



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:43 P.M., 14 September 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.
 Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Carbon Emissions: Costs

Virginia Crosbie: [\[45954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the (a) supporting data and (b) costs for each of the decarbonising policies being proposed by the Government to achieve net zero by 2050; and what estimate he has made of the cost of achieving net zero by 2050.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

There is inherent uncertainty in any cost estimate for the thirty-year transition to net zero, but it is clear the cost of inaction is much higher than the cost of action on climate change. The Stern Review estimated the impacts of unmitigated climate change at equivalent to 5-20% of global GDP.

Ahead of COP26, the Government has committed to publish a Net Zero Strategy, setting out the Government's vision for the transition to a net zero economy and outlining our path to meet the UK's emissions targets. HM Treasury are also conducting a review on the costs of reaching net zero, to inform the Government's approach to achieving a transition in a way that works for households, businesses and public finances, and maximises growth opportunities.

■ Cobham: Sales

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[45807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the compatibility of the sale of over half of the value of Cobham by the US private equity firm, Advent, and the agreement between the Government and Advent.

Paul Scully:

The Government has worked with Advent to monitor compliance with the undertakings given at the time of their acquisition of Cobham, including commitments to give advanced notice of plans to sell parts of the business.

■ Energy: Finance

Catherine West: [\[43605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the IEA report entitled Net Zero by 2050, A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector, published in May 2021, what steps he plans to take in response to the recommendation there should be no new investments in oil and gas production fields, coal mines or unabated coal power plants beyond 2021.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As we move towards net-zero, oil and gas will play a smaller, but still an important role in meeting UK energy demand. All scenarios proposed by the Climate Change Committee setting out how we could meet our 2050 net zero emissions target include continuing demand for oil and natural gas.

The IEA report acknowledges that continued investment in existing sources of hydrocarbons will be required to meet the world's energy demands on the pathway to net zero.

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 this checkpoint by the end of 2021.

In relation to coal powered generation, in June, we announced the deadline for phasing out unabated coal generation in Great Britain will be brought forward to 1 October 2024 as part of our drive to go further and faster in decarbonising the power sector as we work towards net zero emissions by 2050.

■ Environment Protection: Disadvantaged and Low Incomes**Catherine West:**[\[44413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, what steps the Government is taking to support (a) low-income and (b) vulnerable families under that plan.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Ten Point Plan is part of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's mission to level up across the country, mobilising £12 billion of government investment to create and support up to 250,000 highly-skilled green jobs in the UK, and spur over three times as much private sector investment by 2030.

At every step on the path to Net Zero, we will put affordability and fairness at the heart of our reforms.

■ Fuel Poverty: Scottish Highlands**Drew Hendry:**[\[45869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on levels of fuel poverty of the removal of the £20 universal credit uplift in the Scottish Highlands.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government recognises that the £20 Universal Credit uplift has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic. We announced the temporary uplift as part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22. Our focus is now on our multi-billion 'Plan for Jobs', which will support

people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills, increase their hours, or find new work.

Home energy and fuel poverty policy are matters devolved to the Scottish Parliament. However, until the Scottish Government has built the capacity to replace them, Cold Weather Payments, Winter Fuel Payments continue to be UK Government provision in Scotland. The Energy Company Obligation and Warm Home Discount will continue to apply across Great Britain until at least March 2022

■ **Manufacturing Industries: Conditions of Employment**

Catherine West: [\[43609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to improve the rights of factory workers.

Paul Scully:

We have already taken steps to improve the rights of workers by legislating to close a loophole which sees agency workers employed on cheaper rates than permanent workers, by quadrupling the maximum fine for employers who treat their workers badly, and by giving all workers the right to receive a statement of their rights from day one. On top of this, in the past year alone, the Government has taken action to support workers by increasing pay for around 2 million workers and enabling workers to carry over more annual leave, due to the pandemic.

The Government also spends around £35 million on state enforcement of employment rights for vulnerable workers. Over the past year, a multiagency taskforce (Operation TACIT) has been operating in Leicester to tackle allegation of abuse in the city's garment factories, which has visited over 300 premises and taken appropriate enforcement action where necessary, as well as working with Leicester City Council to engage with the community and increase whistleblower confidence.

■ **Offshore Industry: Procurement**

Alex Cunningham: [\[44337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he expects to appoint a Supply Chain Champion for the offshore oil and gas sector.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Through the North Sea Transition Deal, the offshore oil and gas sector committed to appointing an industry supply chain champion to co-ordinate business opportunities with other energy sectors. Good progress has been made on this and an announcement is expected soon.

■ **Oil: Shetland**

Catherine West: [\[43602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the environmental impact of the Cambo oilfield in Scotland.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Environmental Statement submitted by Siccar Point Energy E&P Limited considers the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project of the Cambo Phase 1 Field Development. That Environmental Statement is currently being assessed by the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning (OPRED) in accordance with the Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Unloading and Storage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2020.

Catherine West:[\[43603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the compatibility of the Cambo oilfield in Scotland with the UK's upcoming role as President of the COP26 summit.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The development proposal from Cambo is being scrutinised in line with robust regulatory procedures and no decision has yet been taken by OGA yet.

The UK is leading the way in the energy transition and this year the UK published the North Sea Transition Deal – the UK is the only G7 country to have agreed a landmark deal to support the oil and gas industry's transition to green energy by 2050 while at the same time supporting 40,000 jobs.

■ Pregnancy: Employment**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[43624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the oral Answer of the Minister for Equalities on 26 May 2021, Official Report, column 356, what actions have resulted from the establishment of the roundtable with the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to discuss pregnancy and maternity discrimination.

Paul Scully:

Since May, we have held a series of stakeholder meetings with key organisations from business and family/women's representative groups to discuss the issues which pregnant women and new mothers can face in the workplace. These have focused on what an Advisory Board can usefully add to other work in this area – such as the Government's commitment to extend the redundancy protection currently offered to someone on maternity leave into a period of return to work. The first full meeting of the Board will take place later in September and will agree Terms of Reference and the forward work programme.

■ UK Trade with EU: Carbon Emissions**Rachael Maskell:**[\[43565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what alternatives to a Carbon Border Tax or a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism she is considering to incentivise behaviour change in producers and manufacturers.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As set out in our Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, we are continuing to assess a range of potential options on the issue of carbon leakage. We will be publishing more analysis on the possible risks of carbon leakage to the UK and possible mitigation options in due course.

The UK's ambitious carbon pricing mechanism - including our new UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) and Carbon Price Support mechanism – is also a fundamental component of our Strategy. We are committed to reviewing the UK ETS to ensure it aligns with our Net Zero commitments. This will include reviewing our current approach to providing at risk sectors with free allocations.

Rachael Maskell:[\[43566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to propose a Carbon Border Tax or Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism at COP26; what steps he plans to take to ensure that companies pay for the carbon used in the production and manufacturing of imported goods to help prevent carbon leakage.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As set out in our Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, we are continuing to assess a range of potential options on the issue of carbon leakage. We will be publishing more analysis on the possible risks of carbon leakage to the UK and possible mitigation options in due course.

As incoming COP president and G7 president, our instinct is to work together with our international partners, including developed and developing countries, on how we tackle climate change together.

Rachael Maskell:[\[43568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 August 2021 to Question 33969 on EU External Trade: Carbon Emissions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of a carbon border tax or carbon border adjustment mechanism on tackling carbon used in the production and manufacturing of imported goods.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As set out in our Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, we are continuing to assess a range of potential options on the issue of carbon leakage. We will be publishing more analysis on the possible risks of carbon leakage to the UK and possible mitigation options in due course.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Electoral Commission**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[41660\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to strengthen the independence of the Electoral Commission.

Chloe Smith:

The public rightly expects efficient and independent regulation of the electoral system. The Government has proposed a series of measures in the Elections Bill that will facilitate parliamentary scrutiny of the Electoral Commission's work, while respecting their independence.

