to cash and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the longer term. On 1 July, the Government published a consultation on legislative proposals to protect access to cash. These proposals seek to ensure that people only need to travel reasonable distances to pay in or take out cash, and that the right regulatory oversight for cash access is in place for the future. The consultation is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/access-to-cash-consultation>

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Daniel Kawczynski:****[41758]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for specific sectors, such as aerospace and aviation, to avoid redundancies due to reduced orders as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was designed as a temporary, economy-wide measure to support businesses while widespread restrictions were in place. Closing the scheme at the end of September is designed to strike the right balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and

protect incomes, and ensuring that incentives are in place to get people back to work as demand returns. This approach has worked; the OBR have estimated that without the short-term fiscal easing announced in the Budget, and in particular the CJRS extension, unemployment would have been about 300,000 higher in the fourth quarter of this year than the 2.2 million in the central forecast.

The Government recognises the particular challenges that the travel industry has faced as a result of COVID-19. In England travel agents have recently benefited from Restart Grants worth up to £6,000, and can continue to benefit from the £2 billion of discretionary grant funding that has been made available to local authorities in England through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). Furthermore, the aviation and aerospace sectors are being supported with over £12 billion that has been made available through loan guarantees, support for exporters, the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF) and grants for research and development. In addition, airports continue to benefit from the renewed Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme announced at Budget.

The Global Travel Taskforce (GTT) report sets out a clear framework for the Government's objective of establishing a safe and sustainable return to international travel, which is key to enabling the sector's recovery. It has been created following extensive engagement with the international travel and tourism industries, and changes following the recent checkpoint review of the GTT are a vital step in enabling the recovery of travel operators and those whose jobs rely on the travel industry.

The Government has shown throughout the pandemic that it is prepared to adapt support if the path of the virus changes. It continues to engage closely with sectors across the economy, including the travel industry, in order to understand their recovery horizons as the vaccine is rolled out and restrictions ease.

Claire Hanna:

[45294]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to retain the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme beyond September 2021 for sectors of the economy that have not returned to pre-covid-19 pandemic levels of customers.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was designed as a temporary, economy-wide measure to support businesses while widespread restrictions were in place. Closing the scheme at the end of September is designed to strike the right balance between supporting the economy as it opens up, continuing to provide support and protect incomes, and ensuring that incentives are in place to get people back to work as demand returns. This approach has worked; the OBR have estimated that without the short-term fiscal easing announced in the Budget, and in particular the CJRS extension, unemployment would have been about 300,000 higher in the fourth quarter of this year than the 2.2 million in the central forecast.

The Government has shown throughout the pandemic that it is prepared to adapt support if the path of the virus changes. It continues to engage closely with sectors

across the economy in order to understand their recovery horizons as the vaccine is rolled out and restrictions ease.

■ Credit: Debt Collection

Stella Creasy: [\[45114\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people accessing financial products through buy now pay later firms in each of the last 12 months.

Stella Creasy: [\[45115\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people referred to debt collection agencies by buy now pay later firms in each of the last 12 months.

Stella Creasy: [\[45116\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the total level of debt owed to buy now pay later firms at the end of (a) February 2021 and (b) August 2021.

John Glen:

HM Treasury does not hold information on the number of people accessing financial products through Buy-Now-Pay-Later firms, the number of people referred to debt collection agencies by Buy-Now-Pay-Later firms, or the total level of debt owed to Buy-Now-Pay-Later firms.

On 2 February, the Government announced its intention to regulate Buy-Now-Pay-Later products. On 17 March, the Government tabled an amendment to the Financial Services Bill (now Act) to allow the Government to bring Buy-Now-Pay-Later products into the scope of FCA regulation in a proportionate way. Treasury and FCA are now working closely to publish a consultation document soon.

■ Employment Schemes: Young People

Colleen Fletcher: [\[45137\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to help young people into employment as part of the economic recovery from the covid-19 pandemic in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Steve Barclay:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has protected the jobs and livelihoods of young people across England: as of the end of July 2021, 158,800 jobs held by those aged 24 or under were on furlough. In the West Midlands, 14,310 jobs held by under 25 year olds were protected by the CJRS, of which 820 were in Coventry.

The youth unemployment rate (16-24 year olds) has also decreased in recent months, to 13.1% in April-June 2021, down from a post-Covid peak of 14.8% in Q3 2020. In the West Midlands, youth unemployment has dropped from a Covid-19 peak of 19.1% in November-January 2021 to 14.4% in April-June 2021.

In addition to the CJRS protecting jobs, the government's Plan for Jobs provides a range of support to help young people into work. The £2 billion Kickstart Scheme provides young people at risk of long-term unemployment with fully-subsidised jobs to give them experience and skills. All young people on Universal Credit will also benefit from an expanded Youth Offer, which provides extra support as they search for work.

This is available to young people across Great Britain, including the West Midlands, Coventry, and Coventry North East constituency. As of 31st August, 5,670 Kickstart jobs have been started by young people in the West Midlands.

■ **Energy: Conservation**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[45086\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress his Department has made on spending £9.2 billion on energy efficiency measures over the course of the 2019 Parliament.

Kemi Badenoch:

We have so far invested over £2.5bn to support both low-income households and public sector organisations to install energy efficiency measures, while also expanding the Energy Company Obligation to £1bn per year. This is significantly above the £1.28bn originally included in the 2019 manifesto covering the first two years of this Parliament.

The investment made by this government has resulted in considerable wider economic benefits. For example, our support for low-income households alone is estimated to support over 25,000 jobs and save households an average of £350-450 per year on their energy bills.

Further spending decisions will be made at the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

■ **Financial Services: Northern Ireland**

Stephen Farry:

[\[44482\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the evidence submitted by the Consumer Council of Northern Ireland to the Treasury Committee's call for evidence on the future of financial services on the (a) potential comparative levels of financial distress and exclusion in Northern Ireland, (b) provision of basic bank accounts and (c) need for a local presence of the Financial Conduct Authority in Northern Ireland.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that there are varying levels of financial inclusion and vulnerability across the UK, including from the ongoing impact of COVID-19, and is

committed to helping people access the support they need to get their finances back on track.