The Bill makes provisions for the introduction of a Strategy and Policy Statement that will set out guidance and principles, which the Commission will have to have regard to in the discharge of their functions. The Commission will remain independent and the Statement will not replace or undermine the Commission's other statutory duties. The Statement will also be subject to statutory consultation with the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, the Commission themselves and the Devolved Administrations before being submitted to parliamentary approval. The Statement will not affect the ability of the Commission to undertake enforcement activity as they see fit, having had regard to the Statement, but will ensure greater accountability to Parliament on how the Electoral Commission discharge their functions.

■ Government Departments: Flags

Justin Madders: [\[41910\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will list the companies that have supplied Union Jack flags to the Government since 2019.

Justin Madders: [\[41911\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and what proportion of the Union Jack flags purchased by the Government were manufactured in the UK in each of the last two years.

Julia Lopez:

Departments are responsible for their own procurement, therefore this information is not held centrally.

■ Infected Blood Inquiry

Holly Lynch: [\[43582\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his expected timetable is for publication of the final report of the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Penny Mordaunt:

The timetable for the Infected Blood Inquiry is a matter for Sir Brian Langstaff, the Chair of the independent statutory Inquiry. Sir Brian has said that the work of the Inquiry will be completed as quickly as reasonable thoroughness permits - recognising that those infected and affected are still suffering today.

The Inquiry is continuing to work at pace, and will hear evidence and presentations between now and December 2021. Further details on progress can be found on the Infected Blood Inquiry website - <https://www.infectedbloodinquiry.org.uk/>.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ Churches: Repairs and Maintenance****Alexander Stafford:****[45956]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what most recent financial estimates the Church of England holds on the outstanding cost of fabric repairs to its parish churches.

Andrew Selous:

Fluctuating material costs and the availability of specialist workers affect cost estimates significantly, so it is difficult to give a precise figure.

It is estimated, based on available architectural inspections and costed works, that the outstanding capital cost of all repairs over the next five years is close to £1bn for our 16,000 parish churches, or around £200m a year.

At best parishes currently raise and spend approximately half of that annually, so there remains a significant and growing maintenance deficit on these beautiful and treasured buildings.

England's Anglican cathedrals were surveyed in 2019 to establish their repair and maintenance liabilities and from that it is estimated that these 42 buildings require £140m in the next five years in maintenance and repair. This estimate does not include precinct properties.

Alexander Stafford:**[45957]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church of England spent on the maintenance and repair of its parish churches in the financial year 2019-20.

Andrew Selous:

A comprehensive record of maintenance and repair spend is not held centrally, as all parishes operate as independent entities. However it is estimated that parish communities spent at least £130m a year pre-pandemic on church building projects, including repair and maintenance, conservation of collections such as manuscripts, silver and textiles, improvements to accessibility and environmental sustainability, and inclusion of community facilities such as toilets and kitchens. Specialist building

firms, craftspeople, archaeologists, conservators and others rely on churches to provide them with work and a training ground for passing their skills on to apprentices and trainees.

The vast majority of this money is raised locally and we are grateful to national bodies such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, National Churches Trust, Wolfson Foundation and Pilgrim Trust, who continue to provide essential grants. The overall maintenance deficit continues to grow since the ending of the dedicated places of worship repair scheme in 2017.

COP26

■ Air Pollution: Health Hazards

Geraint Davies:

[\[45794\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in other countries on the effects of air quality on health.

Alok Sharma:

By tackling the causes of climate change, we can also reduce the impacts of poor air quality on premature deaths throughout the world. Through our COP26 campaigns, we are seeking closer integration with public health objectives to facilitate a global green, healthy and sustainable recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic.

Through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the COP26 Unit is engaging with countries on the COP26 Health Programme which supports increased ambition on climate change and health, including the relationship with air quality. The engagements also highlight the opportunity for the health sector to reduce carbon emissions in a way that also improves air quality. The government is also working with non-governmental organisations, including the World Health Organisation, to engage with health professionals internationally to advocate for stronger climate action, including addressing the health impacts from air quality.

■ Air Pollution: Pollution Control

Ruth Jones:

[\[44441\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, whether tackling toxic air is part of his priorities for the COP26 summit.

Alok Sharma:

For COP26, countries are being asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 Green House Gas emissions reduction targets that align with reaching net zero by the middle of the century. To deliver on these stretching targets, countries will need to accelerate the global phase out of coal, encourage renewables deployment, curtail deforestation, and speed up the switch to electric vehicles.

By tackling the causes of climate change, we can also reduce the impacts of poor air quality on premature deaths throughout the world. As set out in its NDC the UK supports and is pushing for decarbonisation approaches that strive to improve air quality and minimise adverse impacts on human health. Our domestic policy pathway will be outlined in the UK's Net Zero Strategy which will be published ahead of COP26.

Through our COP26 campaigns, we are seeking closer integration with public health objectives to facilitate a global green, healthy and sustainable recovery from the COVID 19 pandemic.

■ Fossil Fuels: Exploration

Ruth Jones:

[\[44442\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) the EU, (b) the US, (c) China, (d) Australia and (e) the African Union on ending the exploration and licensing of new fossil fuel supplies.

Alok Sharma:

Accelerating the global energy transition from coal to clean power is a top priority of the UK COP26 Presidency. We have engaged the EU, US, China, Australia, and African countries, amongst others, to encourage ambitious action on the transition away from fossil fuels to clean power and to increase international cooperation to speed this change.

We launched the Energy Transition Council to bring together the political, financial and technical leaders of the global power sector to ensure that clean power is the most attractive option for new power generation for all countries. The Council engages with over twenty countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, and North America. We have pushed many developed economies to end public support to fossil fuels overseas, to match UK policy.

■ Grasslands: Biodiversity and Climate Change

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[44272\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, what steps he is taking to encourage effective discussion on the role of grasslands in biodiversity protection and climate heating mitigation and adaptation at the upcoming COP26 summit.

Alok Sharma:

Through our COP26 Nature Campaign, we are advancing work in four core areas; tackling the drivers of deforestation, promoting sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture, mobilising increased and more targeted finance for nature, and driving political ambition on nature.

On Nature Day at COP26, we are creating several opportunities to drive international action on all areas of biodiversity, including grasslands. The UK's top priority is to agree on a strong post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. We will be pushing countries to make ambitious commitments to curb the dual crisis of biodiversity loss

and climate change. This will put us on a path to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and mitigate the climate crisis.

DEFENCE

■ Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition

Mr Mark Francois: [\[44223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the cost of a round of 7.62mm machine gun ammunition as used on the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[44224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the cost of a round of 155mm high explosive artillery ammunition used by the AS-90 howitzer.

Jeremy Quin:

I am withholding the unit cost as its disclosure may prejudice commercial interests.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Dave Doogan: [\[45921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) financial penalties or (b) liquidated damages General Dynamics are liable for as a result of the delays in the Ajax contract.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 9 September 2021 to question 37376 to the right hon. Member for Rayleigh & Wickford (Mr Francois).

Attachments:

1. 37376 - Ajax Vehicles; Procurement [UIN 37376.docx]

■ Boeing E-3: Sales

Mr Mark Francois: [\[44210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft were first advertised for potential sale on the Defence Equipment Sales Authority website.

Jeremy Quin:

The E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft were first advertised for potential sale through the Defence Equipment Sales Authority on the Gov.UK website in their online brochure published on 6 September 2021.

■ Defence: Procurement

John Healey: [\[45803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister for Defence Procurement of 8 June 2021, Official Report, column 823, on the Ajax Programme, how many projects the Senior Responsible Owner referred to is responsible for.

Jeremy Quin:

As I stated in my written statement on 6 September, we have identified the need for a full time, dedicated Senior Responsible Owner for AJAX who will preferably be able to see the project through to completion and a short-list of candidates is currently under consideration.

The current Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the Armoured Cavalry Programme (including AJAX) is the Army's Director Support. This position oversees in-service land equipment and was previously also SRO for the Armoured Infantry Programme, including the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Iron and Steel

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[44200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether UK steel will be used in each of the four designs for the Fleet Solid Support Ship.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 7 June 2021, to Question number 7747.

Attachments:

1. 7747 - Fleet Solid Support Ships; Iron and Steel [UIN 7747.docx]

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[44199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of jobs created by each of the four Fleet-Solid Support Ship designs.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[44201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what social value measure will be applied to the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[44203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the importance of the prosperity agenda in relation to the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract.

Jeremy Quin:

The final contract for the manufacture of the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ships will be awarded to a UK business, either solely or as part of a consortium, and a significant proportion of the build work will be carried out in the UK. We will seek to deliver UK social value in recognition of the opportunities for prosperity and levelling-up that the programme presents. The FSS competition seeks to maximise the social value contribution shipbuilding can make in the UK, including encouraging investment in domestic shipyards, whilst balancing the need to deliver value for money and a solution that fully meets the requirements of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. We are confident the programme will support jobs and skills, but until we reach the main

investment decision it is too early to give any estimates of the number of jobs that may be created or sustained by the programme.

■ **Gurkhas: Pensions**

Stephen Morgan: [\[44432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to meet Gurkha veterans' representative groups to discuss the effects of historical pension inequality; and if he will make a statement.

Leo Docherty:

I can confirm that the Secretary of State, and I, met with a wide range of Gurkha representative groups and representatives from the Nepali Embassy, including the Nepali Ambassador, on 8 September 2021. We agreed to start the Bilateral Committee to discuss all Gurkha Veteran Welfare issues in December. The Committee will be an opportunity to discuss Gurkha welfare concerns across the board.

It remains this Government's view that the pension schemes offered to Gurkha veterans in the past were very fair schemes.

■ **Hercules Aircraft: Sales**

Mr Mark Francois: [\[44212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when the RAF C-130J Hercules aircraft were first advertised for potential sale on the Defence Equipment Sales Authority website.

Jeremy Quin:

RAF C-130J Hercules aircraft were first advertised for potential sale through the Defence Equipment Sales Authority on the Gov.UK website in their online brochure published on 6 September 2021.

■ **Military Aid**

Emily Thornberry: [\[43445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many overseas requests for military training and other capacity building assistance to be provided on location in the requesting country have been (a) approved and (b) declined by his Department in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20, and (vi) 2020-21.

James Heapey:

The number of training and capacity building activities delivered overseas each year is set out in the table below. The information reflects the number of activities rather than the number of participants.

Given requests for assistance come from a variety of places we do not keep a record of the number we have rejected.

FINANCIAL YEAR	NO. OF ACTIVITIES
2015/16	508
2016/17	556
2017/18	541
2018/19	649
2019/20	649
2020/21	282

Emily Thornberry:[\[43446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many overseas requests for case-specific military and security assistance have been (a) approved and (b) declined by his Department in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

James Heappey:

The number of activities assessed to fall within the scope of “military and security assistance” is set out below for each year. [This covers a variety of categories of assistance, ranging for example from development of infrastructure to logistical support to provision of defence advisers or other embedded personnel. The figures exclude certain international activities conducted primarily in support of direct UK interests, such as exercises and operations.]

Given requests for assistance come from a variety of places we do not keep a record of the number we have rejected.

FINANCIAL YEAR	NO. OF ACTIVITIES
2015/16	523
2016/17	393
2017/18	293
2018/19	354
2019/20	352
2020/21	318

■ National Flagship

Emily Thornberry: [\[40765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which agency produced the artist's impression of the future national flagship, released to the media on 30 May 2021; and how much was spent from the public purse on the production of that image.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: The artist's impression of the National Flagship released to the media on 30 May 2021 was not produced by a Government agency and no cost to the public purse was incurred.

■ Royal Yacht

Alan Brown: [\[40987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the crew allocation for the proposed Royal Yacht.

Alan Brown: [\[40990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will provide details of the (a) specification development, (b) tender and award process, (c) construction, (d) commissioning and handover and (e) other aspects of the procurement programme for the proposed new Royal Yacht.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: Details of the first phase of the competition to design the National Flagship were set out in a Contract Notice published on 19 July 2021. Further details will be made available to industrial partners that express an interest in bidding for phase 1 of the National Flagship design competition. Premature disclosure of this information, or of that pertaining to later stages of the procurement, would be prejudicial to the commercial interests of the Ministry of Defence and its industrial partners and I am therefore withholding it at this time.

The crew allocation of the ship will be dependent upon the selected design.

■ Shipbuilding

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[44202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's timescale is for the publication of the National Shipbuilding Strategy refresh document.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on Wednesday 8 September to Question 43387 to the hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (Mr John Healey).

Attachments:

1. 43387 - Shipbuilding [43387 - Shipbuilding.docx]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Charities: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:**[\[43559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the ability of charities to conduct fundraising activities.

Matt Warman:

Charities and volunteers have played a huge role in the national effort against coronavirus. We recognise that the restrictions that have been necessary over the last year have impacted on the ability of many in the charity and social enterprise sectors to generate income, including from fundraising. We continue to assess the impact of the pandemic on the sector, drawing on a range of sources of intelligence and data.

Government has worked with the Fundraising Regulator and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising to produce guidance around safe fundraising practises, in line with Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and subsequent lifting of restrictions. This [guidance](#) was produced to allow the sector to maximise opportunities for fundraising activities to take place at all stages of the pandemic, in a safe and responsible way. My officials will continue to work with the Fundraising Regulator and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising to support safe and responsible fundraising to take place, recognising that this will be vital in helping charities to rebuild their income streams in the months ahead.

■ Charities: Finance**Rachael Maskell:**[\[43564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the £750 million allocated by the Government to support the charitable sector on 8 April 2020 that has been returned to Her Majesty's Treasury as a result of underspending.

Matt Warman:

Of the £750 million package for charities and voluntary organisations, £200 million was allocated to the Department for Health and Social Care specifically for hospices, and £60 million was allocated to the Devolved Administrations. £160 million was distributed by a range of government departments to organisations working in their sectors.

In total, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) was responsible for administering £347 million (which includes £17 million additional funding in relation to the Big Night In).

As at the end of the first quarter of 2021/22, £0.19 million has been identified as underspend from the funding administered by DCMS. A small number of grants are not closed down so it is possible that additional underspends may arise.

■ Cultural Heritage: North Yorkshire

Daisy Cooper: [\[43682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with Historic England on the preservation of significant Roman ruins including those at Eastfield in North Yorkshire.

Caroline Dinenage:

Roman ruins of national importance may be protected by the Secretary of State as Scheduled Monuments. Before doing so, he consults Historic England.

In the case of the currently unscheduled ruins discovered at Eastfield, Historic England has negotiated with Keepmoat Homes, the developer, to secure their short-term preservation as part of public open space within the 'Capella' housing scheme. Once the core area of the ruins is clearly defined and reburied, the Secretary of State will consider the case for designating them as a Scheduled Monument in order to help secure their protection and long-term preservation.

■ Telecommunications Systems

Dame Meg Hillier: [\[45815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department has taken to help people without a broadband connection prepare for the closure of the public switched telephone network in 2025.

Matt Warman:

The Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) is privately owned, and the process for its closure is industry-led. The PSTN closure will be undertaken in a phased approach with areas shutting down over the coming years with the final exchange expected to turn off in 2025.

While PSTN withdrawal is an industry-led process, the Government and Ofcom are working together to ensure consumers and sectors are protected and prepared for the withdrawal process.

The PSTN network will be replaced with new All-IP technology - such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). This technology is higher quality and more reliable than the existing PSTN network and will guarantee a better quality of service. All-IP requires a stable internet connection of approximately 0.5Mbps. Where it is not possible to deliver such a service to a premise, the service provider will be required to offer an alternative technological solution - such as Single Order Generic Ethernet Access (SoGEA).

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

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

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

If an individual is concerned about the PSTN withdrawal process, or would like further information, they should contact their telecoms service provider who will be able to provide specific support.

EDUCATION

■ Advisory Services: Young People

Steve Reed:

[\[44354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data his Department holds on local authority provision of integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for young people aged between 13 and 19.

Nick Gibb:

The Government does not hold data on local provision relating to personal development of young people. All schools must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, and which prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. It is important that schools' provision helps young people to develop as rounded individuals. This is addressed through subjects such as citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education. The Department also expects schools to provide pupils with a range of extra-curricular activities to help further their development. Some of this will be provided by local authorities, but the Department does not hold this information centrally.