The Government remains committed to ensuring that individuals, whatever their background or income, and wherever they live in the UK, are able to access useful financial products and services. In February 2021, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published its finalised guidance for firms on the fair treatment of vulnerable customers. This applies to all firms where the FCA Principles for Business apply, which includes Northern Ireland, in respect of the supply of products or services to retail customers.

The Government is committed to improving access to financial services and recognises that access to a transactional bank account is key to enabling people to manage their money on a day-to-day basis effectively, securely and confidently. The nine largest personal current account providers in the UK are legally required to offer basic bank accounts to customers who do not have a bank account or who are not eligible for a bank's standard current account. Many of these providers operate in Northern Ireland. The Government keeps the list of designated banks under review.

Finally, the Government welcomes the FCA's announcement on 15th July 2021 that the FCA will be establishing a presence in Belfast for the first time.

■ Freezing of Assets

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[44166\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many assets have been frozen in the UK as a result of financial sanctions against designated people and entities under the Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions Regulations 2021 since the regime was introduced in April 2021.

John Glen:

Since the launch of the Global Anti-Corruption financial sanctions regime in April 2021, an asset freeze has been imposed against 27 individuals. The Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI) undertakes an annual review of frozen assets in the UK, requiring all persons or institutions that hold or control frozen assets in the UK to report to OFSI. That review has not yet commenced for 2021 but will commence shortly and details of frozen assets reported will be published in OFSI's 2021-2022 Annual Review next year.

■ Health and Social Care Levy

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[45104\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 86 in the technical annex of the Government's September 2021 publication, Building Back Better: Our plan for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's plan to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the health and social care levy will extend to providing that support to universities.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[45105\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 86 in the technical annex of the Government's September 2021 publication, Building Back Better: Our plan for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's plan to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the health and social care levy will extend to providing that support to childcare providers in England.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[45106\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 86 in the technical annex of the Government's September 2021 publication, Building Back Better: Our plan for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's plan to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the health and social care levy will extend to providing that support to further education colleges in England.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[45107\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 86 in the technical annex of the Government's September 2021 publication, Building Back Better: Our plan for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's plan to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the health and social care levy will extend to compensating charities delivering public services under contract to local authorities.

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[45108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 86 in the technical annex of the Government's September 2021 publication, Building Back Better: Our plan for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's plan to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the health and social care levy will extend to covering employment costs incurred by private companies delivering NHS services.

Steve Reed:

[\[45132\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 86 in the technical annex of the Government's September 2021 publication, Building Back Better: Our plan for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's plan to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the health and social care levy includes providing that support to local authorities in England.

Steve Barclay:

The Government intends to compensate departments and other public sector employers in England at the Spending Review for the increased cost of the Health and Social Care Levy, and provide Barnett consequential on this funding to the devolved administrations. Further details on the approach to this compensation will be set out at the conclusion of the Spending Review on 27 October 2021.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Patrick Grady: [\[43546\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people have been charged for making unauthorised withdrawals from Lifetime ISAs in each financial year since 2015-16.

Patrick Grady: [\[43547\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the total number of unauthorised withdrawals from Lifetime ISAs was in each financial year since 2015-16.

John Glen:

Information on unauthorised Lifetime ISA withdrawals will be published in the next HMRC savings statistics publication and will be available via the gov.uk website.

■ International Monetary System: Belarus

Hilary Benn: [\[41662\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his policy is on the granting of new Special Drawing Rights to Belarus by the IMF.

John Glen:

We are considering all appropriate and effective means of constraining the finances of the Lukashenko regime. The UK has already made more than 100 sanctions designations in response to the fraudulent elections and subsequent human rights violations in Belarus and remains committed to taking action against those responsible for the continued suppression of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The IMF implemented a new general allocation of Special Drawing Rights on the 23 August. The unconditional nature of the SDR allocation means that Belarus will receive a new allocation in proportion to its quota share, consistent with the IMF's Articles of Agreement. It is worth noting that IMF Special Drawing Rights, or SDRs, are an international reserve asset and are not money or currency, though may be exchanged with other countries for currency through a system of Voluntary Trading Arrangements. The UK retains the right to refuse to purchase SDRs from any countries that we choose. The UK has driven G7 calls for the SDR allocation to be accompanied by transparency and accountability measures and updated IMF guidance on how countries should appropriately use their SDRs.

■ Monetary Policy Committee: Scotland

Kenny MacAskill: [\[42156\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on which date the last person who was educated at a Scottish university was appointed by his Department to the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee.

John Glen:

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

■ Money**Dr Rupa Huq:****[43600]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ensure the long-term future of cash.

John Glen:

The Government recognises the importance of cash to the daily lives of millions of people and businesses across the UK, including those who may be on low incomes or vulnerable. That is why at the March 2020 Budget, the Government committed to legislating to protect access to cash and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the longer term.

On 1 July, the Government published a consultation on access to cash, which sets out proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel a reasonable distance to pay in or take out cash. The Government's proposals would support the continued use of cash in people's daily lives and help local businesses to continue accepting cash by ensuring reasonable access to deposit facilities. The consultation will be open until 23 September and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/access-to-cash-consultation>

The Government also made legislative changes to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses as part of the Financial Services Act 2021.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus**Bim Afolami:****[42077]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to tackle cases of lenders potentially penalising mortgage applicants on the basis of them taking furlough or a Self-Employment Income Support Scheme grants.

John Glen:

Decisions concerning the pricing and availability of loans, including application requirements, remain commercial decisions for lenders and the Government does not seek to intervene. For individuals applying for new credit, it remains important that lenders are able to carry out proper checks to ensure that they are not lending in an unaffordable way, especially if, for example, a borrower's income had not yet returned to the level it was at pre Covid-19. Where an individual has been refused a mortgage with one provider we would also urge them to shop around, recognising lenders do not all take the same approach to assessing affordability.

■ National Savings Bonds: Environment Protection**Stephen Farry:**[\[44483\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to tie measurable outcomes for (a) progress towards net zero emissions and (b) a net increase in employment within the green economy with the green saving bonds initiative.