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

Schools and colleges have flexibility over how they deliver their curriculum and extra-curricular programme, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

■ Assessments: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[45876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether pupils will be required to self-fund (a) A level and (b) GCSE exams that they plan to resit in Autumn 2021.

Nick Gibb:

The autumn exam series will give students who may wish to improve their summer GCSE, A level or maths and science AS level teacher assessed grade the opportunity to do so.

The Department has set out in guidance that centres are expected to fund their autumn fees from exam fee rebates. We confirmed that we will support centres where exam fees exceed their summer rebate. Students at state-funded centres and private candidates should therefore not be required to cover the cost of exam entry fees for the autumn series.

The Department is also providing an extensive autumn exam support service to help centres with essential additional costs associated with running exams in the autumn, including assistance with costs for additional venue space and invigilation. In addition, this year the Department is providing funding for invigilator training, and funding venue and invigilation costs for condition of funding students.

The autumn series exams are open to any student who receives a teacher-assessed grade this summer, or who an exam board reasonably believes would have entered the summer 2021 exams had they taken place. This includes private candidates. In addition, any student who was aged at least 16 on 31 August 2021 can take the GCSE English language and maths exams in the November series, as is normally the case if required as a condition of funding.

It is at the discretion of independent schools whether to charge fees for entries to autumn exams.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series/centre-responsibility-for-autumn-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series-guidance>.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[43555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason younger children are excluded from the requirement for covid-19 testing when they have been in contact with someone who has had a positive covid-19 test.

Nick Gibb:

Young people are not excluded from testing. The Government's priority is to ensure that protective measures, such as testing, help keep children and staff safe and minimise disruption to face to face education and childcare.

Since Monday 16 August, people who are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 and 6 months are no longer legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. Instead, they are advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible to check if they have COVID-19 and for variants of concern.

Children under 5 who are identified as close contacts are only advised to take a PCR test if the positive case is in their own household as they are likely to find the testing process unpleasant. Recent clinical studies have also shown that children are at very low risk of serious illness if they catch COVID-19. Testing is voluntary but parents and carers are strongly encouraged to participate as testing helps to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in nurseries through asymptomatic transmission.

■ Children's Centres

Feryal Clark: [\[44461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of Sure Start centres that have (a) closed and (b) reduced the services they provide since 2010.

Vicky Ford:

Based on the information supplied by local authorities as of 31 August 2021, there were 3,000 Sure Start children's centres and sites open to families and children providing children's centre services as part of a network. A total of 637 centres had closed since 2010^[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.

■ Education: Finance

Helen Hayes: [\[43591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Chancellor and (b) Prime Minister on the potential merits of providing additional funding for education recovery from the covid-19 outbreak as part of the Spending Review.

Nick Gibb:

Since June 2020, the Department has announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery, including over £950 million of flexible funding to schools and £1.5 billion for national tutoring.

The Government will consider what more needs to be done in the context of the forthcoming Spending Review, including a review of time spent in school and 16-19 education and the impact this could have on children and young people's attainment and wellbeing.

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[43707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the adequacy of funding for education recovery from the covid-19 outbreak; and what (a) support and (b) resources he is providing to teachers and schools to assist with (i) recovery from the covid-19 outbreak and (ii) catch-up learning.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has announced significant investment of over £3 billion in education recovery funding to support children and young people to make up for education lost during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes over £950 million worth of funding direct to schools and a significant expansion of our tutoring programmes.

The Department has supported the Oak National Academy, helping schools to provide high quality online lessons, including making resources available online throughout the summer holidays.

Alongside this, the Department provided additional targeted funding to support schools through the exceptional costs fund, the COVID-19 workforce fund, and additional support to provide free school meals to eligible pupils.

Through an investment of more than £400 million, the Department has provided internet access and over 1.35 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people. We will continue to provide internet access for disadvantaged pupils whose face-to-face education is disrupted during the Autumn term.

In May 2021, the Department announced a further £17 million towards improving mental health and wellbeing support in schools and colleges. This is in addition to the £79 million announced in March 2021.

The Department continues to discuss education recovery across Government and in the context of the Spending Review.

■ Education: Internet

Daisy Cooper:

[\[43676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what framework he used to determine which digital platforms are included in his Department's Constituency framework: education and childcare setting (excluding universities) guidance.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[43677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to review and update the list of digital platforms that are included in his Department's Constituency framework: education and childcare setting (excluding universities) guidance.

Nick Gibb:

The updated Contingency Framework sets out the expectation that schools and colleges should offer remote education to any pupils unable to attend in person. It does not refer to specific platforms but does signpost the Department's 'Get help with remote education' service which provides information, guidance and support on setting up remote education.

This includes the Department's continued work with Google and Microsoft providers to deliver the Digital Education Platforms programme. The programme provides Government funded support for schools and colleges to get set up on one of two free to use digital platforms, which includes G Suite for Education (Google Classroom), and Office 365 Education (Microsoft Teams). The Microsoft and Google platforms were chosen as they are free to use to the education sector and had the unified technology and support to set up and deliver effective remote education provision.

The funding covers the technical set up of the platform including all staff and pupil accounts.

■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus**Daisy Cooper:**[\[43678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of germicidal ultraviolet air disinfection on tackling the spread of covid-19 in schools and other educational settings.

Nick Gibb:

A trial of air cleaning devices in 30 schools in Bradford has recently been launched. It includes upper room ultraviolet and high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) devices to help understand their effectiveness. The Department for Education will monitor the outcomes from the trial.

Additionally, the Department has announced that CO2 monitors will be provided this term to state-funded nurseries, schools and colleges, backed by £25 million in government funding.

The new monitors will enable staff to identify areas where ventilation needs to be improved and provide reassurance that existing ventilation measures are working, helping balance the need for good ventilation with keeping classrooms warm.

■ Free School Meals: Enfield North**Feryal Clark:**[\[44462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many meals were delivered to children eligible for free school meals over the 2021 school summer holidays in Enfield North constituency.

Vicky Ford:

Schools provide free school meals for eligible pupils during term time only. Beyond that, billions of pounds of welfare assistance is in place to support families, young people and children.

The department has significantly expanded the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme with a £220 million investment in 2021, building on the pilot programme that has been in place since 2018. The programme ran in every English local authority this summer holiday, providing healthy nutritious food and enriching activities to eligible children.

In addition, the Covid Local Support Grant established by the Department for Work and Pensions, operated through local authorities in England, is there to support the hardest hit families and individuals with food and essential utility costs.

This grant was extended with a further investment of £160 million, to cover the period up to 30 September 2021. This grant is further to the £269 million invested since the scheme (previously known as the Covid Winter Grant Scheme) launched in December 2020. Local authorities have discretion to decide how to allocate this government funding in their areas, recognising that they are best placed to understand local needs.

Further Education: Internet

Peter Kyle: [\[45890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 42022 on Schools: Internet, how many further education colleges lack full-fibre internet connectivity (a) nationally, (b) regionally and (c) by local authority.

Gillian Keegan:

All further education (FE) colleges in England have a full-fibre internet connection. All except one are connected via the Janet network, which is funded by the Department for Education and college subscriptions.

288 FE providers in England, including FE colleges, sixth-form colleges and Independent Specialist Providers are connected via Janet. Janet also connects all FE and higher education establishments across the UK. The majority of colleges already have a 1 gigabyte per second connection and work is ongoing to provide this to all colleges.

The exception, the City of Liverpool College, has a full fibre connection via the local council.

Further Education: Public Bodies

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[45097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what body is responsible for assessing whether colleges have failed in their legal duty under section 45 of the Education Act 1997.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[45959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of colleges in discharging their legal duty under section 45 of the Education Act 1997.

Gillian Keegan:

Under Section 125 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Ofsted are required to comment on the careers guidance provided at colleges to 16 to 18 year olds and students aged up to 25 with an education, health and care plan as part of their inspection reports. As part of the Education Inspection Framework, Ofsted will also inspect and comment on careers advice when inspecting other further education and skills providers.

The 'Careers Education in England' report, published by the Careers and Enterprise Company in 2020, shows that since the launch of the government's careers strategy in 2017, careers education performance in schools and colleges has consistently improved across all measures. On average, schools and colleges were found to meet 3.75 of the Gatsby benchmarks, compared to 1.87 in the 2016/17 academic year. We are also seeing accelerated progress for schools and colleges in the enterprise adviser network and in careers hubs.

■ GCE A-level

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[44233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the high level of A*s at A-level on university admissions for students.

Michelle Donelan:

Students can and should feel proud of their results this year. The 2021 admissions cycle saw a large increase in applications from English students compared with 2020 and 2019 and the latest data (as at 28 days after A level results day) shows record numbers of English students have been accepted to higher education (HE). The number of English students being placed onto their first choice is up by more than 26,000, or 9% compared with 2020. 24% of disadvantaged English 18-year-olds were accepted to HE this year. This is up from 23.3% in 2020.

■ Higher Education: Finance

Sam Tarry:

[\[44471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect that the reduction to the Strategic Priorities Grant allocated to universities and higher education colleges for the 2021-22 financial year will have on students in London.

Michelle Donelan:

In January 2021, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, asked the Office for Students (OfS) to reform the Strategic Priorities Grant for the academic

year 2021/22. The Strategic Priorities Grant is a limited funding pot provided by government to support the provision of higher education. Reprioritisation of this funding is needed to ensure value for money, and support strategic priorities across the sector, including provision of courses vital for the economy and labour markets, and continued support for disadvantaged students and underrepresented groups. The reforms for 2021/22 included the removal of the London Weighting element of the grant.

The OfS consulted on the Secretary of State for Education's proposals and has recently published its conclusions^[1]. The consultation responses were carefully analysed, and the issues raised were considered by both the OfS and the Secretary of State for Education in reaching their respective decisions about the allocation of the Strategic Priorities Grant for the 2021/22 academic year.

The London Weighting (additional grant money given to London-based providers to cover the higher costs of delivery in London) accounts for a small proportion of London-based providers' income. Providers in London received around £64 million London Weighting in the 2020/21 academic year, which is less than 1% of their estimated total income.

The removal of London Weighting is required to enable the reprioritisation of the Strategic Priorities Grant towards the provision of high-cost subjects that support the NHS and wider healthcare policy, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and specific labour market needs. As a result of these reforms, including the removal of London Weighting, total funding for high-cost subjects for the 2021/22 academic year, such as medicine and engineering, is 12% higher than last year, an increase of £81 million. This additional high-cost subject funding will be available to providers in London, supporting provision for London-based students.

[1] <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/consultation-on-recurrent-funding-for-2021-22/>

■ Lifelong Education

Stuart Anderson:

[43667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support the delivery of (a) adult education and (b) other lifelong learning programs.

Gillian Keegan:

We are 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 they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

Starting this year, the government is investing £2.5 billion in the National Skills Fund in England.

Since 1 April this year, the government is supporting any adult who does not have A-level equivalent or higher qualifications, to access over 400 fully 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, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. We are now expanding the Skills Bootcamp programme across the country during the 2021-22 financial year, with £43 million from the National Skills Fund.

As part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, from 2025 we will introduce a Lifelong Loan Entitlement equivalent to four 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.

■ Mathematics: Education

Stephen Timms:

[\[41615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to help increase the number of students studying mathematics at (a) A Level and (b) Higher Education.

Nick Gibb:

Mathematics remains the most popular A level subject with 19% more entries since 2010. There has been an increase in entries to both A level Mathematics and further Mathematics of 3.8% and 7.1% respectively since 2020.

The Department has reformed the curriculum for Mathematics so that it matches standards set in the highest performing jurisdictions internationally. A new, more challenging GCSE provides a better foundation to study these subjects at A level, and the reformed mathematics A levels ensure that students are prepared for higher education.

The Department funds a national network of 40 maths hubs across England to raise the standard of Mathematics education to meet the standards achieved in top-performing jurisdictions. Through a school-led model, maths hubs aim to harness Mathematics expertise within an area to develop and spread excellent practice in the teaching of Mathematics, for the benefit of all students.

The Department funds the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme (AMSP) to support schools and colleges to improve the effectiveness of level 3 Mathematics teaching and increase participation, including the provision of tailored support to schools and colleges in areas with low levels of progression.

The Government will nurture our top mathematical talent by delivering its commitment to have a 16-19 maths school in every region, 11 in total. The principal aim of maths

schools is to help prepare more of our most mathematically able students to succeed in maths disciplines at top universities and pursue mathematically intensive careers.

This is part of a range of initiatives to improve maths provision, including the AMSP and additional funding via the Advanced Maths Premium to support schools to increase A level maths participation. It will also complement the work of maths hubs.

The AMSP also provides targeted support for students preparing for study in higher education.

■ Mathematics: Higher Education

Helen Hayes:

[\[43587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of maths (a) undergraduates and (b) postgraduates in each of the last 10 years.

Michelle Donelan:

The Higher Education Statistics Agency collects and publishes statistics on enrolments obtained at UK Higher Education Providers. Latest statistics refer to the 2019/20 academic year.

The attached tables show the numbers of enrolments in mathematical sciences between the academic years 2010/11 and 2019/20. Information for 2019/20 is provided in a separate table due to the introduction of a new subject classification system, the Higher Education Classification of Subjects. Figures for 2019/20 are not directly comparable with previous years.

Attachments:

1. 43587_table [43587_table
_showing_enrolment_figures_for_mathematical_sciences.xls]

■ Music: Education

Andrew Lewer:

[\[43654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to confirm the funding allocation for Music Education Hubs beyond 2021-22; and for how many years future funding will be allocated.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has invested around £380 million of funding in music education hubs between 2016 and 2021, to ensure all children, whatever their background, have access to a high-quality music education. This has been followed by a commitment of £79 million in the 2021/22 financial year for music education hubs, and £1 million for charities focused on teaching music.

Decisions regarding future funding are subject to outcome of the next Spending Review. As announced on 7 September, the Spending Review will set Departmental budgets for the 2022/23 to 2024/25 financial years and concludes on 27 October

2021, alongside Autumn Budget 2021. Future funding for hubs will be confirmed subsequently.

Andrew Lewer:

[\[43655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will carry out a public consultation on the development of the new National Plan for Music Education.

Nick Gibb:

The Department undertook a public consultation between 9 February 2020 and 15 March 2020, seeking views on music education to inform proposals for the refreshed National Plan for Music Education (NPME).

The Department received 5,191 responses from a range of individuals and organisations, including young people, parents and carers, teachers and music education hubs. Following a delay due to COVID-19, we have published our response to the call for evidence, the findings from which will inform the refreshed plan.

To further support the development of the plan, the Department has announced the appointment of an advisory panel made up of experts from across the music education sector, to build upon these findings.

The advisory panel includes teachers, representatives from the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, UK Music, as well as Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England, whose independent Review of Music Education in England informed the original NPME.

■ Schools: Internet

Peter Kyle:

[\[45889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 42022, what the (a) local authority and (b) regional breakdown is of the schools not in postcodes that (i) have access to full fibre internet and (ii) proposed commercial build within the next five years.

Nick Gibb:

According to data from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 3,835 schools are in postcodes that do not have access to full fibre or are currently not in areas of proposed commercial build within the next 5 years. Around 2,000 of those schools are in scope of DCMS' Gigabit Hubs programme and so will have access to gigabit capable connectivity by 2025. These figures do not account for schools that have access to fibre through a private leased line arrangement to enable gigabit capable connectivity. The future build plans of telecoms providers are commercially sensitive. The Government are therefore unable to disclose regional or local authority level data.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Feryal Clark:

[\[43696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that children with special educational needs and disabilities (a) recover their lost learning and (b) are in receipt of adequate (i) wellbeing, (ii) development and (iii) education services in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We are committed to helping all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in all education settings, make up education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. We recognise that extended school and college restrictions have had a substantial impact on children and young people's learning, health and wellbeing, particularly for those with SEND. We are committed to supporting them and their families.