John Glen:

In June 2021, the Government published the UK Government Green Financing Framework. This outlines HM Treasury's approach to measuring and reporting the impact of Green Savings Bonds and the Green Gilt

The Government will publish biennial impact reports starting no later than 2023. These will include metrics measuring the environmental impacts of six categories of expenditure financed by the programme, including Clean Transportation and Renewable Energy. These metrics will demonstrate the green financing programme's contribution towards net zero emissions.

Impact reports will also include metrics for social co-benefits of expenditures, including the number of jobs created or supported, making clear the role of green financing in the Government's levelling up agenda.

■ Pensions: Tax Allowances**Grahame Morris:**[\[45101\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of private pension tax relief for (a) high rate and (b) additional rate taxpayers.

John Glen:

Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs' most recently published figures estimate Income Tax relief on contributions to private pensions totalled £30.5 billion in 2017-18 and it is estimated around 60% of this is relieved to Higher and Additional Rate taxpayers. HM Revenue & Customs' Personal Pensions: Contributions and Tax Relief Statistics are next due to be published on 30 September 2021.

■ Redundancy: Government Assistance**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[45139\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support people who have been made redundant as a result of the covid-19 outbreak to (a) access training and skills support and (b) secure suitable alternative employment.

Steve Barclay:

Over a year ago, the Government launched the Plan for Jobs to help people affected by Covid-19 get back into work.

The Plan for Jobs invested in skills measures which we know work to help adults build the skills they need to get into work. To support jobseekers to find new employment in in-demand sectors, we expanded sector-based work academy programmes with almost £60m of additional funding.

The Plan for Jobs also introduced incentives for employers to hire apprentices - which we increased to £3000 per new hire at Budget – and boosted funding for the National Careers Service to reach more adults with high quality careers advice.

At Spending Review 2020, we introduced the Lifetime Skills Guarantee to further expand skills training opportunities for adults with £95m to fund free courses in economically valuable subjects for adults who do not already have A Levels and £43m to expand the employer-led skills bootcamps across England. Bootcamps support retraining for adults in growing sectors, providing a guaranteed job interview to participants.

Adults who are unemployed can also access full funding for skills training up to and including Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) through the Adult Education Budget.

The Government has also boosted employment support to help those who have experienced unemployment during the pandemic. At Spending Review 2020 we provided £3.6bn additional funding in 2021-22 for DWP to deliver employment support for people who need it most. This includes £1.4bn of additional funding in 2021-22 to sustain expanded work search support, including the doubling of the number of work coaches to 27,000.

For those on Universal Credit who have unfortunately been searching for work for over a year, we are also investing in the new three-year £2.9bn Restart programme, which will provide intensive and tailored support to over 1 million unemployed Universal Credit claimants across England and Wales and help them find work.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Kate Osamor:

[45224]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional funding will be made available to local authorities housing refugees via the Afghan Citizens Resettlement scheme.

Steve Barclay:

The government has announced the Afghanistan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable Afghans in its first year, potentially rising to 20,000 over the long term. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) for those who worked with the UK in Afghanistan also remains open. More detail on funding for local authorities to support those eligible for both schemes will be announced shortly.

In addition to the Afghan schemes, the Home Office also delivers the UK Resettlement Scheme which resettles vulnerable refugees from a range of regions of conflict and instability.

Treasury: Welsh Government**Ruth Jones:** [\[42112\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he last spoke to the Minister for the Economy in the Welsh Government.

Steve Barclay:

On 3rd June the Chancellor joined the Prime Minister to meet with the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland to discuss the United Kingdom's Covid recovery.

As the minister responsible for Treasury interest in devolution to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, I regularly meet with ministers from the Devolved Administrations. I last met with the Finance Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on 20th July.

WALES**Wales Office: Listed Buildings****Tim Loughton:** [\[45036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, 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.

Simon Hart:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales does not own any properties.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**Discrimination: Artificial Intelligence****Dan Carden:** [\[45253\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions has she had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the impact of algorithmic decision-making on people with protected characteristics.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) is part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Officials in the Equality Hub and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have discussed with the CDEI its Review into bias in algorithmic decision-making.

As part of its 2021-22 Annual Plan, the EHRC is developing guidance on artificial intelligence and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), for government departments and public bodies. This is in response to recommendations from the CDEI as well as the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Additionally, as part of the planning process for the EHRC's 2022-25 Strategic Plan, the Commission is engaging with

key stakeholders, including the Ada Lovelace Institute and the Alan Turing Institute to build its capability to respond to the most pressing equality and human rights issues arising from the use of artificial intelligence.

■ Regional Planning and Development: Social Mobility

Stuart Anderson:

[\[42132\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what progress the Social Mobility Commission has made on levelling up life chances across the country; and what steps she is taking to implement the recommendations made by that Commission.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Social Mobility Commission (SMC) is an advisory body required by statute to do three things: 1) monitor progress on social mobility outcomes across the UK in an annual report 2) undertake research to inform recommendations for how government might improve social mobility in England and 3) share knowledge about how social mobility can be improved more widely.

The SMC has taken recent steps to improve how it delivers against these statutory objectives, including:

- Producing a body of research work to help national and local leaders understand and address regional disparities in a more effective way through reports including, 'The long shadow of deprivation' (2020), and 'Moving out to move on' (2020).
- Translating the insights from its reports into comprehensible actions that young people can take to improve their own outcomes.
- Establishing an employers' programme which has been successful in driving change in how employers both recruit and promote people from working class backgrounds.

The Commission's work is an important part of the data-driven approach within the Equality Hub in the Cabinet Office. The Hub will consider its research and recommendations, with a view to using its evidence to inform the wide-ranging programme of work across Government to level up the country.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Ed Davey:

[\[45038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the time taken for beneficiaries to receive their Access to Work payments.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work aim for customers to be paid within 10 days of receipt of claims and all supporting evidence. During July and August postal delays held up payment claims being received into DWP.

We have introduced scanning of all claims on day of receipt improving payment times, and Access to Work are also developing a digital claim portal which will allow customers to submit their claim online and upload any supporting information. We expect to start testing this with some customers in December 2021.

■ Access to Work Programme: Disability**Vicky Foxcroft:****[42016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Disability Strategy, published in July 2021, what steps she is taking to increase the awareness of Access to Work among disabled employees.

Justin Tomlinson:

We are taking a range of steps to continue to raise awareness of Access to Work among people with a disability or long-term health condition.

We regularly promote the scheme through the Department's social media channels, signposting people to the Access to Work pages on the JobHelp website and on gov.uk.

We are also ensuring advisers who work with potential customers, including Jobcentre Plus, health professionals and advisory groups, have the information and tools to act as advocates for the scheme.

In addition, we are continuing to work with stakeholders, partners and employer associations to raise awareness of Access to Work through communications to their customers, and we have produced a communications toolkit to help them raise awareness.

We are continuing to promote Access to Work to employers as part of the Disability Confident scheme.

Vicky Foxcroft:**[42018]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the National Disability Strategy, published in July 2021, what the timescales are for the (a) creation of Access to Work Passports and (b) expected completion date of the Scheme; and what steps her Department is taking to ensure that disabled people are aware of Access to Work Passports and how they can benefit from them.

Justin Tomlinson:

To support transitions into work and between jobs, Access to Work has been working with stakeholders to develop an Adjustments Passport. Later this year we will run a series of pilots for those transitioning from education into work and service leavers leaving the armed forces. These pilots will enable us to gain an understanding of the

passport's effectiveness in supporting transitions and raising awareness of in-work support.

The Adjustments passport is already being tested with Access to Work customers who take up freelance and contractor opportunities and with 400 young job seekers in the Health Model Offices since May 2021.

Once fully evaluated we will consider making the passport more widely available during 2022. To raise awareness of the pilots we will promote the passport pilots through social media channels and our stakeholder forums.

■ Disability: Employment

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[42012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to launch a consultation on workforce reporting on disability for large employers.

Justin Tomlinson:

As set out in the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July, the Cabinet Office will consult later this year on workforce reporting on disability for large employers, exploring voluntary and mandated workplace transparency, before publishing next steps.

■ Disability: Finance

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[42013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress has been made by her Department on setting up an Extra Costs Taskforce.

Justin Tomlinson:

As set out in the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Cabinet Office will set up an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including how this breaks down for different impairments – by summer 2022.

Officials are currently developing proposals for the taskforce and its terms of reference and membership. Insight from disabled people and organisations will inform the development of the Taskforce.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[42014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to ensure a wide range of disabled people and their families are involved in the Extra Costs Taskforce; and if he plans to work with disability charities and organisations to ensure as many experiences as possible are included.

Justin Tomlinson:

As set out in the National Disability Strategy, published on 28 July, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Cabinet Office will set up

an Extra Costs Taskforce, bringing together disabled people, regulators and businesses, to better understand the extra costs faced by disabled people, including how this breaks down for different impairments – by summer 2022.

Officials are currently developing proposals for the taskforce and its terms of reference and membership. Insight from disabled people and organisations will inform the development of the Taskforce.

■ Discretionary Housing Payments

Justin Madders:

[\[41927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with local authorities on the link between the Local Housing Allowance rates and Discretionary Housing Payment applications.

Will Quince:

We regularly engage with local authorities in relation to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), this includes discussions on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.

DHPs can be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs, including those in the private rented sector whose LHA maximum rate does not cover the full amount of their rent. Local authorities have broad discretion to spend in line with their local priorities, supported by non-statutory guidance, which provides a list of priority groups to assist with their decision making.

Funding for LHA rates was boosted by almost £1bn in 2020/21 and rates have been maintained in cash terms at their increased levels for 2021/22.

Local authorities are notified annually of the total amount allocated to each authority. For 2021-22 the Government has made available £140m in DHP funding for local authorities in England and Wales to distribute to help support vulnerable people with housing costs.

■ Employment Schemes

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[41862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the number of people who have found employment through the Plan for Jobs skills and employment programmes.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions will be monitoring and evaluating the Plan for Jobs programmes throughout their implementation.

Since April 2020, almost 1.6m people have moved from unemployment to employment from the Universal Credit Intensive Work Search group as shown in the table below.

Movements into employment are available for out-of-work Universal Credit claimants in the Intensive Work Search (Searching for Work) group.

Universal Credit Into Work Rate, May 2018 to May 2021

	INTO WORK RATE (PERCENTAGES)	INTO WORK VOLUME ('000s)
May-18	9.6	19
Jun-18	9.3	20
Jul-18	9.1	22
Aug-18	9.8	27
Sep-18	10.6	32
Oct-18	11.1	36
Nov-18	11.5	40
Dec-18	7.4	29
Jan-19	9.4	41
Feb-19	9.0	45
Mar-19	10.5	55
Apr-19	9.8	53
May-19	10.0	55
Jun-19	8.9	52
Jul-19	9.3	54
Aug-19	9.6	57
Sep-19	10.4	65
Oct-19	10.4	64
Nov-19	10.0	64
Dec-19	7.4	46
Jan-20	8.1	53
Feb-20	8.5	60
Mar-20	8.1	58

	INTO WORK RATE (PERCENTAGES)	INTO WORK VOLUME ('000s)
Apr-20	6.3	62
May-20	6.3	84
Jun-20	6.7	96
Jul-20	7.7	115
Aug-20	7.5	112
Sep-20	9.0	136
Oct-20	9.0	134
Nov-20	8.1	121
Dec-20	6.0	88
Jan-21	6.0	91
Feb-21	6.3	97
Mar-21	8.4	130
Apr-21	9.9	148
May-21	10.3	148

Note: The base population for the Into Work measure is UC claimants in the Intensive Work Search (Searching for Work) conditionality group who are not in work or who have a valid fit note in the relevant month. The Into Work rate is the proportion of these claimants who move into work the following month. These rates are calculated from DWP Management Information and are subject to revision. Figures shown here are from data as of August 2021. The Into Work volumes do not align to caseloads in the DWP Universal Credit Official Statistics due to differences in definitions and population filters. Claimants included in the Into Work rate may or may not remain in the Intensive Work Search group or on Universal Credit depending on their level of earnings and other circumstances. Claimants are identified as being in work if they have earnings in HMRC's Real Time Information data, or if they are required to report self-employed earnings. Claimants can be part of the Into Work rate in more than one month if they move in and out of periods of work.