Since June 2020, we have announced more than £3 billion to support education recovery in schools, 16-19 providers, and early years settings, and this will have a material impact in closing gaps that have emerged.

We have consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings by providing additional uplifts both in the Catch-up Premium in the 2020/21 academic year and now the Recovery Premium in the 2021/22 academic year, in recognition of the significantly higher per pupil costs they face. In mainstream settings, school leaders are able to target these initiatives to vulnerable children and are able to use the Recovery Premium to meet wider non-academic needs. Funding announced for school-led tutoring will also provide greater flexibility to schools and we anticipate that this will especially benefit children and young people with SEND in all settings, where tutors familiar to these children can support them to realise the benefits of tuition. Specialist settings were given an uplift to deliver summer schools, at 3 times the normal rate.

The government is committed to an ambitious, long-term education recovery plan. The next stage will include a review of time spent in school and 16-19 education and the impact this could have on children and young people's attainment and wellbeing. The findings of the review will inform the Spending Review. We will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on education and consider what more needs to be done to help children and young people, including those with SEND, catch up.

In addition to summer schools this year, a broader programme of summer enrichment activities, including the Holiday Activities and Food programme, ran to support children and young people, and their families.

For pupils and students with SEND in mainstream settings we are investing over £42 million in 2021/22 to continue funding projects that support them.

■ Special Educational Needs: Public Finance**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[44424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing a disabled children's innovation fund to help evaluate and provide early-help services to improve outcomes for disabled children and families in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[44425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the potential long-term financial costs of providing early intervention funding for support for disabled children and their families.

Vicky Ford:

We believe it is right for local authorities, who know their areas' needs best, to determine what services, including early help, are required locally.

Respite care services for disabled children are provided on the basis of an individual assessment of each child and family's needs, and it is right that this individual focus continues. Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, we ensured that respite care services for disabled children and their families were allowed to continue to operate. This applied to services which care for children in and away from home. Where parents have a disabled child under the age of 5, they were also able to establish a support bubble with another household to provide respite care.

To support local areas, the government has given over £6 billion in unringfenced funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including children's services. We will continue to work with other government departments, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to ensure the upcoming Spending Review reflects the needs of children's services.

In addition to statutory services, we are providing £27.3 million to the Family Fund in financial year 2021-22 to support over 60,000 families on low incomes raising children and young people with disabilities or serious illnesses. Grants can be used for a range of purposes, including family breaks.

■ Universities: Sexual Harassment**Jim Shannon:** [\[43516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle sexual harassment in universities.

Feryal Clark: [\[44464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to tackle sexual harassment and violence on university campuses.

Michelle Donelan:

Any form of harassment, violence or sexual assault is abhorrent and unacceptable anywhere in society, including in our universities. Sexual harassment is in no way tolerable on our campuses and online environments. The government urges university leaders to ensure a zero-tolerance approach to all harassment and sexual misconduct and to ensure they have robust systems in place for reporting incidents where they do occur.

The Office for Students (OfS) statement of expectations on harassment and sexual misconduct was published on 19 April and is a useful tool for providers. As part of its next steps on harassment and hate crime, the OfS will now be considering options for connecting the statement of expectations to its conditions of registration. The OfS wrote to providers on 10 June, asking them to review and update their systems, policies and procedures in line with the statement of expectations on harassment and sexual misconduct by the beginning of the next academic year. I have made it clear that government sees the OfS statement as the minimum that providers should be doing to keep students safe from sexual harassment and misconduct, and to handle reported incidents appropriately when they do occur.

I also wrote to the sector on 2 July reasserting the government's firm expectations for providers in this space. This includes giving urgent consideration to the OfS request to update their systems. I detailed the way in which the government will legislatively tackle the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in relation to workers and employers. I also outlined that I have asked officials to explore options for going further in this area in higher education (HE). The use of NDAs in relation to sexual violence, harassment and misconduct is wholly inappropriate.

I am extremely concerned that many of the deeply disturbing testimonies that continue to be posted on the 'Everyone's Invited' website reference experiences within HE settings. I met with the founder of Everyone's Invited in June, to discuss tackling sexual harassment in HE. I also met with Universities UK (UUK) to discuss this issue, including their existing guidance for providers in this area. I understand they are preparing guidance on staff to student sexual misconduct, which will be published soon.

I know that sexual harassment and misconduct is an area that for several years HE providers, the OfS, the government and sector bodies have been working together on. In 2015, UUK set up a taskforce on harassment at the request of the government. Since 2016, a total investment of £4.7 million, match funded by HE providers, has been invested by the OfS and its predecessor, funding 119 safeguarding projects. £2.45 million of this was given to 63 projects specifically focused on tackling sexual and gender-based violence in HE. In my recent letter to the sector, I highlighted that it may also be timely to revisit the resources produced by these OfS-funded projects relating to this area, available via the following link:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/student-safeguarding-evaluation-and-resources/>.

In addition to preventative policies and procedures, we expect providers to ensure that students continue to have access to support services, and complaints processes, during the COVID-19 outbreak, to ensure they are able to report any issues. I will continue to work across government to ensure that sexual harassment is stamped out of our world leading HE sector.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Welfare

Steve Reed:

[\[45842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of local authorities' ability to enforce animal health and welfare legislation that is designed to protect domesticated and wild animals.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has already taken significant steps to improve the welfare of domestic and other animals. The Animal Health and Welfare Framework has been produced to help county councils, unitary authorities and metropolitan boroughs in England deliver their statutory duties in relation to the health and welfare of farmed animals. Published in May 2021, our Action Plan for Animal Welfare sets out an ambitious programme of future reforms which will strengthen our position as a world leader in this field.

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 were developed to help improve standards and enforcement across a range of animal activities licensed by local authorities; for example, modernising the regulation of dog breeding, pet selling and animal boarding. Local authorities are responsible for enforcing the requirements of licenses in these areas and have access to appropriately trained officers. Statutory guidance aims to improve consistency with the interpretation and application by local authorities of the regulatory regime across England. Ultimately, however, it is for local authorities themselves to decide how best to use the powers of inspection and licensing available to implement the regime and deal with individual cases.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Welsh Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[43665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last met Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Victoria Prentis:

The Secretary of State meets regularly with Ministers from the Welsh Government at the Inter-Ministerial Group EFRA meetings. He met the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd; and the Minister for Climate Change at the last meeting on 13 September and they are due to meet again on 25 October.

■ Farms: Animal Welfare

Andrea Jenkyns: [\[43583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to protect whistle-blowers who report animal abuse on farms.

Victoria Prentis:

There are clear rules in place to protect and manage personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018 and in the eight data principles contained in the General Data Protection Regulation.

Defra's Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) investigates all allegations which raise concerns about the welfare of livestock on farm. APHA staff are provided with specific guidance on data protection rules and their obligations and responsibilities to protect personal information.

Data collected is only used, with permission, for the purposes of investigating a particular case and anyone reporting a suspected welfare issue to the APHA can also request anonymity.

■ Fly-tipping

Alberto Costa: [\[43552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to tackle fly-tipping.

Rebecca Pow:

Our 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy set out our strategic approach to prevent, detect and deter waste crime. This included a commitment to strengthen sentences for fly-tipping and develop a fly-tipping toolkit. The toolkit, which will be developed with the National Fly-tipping Prevention Group, will be a web-based tool to help local authorities and others work in partnership to tackle fly-tipping.

In recent years we have also bolstered local authorities' powers to tackle fly-tipping. We have introduced the power to issue fixed penalty notices of up to £400 to both fly-tippers and householders who pass their waste to an unlicensed waste carrier. We have also provided local authorities with powers to stop, search and seize vehicles of suspected fly-tippers.

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

We are also preparing a number of legislative reforms to tackle waste crime, which should help to tackle fly-tipping. We are taking forward the commitment in the Resources and Waste Strategy to develop proposals for the reform of the waste carrier, broker, and dealer regime. We are working with industry and the regulator and we intend to consult later this year. We also intend to consult on the introduction of mandatory electronic waste tracking. Digital records of waste movements will allow

regulators to detect when waste doesn't reach the next stage, which may indicate illegal activity including fly-tipping.