For the latest available information on starts on Kickstart jobs, I refer the honourable member to the answer given for PQ36791 (<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-20/36791>).

Employment outcomes are available for Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) in England and Wales and JETS Scotland, and provided in the table below. It should be noted that JETS provides support for up to six months and many people who have started on the scheme will not yet have had time to achieve an employment outcome.

JETS Starts and Employment Outcomes

	PROGRAMME STARTS (TO END JUNE 2021)	EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES (TO END JUNE 2021)
JETS England and Wales (launched 5 October 2020)	132,885	24,535
JETS Scotland (launched 25 January 2021)	5,995	655

Note: JETS data are taken from the Provider Referrals and Payments (PRaP) system. An employment outcome is defined as when an individual achieves £1,000 cumulative earnings within eight months of starting on the programme as identified via HMRC earnings information.

The number of people who have started on Job Finding Support (JFS) and Sector Based Work Academies (SWAPs) provision is provided in the tables below. Employment outcomes for these programmes is not currently available.

SWAPs Starts

1 APRIL 2020 - 31 MARCH 2021	64,500
1 April 2021 - 29 August 2021	30,070
Total since April 2020	94,570

Notes: A SWAP start is defined as the first day of the placement, which is usually the first day of pre-employment training. A start is only recorded where a claimant attended their placement. SWAPs starts data are collected by Jobcentre staff and reflect the number of SWAP starts by claimants in receipt of Universal Credit (UC), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Income Support (IS).

JFS Starts

MONTH	STARTS TO JFS
Jan-21	1,440
Feb-21	3,465

MONTH	STARTS TO JFS
Mar-21	4,530
Apr-21	2,585
May-21	4,490
Jun-21	4,940
Jul-21	5,740
Aug-21	4,265
Total	31,455

Notes: JFS Starts are taken from the Provider Referrals and Payments (PRaP) system. Starts occur where an initial meeting has taken place and participant has acknowledged receipt of appropriate documents such as the Job Finding Action Plan (JFAP).

Through our Youth Offer we currently have over 115 Youth Hubs physically open to support young people across Great Britain get into work and the ambition is to have 150 open by the end of the year.

■ Jobcentres

Layla Moran: [\[45256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to resume face-to-face appointments at job centres in the next three months.

Mims Davies:

Throughout the pandemic, Jobcentres remained open for anyone who needed face-to-face support. From April, Jobcentres in England, Scotland and Wales returned to their pre-lockdown opening hours and restarted face-to-face appointments, in accordance with government guidelines.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Leicestershire

Dr Luke Evans: [\[42168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Kickstart scheme in (a) Leicestershire and (b) Bosworth.

Mims Davies:

We are pleased to say that, as of the 8th September, over 69,000 young people have started Kickstart jobs. Over 188,000 jobs have been made available for young people to apply for through the Kickstart Scheme with over 281,000 jobs approved for funding by the Scheme.

Below are tables listing the number of Kickstart jobs which have been made available and started by young people to date by geographical area of Great Britain and work sector. The figures used are correct as of the 8th September and these figures have been rounded according to departmental standards.

We are currently not able to publish a breakdown below the regional and national level although expect to be able to do so in due course, this is because the information is contained across multiple systems and the work to gather and quality assure it would be a disproportionate cost.

From 18/08/2021 to 08/09/2021, over 4,800 jobs were made available each week, and over 2,800 started each week.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

LOCATION	JOBS MADE AVAILABLE	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
East Midlands	11,900	4,170
East of England	14,900	4,870
London	38,400	15,170
North East	7,500	3,170
North West	24,000	8,830
Scotland	13,800	6,140
South East	21,700	7,460
South West	14,000	4,660
Wales	10,600	3,390
West Midlands	16,900	6,150
Yorkshire and The Humber	14,600	5,250

*These numbers are rounded and so may not match provided totals. Jobs Made Available include 1,000 non-grant funded vacancies and Total Starts include around

LOCATION	JOBS MADE AVAILABLE	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
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900 starts to non-grant funded jobs

SECTOR	JOBS MADE AVAILABLE	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
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Administration	46,900	17,420
Animal Care	1,000	540
Beauty & Wellbeing	1,300	520
Business & Finance	6,700	2,540
Computing Technology & Digital	13,100	6,110
Construction & Trades	5,800	2,200
Creative & Media	14,500	6,980
Delivery & Storage	5,500	1,970
Emergency & Uniform Services	400	160
Engineering & Maintenance	6,200	2,110
Environment & Land	3,500	1,450
Government Services	700	130
Healthcare	5,200	1,530
Home Services	1,400	360
Hospitality & Food	21,100	5,360
Law & Legal	400	210
Managerial	1,100	340
Manufacturing	4,600	1,890
Retail & Sales	29,200	11,370
Science & Research	700	330
Social Care	4,700	1,120
Sports & Leisure	4,300	1,690

SECTOR	JOBS MADE AVAILABLE	TOTAL JOBS STARTED
Teaching & Education	8,900	2,570
Transport	500	150
Travel & Tourism	600	210

*These numbers are rounded and so may not match provided totals. Jobs Made Available include 1,000 non-grant funded vacancies and Total Starts include around 900 starts to non-grant funded jobs

■ National Insurance

Layla Moran:

[\[45257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the average waiting time from the point of application for a person to obtain a National Insurance number.

Guy Opperman:

Demand for the National Insurance Number (NINo) service is currently high with the average time taken to process applications around 13 weeks. The Department is currently recruiting and training additional staff to reduce these waiting times.

The Department expedites NINo applications for those who require one in order to receive Social Security Benefits.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Older People

Dan Jarvis:

[\[45128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of removing the upper age limit for Personal Independence Payment claimants on those with mobility issues who are over pension age.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[45129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support she is providing to claimants over pension age who do not qualify for the mobility allowance of personal independence payment or the mobility scheme and who cannot claim attendance allowance, industrial injuries disabled benefit or constant attendance allowance.

Justin Tomlinson:

Government support for mobility needs is focused on people who become disabled earlier in life; developing mobility needs in older life is a normal consequence of ageing for which people can plan and save for.

Individuals can claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for the first time up to the day before they reach State Pension age (SPa). Once someone is in receipt of PIP they can continue to do so beyond SPa, including the mobility component if they were in receipt of it on reaching SPa, for as long as they fulfil the entitlement conditions. There are limited circumstances where someone in receipt of the mobility component can move between rates once over SPa.

PIP claimants over SPa cannot establish a new entitlement to either rate of the mobility component in line with the general principle set out above.

The upper age limit for claiming PIP by new claimants for the first time was last reviewed prior to the most recent changes to SPa made by the Pensions Act 2014 and we have no plans to amend the upper age limit.

Where someone develops mobility difficulties when over SPa they can use any benefit they receive, including the daily living component of PIP, to meet those needs in a way that best suits them. Additional travel concessions and support may also be available by reference to age, whether or not there are mobility needs.

■ Poverty: Children**Caroline Lucas:**[\[41811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on child poverty of the planned reduction of universal credit by £20 a week; if she will make it her policy to reverse that planned reduction and make the £20 a week permanent; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

It is not possible to produce a robust assessment of the impact of removing the £20 uplift on child poverty. This is particularly the case at the moment given the uncertainty around the speed of the economic recovery, and how this will be distributed across the population.

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced with the success of the vaccine rollout. Now the economy is reopening and as we continue to progress with our recovery our focus is on helping people back into work.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; we have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job; and introduced Restart which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year. Our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

■ **Poverty: Older People**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[41657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce levels of poverty in people that are of pension age.

Guy Opperman:

The Government is committed to action to alleviate levels of pensioner poverty. The overall trend in the percentage of pensioners living in poverty is a dramatic improvement over recent decades. Relative pensioner poverty rates (before housing costs) have halved since 1990. For the year 2019/20 there were 200,000 fewer pensioners in absolute poverty (both before and after housing costs) than in 2009/10. Material Deprivation, an alternative way of measuring poverty, is at an all-time low of 6% of pensioners.

Since 2010, the Government has increased the full yearly value of the basic State Pension by over £2,050 in cash terms. Around 1.4 million pensioners also receive some £5 billion of Pension Credit, which tops up their retirement income and is a passport to other financial help such as support with housing costs, council tax, heating bills and a free TV licence for those over 75. Around 70 per cent of eligible pensioners already receive the main Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit but we want all eligible pensioners to claim it. That's why on 16 June as part of a media day of action on Pension Credit, DWP joined forces with Age UK as well as the BBC to help reach, via national and local media, older people who may be reticent about claiming it. We have also set up a working group made up of a range of stakeholders who have an interest in pensioners' financial wellbeing to look at other opportunities and channels to get information about Pension Credit to pensioners and their family members.

In addition to these current measures, for future pensioners there is also auto-enrolment into workplace pensions, which has transformed pension saving for millions of workers. Furthermore, our 50 Plus: Choices agenda aims to maximise the labour market opportunities for people to earn and save for longer.

■ Sick Leave: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe:

[41630]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance her Department has published for employers on offering long-term sick leave to people suffering with long covid.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is payable for up to 28 weeks per period of sickness absence. Sickness absences which are less than 8 weeks apart count as the same period of sickness. In a new period of sickness, employees are eligible for an additional 28 weeks of SSP. As such, where individuals remain sick or incapable of work as a result of coronavirus, including those suffering with long covid, they will be eligible for SSP, subject to the usual qualifying conditions.

The pages on Gov.UK provide extensive information and support to employees regarding the circumstances in which they may be eligible for SSP and what evidence they need to provide to their employer. Additionally, there is specific guidance for employers explaining which employees may be eligible for SSP and when employers should start paying SSP. There is a calculator to support employers to understand how much SSP to pay.

■ Social Security Benefits

Alan Brown:

[41995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to produce a replacement publication for the document entitled What happens if you are overpaid Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance.

Will Quince:

There are no plans to replace the publication 'What happens if you are overpaid Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance', which was withdrawn in October 2017. This is because the information previously contained in that publication is now part of the mainstream guidance on GOV.UK under the sections 'Benefit Overpayments' and 'Reporting Changes in Circumstances'.

The majority of claimants are able to make and maintain their Universal Credit claim online. Claimants can report a change of circumstance by signing into their Universal Credit account and accessing the 'How to manage your Universal Credit Claim' Guide. Where a Universal Credit claim is made and maintained by telephone, changes of circumstance can be reported by telephone.

Full details of how the Department deals with overpayments can be found in the publically available Benefit Overpayment Recovery Guide - [Benefit overpayment recovery guide](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/benefit-overpayment-recovery-guide) - [GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

It should be noted that the Department has a duty to protect public funds and an obligation to ensure that overpaid benefit payments are recovered in accordance with the appropriate

social security legislation. We seek to do so as quickly as possible without creating any undue financial hardship to the claimant.

Recovery rates are set out in legislation, but customers can contact DWP Debt Management if they are experiencing financial hardship in order to negotiate a reduction in their rate of

repayment, or a temporary suspension of repayment, depending on financial circumstances.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses**

Andrew Gwynne:

[45063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will reform the three-year award duration for claims made under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness and bring it in line with longer ongoing awards available under the normal rules.

Justin Tomlinson:

For the majority of cases made under the SRTI, people are given three year awards. This approach is based on a recommendation from an expert advisory group, initially for DLA, but later adopted in other benefits. The three year awards given to SRTI claims strikes a balance that recognises making a prognosis is not an exact science and that people who do live longer than expected should continue to receive the support provided to them by benefit system, while also enabling those who live for much longer than expected, to be looked at afresh in light of their circumstances as they come towards the end of their award. The majority of claims made under the special rules sadly do not reach three years but for those that do, we want to ensure that people are receiving the right level of support.

As part of the health and Disability Green Paper consultation, we are consulting on reform of assessments and seeking views on policy proposals. Following the consultation, detailed proposals will then be brought forward in a White Paper next year, setting out how we can better enable people to take up work and live more independently, and outline the changes we want to make to the benefits system to better address structural and delivery challenges.