We are bringing forward several measures in the Environment Bill to ensure agencies and authorities can work more effectively to combat waste crime through better access to evidence and improved powers of entry. These new powers will help ensure waste criminals, such as illegitimate waste operators reliant on fly-tipping for income, are held accountable for their actions.

■ Furs: Overseas Trade

Emily Thornberry: [\[43453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the safety of raw mink furskins and related items under customs code 430110 as commodities for (a) import to or (b) export from the UK.

Emily Thornberry: [\[43454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken since March 2021 to mitigate the potential risks involved in the (a) import to and (b) export from the UK of raw mink furskins and related items under customs commodity code 430110.

Emily Thornberry: [\[44265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what research the Government has (a) commissioned and (b) received to better understand the potential risks to human and animal health posed by international trade in pelts of fur contaminated with covid-19 since March 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[44266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice the Government has provided to UK importers and exporters of (a) raw mink fur skins and (b) related items under customs commodity code 430110 on (i) the potential risks to human and animal health posed by that trade and (ii) steps that can be taken to mitigate those risks since March 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

The World Animal Health Organisation (OIE) has recently concluded that there is insufficient evidence to consider raw mink fur skins as safe for international trade because of the SARS-CoV-2 risk. Further evidence is needed to improve our understanding of any other risks to human or animal health potentially posed by international trade in contaminated pelts or fur. The UK has been closely involved in these discussions.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has established that no specific authorisations have been issued for the import of untreated furs from third countries into the UK in the last two years. This view is supported by analysis of data from the Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS), which is used to notify enforcement authorities about imports of live animals, animal products and

high-risk food and feed not of animal origin into Great Britain. No Export Health Certificates have been issued by the domestic authorities for raw mink skins and APHA data also show no evidence of any UK export of this commodity.

The UK's approach to biosecurity is internationally recognised for delivering the highest standards of protection from pests, diseases, and invasive non-native species. This begins with the vital process of horizon scanning to detect potential risks, it includes robust measures to prevent and detect incursions as well as a capacity to respond effectively to contain or eradicate outbreaks that may occur. This is underpinned by world-class scientific capabilities and collaboration internationally and across Government through key links with industry, stakeholder organisations and the wider public.

Safeguard measures under the OIE code may be put in place to ban the import of goods because of a new or emerging disease threat. Although such measures have not been introduced domestically to date, we continue to monitor developments and to consider our response should we receive any applications to import raw mink fur.

■ Liquefied Petroleum Gas: Environment Protection

Ben Lake:

[\[45243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent studies his Department has undertaken on green alternatives to liquefied petroleum gas.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050 and, as part of the work to meet that commitment, has taken great strides to promote green alternatives to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and other fossil fuels in a range of sectors. This has included gathering evidence on a number of different potential technologies including electrification, hydrogen and biofuels.

For the transport sector, the Government has not undertaken any recent studies into the alternatives to LPG specifically. Our recent Transport Decarbonisation Plan set out how we plan to cut emissions in the transport sector. This includes the phase-out of the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, and, from 2035, the requirement for all new cars and vans to be 100% zero emission at the tailpipe. Renewable alternatives to LPG, including for example bio-LPG, are supported through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation, which has been in place since 2008. In regard to hydrogen as an alternative, the Government has recently published the first ever UK Hydrogen Strategy, which builds on the Government's ambition for 5GW low carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030.

On heating in particular, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy commissioned research into the alternatives to using fossil fuels for heating off the gas grid. These can be found [here](#) and include [Electric and bioenergy heating in off-gas grid homes: evidence gathering](#) & [Electric heating in rural off-gas grid dwellings: technical feasibility](#).

■ Tree Planting

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees (a) in number and (b) by hectare have been planted in England in each year since 2010; and what steps he plans to take to ensure that the Government achieves its commitment to plant 30,000 hectares of trees each year by the end of this Parliament.

Rebecca Pow:

The Forestry Commission produces statistics on new planting and restocking of woodland combined by area, but not by tree numbers, in England and the UK. The area of new planting and restocking in England since 2010, taken from the published statistics, which are reported in thousands of hectares, is shown below.

Woodland Area (thousands of hectares)^[1]

YEAR (ENDING 31 MARCH)	NEW PLANTING AND RESTOCKING
England	
2010	5.08
2011	6.50
2012	6.30
2013	6.57
2014	7.83
2015	8.83
2016	4.13
2017	4.15
2018	3.54
2019	3.07
2020	5.08
2021	4.16

Woodland area statistics can be found in Forestry Statistics on the Forest Research web site at: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/>

The Government has committed to increasing tree planting in the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of this parliament. The England Trees Action Plan (ETAP), published in May, announced new measures for England to boost tree

planting, establishment and management, support a thriving green economy through more private investment in trees and woodlands, and bring trees closer to people.

ETAP implementation is supported through more than £500 million from the Nature for Climate Fund. This includes over £25 million for Woodland Creation Partnerships this year, £6 million for the Urban Trees Challenge Fund for the next two years, a £2.7 million Local Authority Treescape Fund over this next year, and substantial funding for the recently launched England Woodland Creation Offer providing grants for woodland creation and establishment.

The plan sets out a host of other commitments to increase tree planting, including: selecting three new English regions to become part of the Woodland Creation Partnerships scheme to boost tree planting rates; setting up a new fund to support UK tree nurseries to enhance quantity, quality, diversity and biosecurity of domestic tree production and by establishing a new Impact Fund to leverage private green finance to boost tree planting rates.

[Source](#): Forestry Commission, Forestry England, Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland, Natural Resources Wales, Forest Service grant schemes.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad**

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[45941\]](#)

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

Nigel Adams:

Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 8,000 British nationals from Afghanistan. Additionally, on 9-10 September, we evacuated a further 34 British nationals via Doha. Work continues to explore all possible avenues to ensure that any British nationals who remain in Afghanistan are able to leave safely if they wish to do so. To enable this, we have asked all British nationals in Afghanistan to register their presence with us and we are working to verify all those who have submitted their details. We have been clear that the Taliban must allow safe passage for those who want to leave.

■ **Afghanistan: Data Protection**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[45112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) reasons for not destroying sensitive material including personal details of Afghans employed by the UK Government during the drawdown of the UK Embassy in Kabul, (b) threat posed to people who have been exposed by their details not having been destroyed and (c) potential for ongoing UK

operations in the region to have been compromised by not destroying such sensitive material.

Nigel Adams:

We have worked tirelessly to secure the safety of those who worked for us including getting three families to safety. During the drawdown of our Embassy every effort was made to destroy sensitive material.

■ **Afghanistan: Diplomatic Service**

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[45940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of the UK resuming in-country consular support in Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Our focus is on the immediate priorities of ensuring safe passage for anyone remaining in Afghanistan who is eligible to come to the UK and wishes to leave, supporting the thousands of new arrivals in the UK, and continuing to provide assistance to the Afghan people. Our Embassy to Afghanistan has temporarily relocated to Qatar, until it can be re-established in Afghanistan, to lead our diplomatic, security and humanitarian engagement remotely. The situation on the ground remains fluid and we will continue to review this posture. Our High Commission in Pakistan and Embassies in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Qatar, reinforced by Rapid Deployment Teams, are also providing consular support.

■ **Afghanistan: Ethnic Groups**

Kim Johnson:

[\[43698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps are being taken to evacuate the Hazara minority community who face persecution and threats to their safety from the Taliban.

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. This commitment extends to all ethnic and religious groups, including individuals from the Hazara community. The UK is formally launching a 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: Pakistan**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[41764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he is making to his Pakistani counterpart on support for the Taliban in Afghanistan from Pakistani's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary visited Pakistan on 3 September 2021 to discuss how the two countries can work closely together on the situation in Afghanistan. He held meetings with Prime Minister Imran Khan, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Chief of Army Staff General Bajwa. Discussions covered all aspects of Pakistan's interests in the region.

■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[45832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 43474 on Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations, if he will publish any documents related to (a) impact assessments, (b) policy predictions, (c) humanitarian response planning and (d) emergency contingency planning when (i) the US Government under Donald Trump announced the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and (ii) President Joe Biden reaffirmed that commitment.