■ **State Retirement Pensions**

Ruth Jones:

[42130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she last spoke to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the state pension triple lock.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State regularly discusses a range of issues relating to her portfolio with Cabinet colleagues. The oral statement on 7 September 2021, set out our plan for uprating this year.

[Pensions Update - Tuesday 7 September 2021 - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

■ State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays**Wendy Chamberlain:****[45271]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average processing time is for a new state pension claim; what the average processing time was 12 months ago; how many unprocessed claims for new state pensions her Department holds; what steps she is taking to tackle delays in processing new state pension claims; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

DWP is aware that a small number of new State Pension claims have been subject to delays in receiving payment.

The Department is working hard to clear the current backlog, many of which have accrued since the Covid Pandemic.

We are prioritising overdue payments and payments that are imminent within the next few weeks. Normal service will be resumed by the end of October 2021.

Claimants don't need to act, we have identified the cases and will process them as soon as possible.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[41658]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help ensure that women born in the 1950s who were affected by pension age changes are compensated.

Guy Opperman:

The Government decided over 25 years ago that it was going to make the State Pension age the same for men and women as a long-overdue move towards gender equality. Raising State Pension age in line with life expectancy changes has been the policy of successive administrations over many years.

In the Judicial Review on changes to State Pension age, both the High Court and Court of Appeal have supported the actions of the DWP, under successive governments dating back to 1995, finding we acted entirely lawfully and did not discriminate on any grounds.

There is no plan to compensate anyone affected by State Pension age legislation that Parliament has enacted.

Justin Madders:

[\[41923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many of the pre-2008 female state pension recipients who had been divorced have been identified as being in receipt of the incorrect state pension entitlement; and how many of those recipients are now receiving the correct state pension.

Guy Opperman:

Married women, whose husband became entitled to his State Pension before 17 March 2008, are required, as set out in Section 1 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, to make a claim to get Category BL State Pension.

All State Pension recipients who become divorced should inform DWP of this change to check whether their State Pension position is affected. This has been the position with successive governments. We remind people to do this in the information included with annual uprating letters and there is also information on GOV.UK.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[42177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of compensating women born in the 1950s who were affected by state pension increases of (a) 1995, (b) 2007 and (c) 2011.

Guy Opperman:

The Government decided over 25 years ago that it was going to make the State Pension age the same for men and women as a long-overdue move towards gender equality. Raising State Pension age in line with life expectancy changes has been the policy of successive administrations over many years.

In the Judicial Review on changes to State Pension age, both the High Court and Court of Appeal have supported the actions of the DWP, under successive governments dating back to 1995, finding we acted entirely lawfully and did not discriminate on any grounds.

The costs of reducing women's State Pension age to 60 are very significant. The total additional cost if we had kept women's SPa at 60 and men's SPa at 65 would be in the region of £215bn for the period 2010/11 to 2025/26, in 2018/19 prices. This figure takes into account State Pension, other pensioner benefits, and savings made on working age benefits .

There is no plan to compensate anyone affected by State Pension age legislation that Parliament has enacted.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Uprating

Matt Rodda:

[\[45254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her Departments' analysis supporting the decision to disregard average earnings increases when determining the next State Pension uprating for 2022-23.

Guy Opperman:

DWP expect average earnings figures for July to be around the level seen in June and this would produce a May to July annual earnings growth figure of 8 to 8.5%.

The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Bill will ensure pensioners' spending power is preserved and that they are protected from higher costs of living. But it will also ensure that as we are having to make difficult decisions elsewhere across public spending, pensioners are not unfairly benefitting from a statistical anomaly.

Annual growth in average employee pay is being affected by temporary factors that have inflated the increase in the headline growth rate. These are compositional effects where there has been a fall in the number and proportion of lower-paid employee jobs and base effects where the latest months are now compared with low base periods when earnings were first affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Matt Rodda:[\[45255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department made of the potential merits of assessing underlying levels of wage growth in 2021-22 with the impact of furlough discounted for the purposes of uprating the State Pension prior to the decision to suspend the triple-lock.

Guy Opperman:

In order to consider whether it would be appropriate to use a rate of underlying wage growth, we consulted the Office for National Statistics views. The ONS published information on measuring underlying pay growth on 15 July 2021 :- ["Far from average: How COVID-19 has impacted the Average Weekly Earnings data"](#).

The ONS identified temporary factors, called base and compositional effects, that have increased the headline growth rate in earnings above the underlying rate. There is no single accepted approach to assessing underlying growth. ONS have published a range of possible growth rates, but acknowledge these should be treated with caution.

Therefore, it would not be appropriate to use estimated underlying levels of wage growth as it would not be a robust basis by which to up-rate and there is ongoing volatility in these data.

■ Statutory Sick Pay**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[42015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to review the future of statutory sick pay.

Justin Tomlinson:

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provides a minimum level of income for employees when they are sick or incapable of work. Employers are legally required to pay SSP to eligible employees who are off work sick or incapable of work, where employees meet the qualifying conditions. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay.

The government has previously consulted on reform to SSP. The consultation posed several important questions on the future of SSP which require further consideration and as we learn to live with a new virus there is space to take a broader look at the role of SSP. The government maintains that SSP provides an important link between the employee and employer but that now is not the right time to introduce changes to the sick pay system.

SSP is just one part of our welfare safety net and our wider government offer to support people in times of need. Where an individual's income is reduced while off work sick and they require further financial support, they may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on their personal circumstances.

■ Universal Credit

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[40808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Child Action Poverty Group report, Universal Credit: What Needs to Change published in July 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations in that report.

Will Quince:

We are aware of the report, and we constantly keep our policies and systems under review.

Universal Credit is a modern, flexible benefit responding effectively to economic conditions, providing a safety net for millions in the wake of the pandemic. In 2021/22 we will spend over £111bn on working age welfare, equivalent to 4.9% of GDP (GB).

The temporary uplift was part of a support package that has lasted beyond the end of restrictions. Our focus now is on our multi-billion pound Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[44488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of keeping the £20 uplift to universal credit in place to support households in receipt of that benefit.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made. The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced with the success of the vaccine rollout. Now the economy is reopening and as we continue to progress with our recovery our focus is on helping people back into work.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; we have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job; and introduced Restart which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year. Our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

■ Universal Credit: Coventry

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[45138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the effect of ending the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit on recipients of that benefit in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made. The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced with the success of the vaccine rollout. Now the economy is reopening and as we continue to progress with our recovery our focus is on helping people back into work.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; we have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job; and introduced Restart which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year. Our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

■ Universal Credit: Key Workers

Caroline Lucas:

[\[41810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what data her Department holds on which sectors universal credit claimants work in; what estimate she has made of the number of claimants classified as critical workers who will receive a £20 a week reduction to their universal credit income; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. We do not systematically collect data on the employment sector background of UC claimants because this does not affect entitlement to UC.

■ Universal Credit: Southport**Damien Moore:**[\[36745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of claimants who will be affected by the ending of the £20 top-up in universal credit in autumn 2021 in Southport.

Will Quince:

There are currently around 4.2 million households in receipt of a temporarily higher level of UC. It is not possible to produce a robust estimate of how many people will be affected by the removal of the £20 uplift due to uncertainty around the speed of the economic recovery and the resulting effect on the caseload.

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced with the success of the vaccine rollout. Now the economy is reopening and as we continue to progress with our recovery our focus is on helping people back into work.

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■ Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme**Kirsty Blackman:**[\[41883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the letter dated 27 July 2021 from the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work to the hon. Member for Aberdeen North, reference MC2021/53746, what progress the Government has made on clarifying the wording on the gov.uk website with regards to submitting a claim to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme on behalf of a deceased person.

Justin Tomlinson:

The work to clarifying the wording on the gov.uk website with regards to submitting a claim to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme on behalf of a deceased person will be concluded this week (w/c13/09) and revised information will be available from w/c 20th of September

Kirsty Blackman:[\[41884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been made to the Vaccine Damages Payment Scheme on behalf of deceased individuals who received a covid-19 vaccination.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme has received 27 claims in respect of vaccination against COVID-19 where a Date of Death has been provided by the claimant.

Kirsty Blackman:[\[41885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applications have been made to the Vaccine Damages Payment Scheme on behalf of people who are deceased in each of the last five years; and how many of those applications have been resolved with a full payment being made.

Justin Tomlinson:

Between April 2016 to 08/09/2021 there have been 33 claims made to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme on behalf of people who have died. No payments have been awarded on these cases.

YEAR	NO OF CLAIMS	
2016/17	1	No payment
2017/18	2	No payment
2018/19	1	No payment
2019/20	0	No payment
2020/21	5	No payment
2121/22 (up to and including 08/09/2021)	24	No payment

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[41886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an online form for the Vaccine Damages Payment Scheme.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is currently looking at how it can improve the operational aspects of the scheme to make the application process simpler, swifter and more accessible for claimants this review will include consideration of an online claim form.

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[41887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of updating the gov.uk webpage for the Vaccine Damages Payment Scheme to provide (a) an estimate for how long it may take for an application to that scheme to be acknowledged and decided upon and (b) separate forms for people who have (i) died and (ii) been disabled as a result of receiving a vaccination.

Justin Tomlinson:

All claimant to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme have their claims acknowledged upon receipt by the Vaccine Damage Payment Unit. As each claim requires medical record to be gathered, causation links to be established and disability assessments to be undertaken. It is not possible to provide a defined timeframe for the period in which a claim can be decided.

The Government are currently looking at how it can improve the operational aspects of the scheme to make the application process simpler, swifter and more accessible for claimants this review will include a review of the application form.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **DCMS Contingencies Fund Advance**

Minister of State for Digital and Culture (Caroline Dinenage): [\[HCWS283\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of all members of this House to give notice of a Contingencies Fund Advance for the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme.

A requirement for a Contingencies Fund Advance has arisen due to the need for the government to partner with the insurance industry to deliver a Live Events Reinsurance Scheme.

The scheme will support live events across the country - such as live music shows, music festivals, sporting and business events - that are at risk of being halted or delayed due to an inability to obtain this insurance. HMG is partnering with insurers to offer a cost indemnification insurance scheme which will make cover available against the cancellation, postponement, relocation or abandonment of events due to new UK Civil Authority restrictions in response to Covid-19. Cover will be available to purchase alongside standard commercial events insurance for an additional premium. The duration of the cover will be from September 2021 to 30th September 2022, with a review in the first half of 2022.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £14,000,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £14,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

This scheme will support the UK's economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis by giving events the confidence they need to plan for the future, whilst also ensuring that we deliver value for money for taxpayers.

■ **Reporting Contingent Liabilities in Relation to the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme**

Minister of State for Digital and Culture (Caroline Dinenage): [\[HCWS284\]](#)

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of all members of this House to bring to their attention the Departmental Minute issued today that provides the House with notice of a contingent liability created by my Department. This is in relation to the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme.

The Live Events Reinsurance Scheme was announced by the government on 5 August 2021 and will support live events across the country - such as live music shows, music festivals, sporting and business events - that are at risk of being halted or delayed due to an inability to obtain this insurance. HMG is partnering with insurers to offer a cost indemnification insurance scheme which will make cover available against the cancellation, postponement, relocation or abandonment of events due to new UK Civil

Authority restrictions in response to Covid-19. Cover will be available to purchase alongside standard commercial events insurance for an additional premium. The duration of the cover will be from September 2021 to 30 September 2022.

Based on the risk share set out and the initial appetite put forward by insurers, the scheme will create £750m of cover at any one time, although this could increase if there is market demand and insurer willingness to offer more cover. The scheme's lifetime exposure is unlimited. To retain control over the fiscal risk, government has retained the right to stop writing new cover at any time, built in a review point in the first half of 2022 and is requiring any individual insurer to seek explicit permission ahead of exceeding a net exposure of £400m or more.

It is normal when reporting contingent liabilities to provide 14 working days' notice before the liability is incurred. There is an exception in cases of special urgency. This is one such occasion. In order to ensure that event organisers have the confidence to plan ahead it is important that we launch this scheme in early September.

A copy of the Departmental Minute is being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.