Nigel Adams:

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

Yasmin Qureshi:[\[45961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what contingency plans his Department made in response to the US Government's announcement of the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

Following President Biden's 14 April announcement, we worked intensively with the US, both on military and civilian channels, to ensure an orderly and co-ordinated withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan. We looked at many options, including the potential for staying longer or increasing our presence, but like our NATO allies, we had to be realistic in what was achievable without a US Forces presence.

■ Air Pollution: Finance

Geraint Davies:

[\[45793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will increase funding ahead of COP26 to tackle air pollution worldwide, particularly in areas where air pollution is increasing, to help countries meet WHO ambient air quality standards and SDG air quality targets.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government recognises the impact of poor air quality on the health and development, particularly of children and older people. Our £340m core voluntary contribution to World Health Organisation represents a significant uplift in UK support and is fully flexible, meaning it will be used across the priorities identified in World Health Organisation's current programme of work, including on the environmental determinants of health through policy and country level support.

As one of the original signatories to the 1979 UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, the UK has long been at the forefront of international action to tackle transboundary air pollution. Through this convention the UK supports international programmes to drive forward scientific understanding of air pollution emissions and their impacts, and engages constructively to agree ambitious standards and emission reduction commitments that encourage action across the Northern Hemisphere and serve as a model for a global response.

The UK has worked with partners to develop the COP26 Health Programme with the aim to support increased ambition on climate and health. This includes the opportunity for countries to make commitments to build their health sector in a way which limits its impact on both carbon emissions and air quality.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Postal Services

Patrick Grady:

[\[43548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that outbound postal services from the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) comply with the Universal Postal Convention following adoption of Resolution C15/2021 of the Universal Postal Union to no longer recognise BIOT postage stamps.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has no doubt about its sovereignty over BIOT, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the Archipelago and we do not recognise its claim.

The BIOT Administration is considering further the practical impact of the UPU resolution on the BIOT postal service and the future of commemorative stamps. The BFPO and the US civil postal system are not affected by the resolution and will carry on as normal.

Patrick Grady: [\[43549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Mauritian counterpart on provision for Mauritius to operate an international mail processing centre in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Nigel Adams:

There have been no discussions with the Foreign Secretary's Mauritian counterpart on provision for Mauritius to operate an international mail processing centre in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

■ **British Virgin Islands: Overseas Aid**

Henry Smith: [\[43480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if the Government will provide funding to the British Virgin Islands to support the recovery of the tourism sector in that country following the devastation resulting from Hurricane Irma in 2017 and the effect of ongoing covid-19 travel restrictions.

Nigel Adams:

Since the start of the pandemic, the UK has provided in excess of £1.5 million of medical supplies, including testing kits, PPE, a field hospital kit and ventilators. The UK began supplying vaccines to BVI in February and will continue to supply sufficient vaccines for all adults in the Territory. In addition UK health experts continue to provide advice and information to the BVI Health Service Authority to help inform BVI's COVID response. The tourism industry is the responsibility of the BVI Government and they have recently announced protocols designed to enable the return of cruise ships to the BVI.

In the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Irma, the UK provided a range of support, including military, police and humanitarian support and technical expertise. The UK then donated approximately £13 million to support immediate priorities identified by the BVI Government in partnership with the Governor's office, including critical infrastructure, the supply of water, electricity and housing.

Since then the UK has supported the long term recovery of the territory through the BVI territory programme which is funded by the UK Government's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF).

■ **China: Pigeon**

Dave Doogan: [\[45922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on a resumption of pork exports from UK pig processing plants whose licenses were voluntarily surrendered due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government is committed to supporting the UK agricultural industry and restoring all exports of pork products to China. In July I [Minister Adams] met representatives from the relevant UK companies, and we understand that a number of companies, from a range of countries, share similar concerns. Foreign Secretary raises trade issues whenever he speaks to State Councillor Wang Yi, including most recently on 19 August. I [Minister Adams] made representations to the Chinese Ambassador on 8 September. In addition, the Secretary of State for International Trade and Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have each written to their Chinese counterparts. Finally, Her Majesty's Ambassador to China and officials in the British Embassy in Beijing have lobbied repeatedly on this issue.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[45900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Joint COVAX Statement on Supply Forecast for 2021 and early 2022, published on 8 September 2021, what assessment he has made of implications for his policies of the forecast given in reaching reach the two billion doses target by the end of 2021 on (a) the number of preventable deaths in relation to the covid-19 virus, (b) the likelihood of more dangerous variants of the covid virus emerging and (c) the global economy.

Wendy Morton:

The UK recognises the significant global health and economic impacts caused by the pandemic, and therefore remains committed to supporting rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines through multilateral cooperation to accelerate the end of this acute phase. The UK has played a leading role in developing the COVAX Facility to support this effort, providing £548 million, which has been key to enabling COVAX in so far delivering over 250 million COVID-19 vaccines to 141 countries and territories.

We recognise the need to further increase global vaccine supply, and are committed to working with industry and international organisations on strategies to facilitate expanded manufacturing of affordable COVID-19 vaccines at scale. This includes sharing vaccine doses, with the UK announcing at the G7 Leaders' that it would donate 100 million vaccines overseas in the next year. 80% of these will go to COVAX to enable it to further support countries in need.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[45901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Joint COVAX Statement on Supply Forecast for 2021 and early 2022, published on 8 September 2021, whether he has plans he has to accelerate the donation of covid-19 vaccines from the UK's surplus to Covax in the context of a global shortfall of doses.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister has committed that the UK will donate 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses within the next year, including a total of 30 million by the end of 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 (JCVI).

In addition to sharing 10.3 million doses to date, which exceeds our target of donating 5 million doses by September, the UK has invested £71 million to join and strengthen the joint vaccine purchasing scheme, donating £548 million specifically to support access in lower-income countries through the COVAX Advance Market Commitment. Our early funding gave COVAX the purchasing power it needed to secure deals with manufacturers to supply internationally-approved vaccines for low and middle-income countries.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[45899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many covid-19 vaccines the UK Government has donated (a) through the COVAX Advance Market Commitment mechanism to lower-income countries and (b) bilaterally to countries; and how many of those vaccines have been administered.

Wendy Morton:

We have donated 10.3 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to date. This exceeds our target of donating 5 million doses by September 2021, and forms part of our commitment to share 100 million vaccine doses over the next year, including 30 million by the end of 2021. So far, 6.2 million doses have been donated through COVAX, 4.1 million doses on a direct bilateral basis, and all have gone to ODA eligible countries. We have received assurances from countries that systems are in place to ensure safe, effective, and timely use in line with WHO guidance. By donating doses to those countries in need, we are able to support and progress equitable access to vaccines around the world.

■ Ebrahim Raisi**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[43428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart on the election of Ebrahim Raisi as president.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary intends to speak regularly with his Iranian counterpart Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian. He and his officials, including those in the British Embassy in Tehran, engage with Iran on a wide range of issues, including our nuclear concerns, our consular cases, human rights and Iran's role in the region. We

call on President Raisi to set Iran on a different course and expect to engage him on the full range of issues.

■ **Fossil Fuels and Renewable Energy: Capital Investment**

Geraint Davies: [\[45792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives of (a) the World Bank and (b) other donors on encouraging (i) cessation all new fossil fuel investments and (ii) investment in clean energy to tackle air pollution.

James Duddridge:

The UK government recognises the importance of reducing fossil fuel consumption both to address carbon emissions and to tackle air pollution. Air pollution which is the number one environmental determinant of health and exposure to air pollution (indoor and outdoor) causes around 7 million deaths annually.

We have shared the UK's fossil fuel policy with the World Bank and other Multilateral Development Banks that the UK is a member of. We have explained that this policy determines the UK's stance on energy investments by the banks and have encouraged them to update their respective energy policies to align with ours. The World Bank's 'Climate Change Action Plan' 2021-2025 published in June 2021 includes important commitments to: support countries' energy transitions from fossil fuels to renewables; align the Bank's financing with the Paris Agreement; and ensure that at least 35% of the Bank's financing will have climate benefits. We have also shared and discussed the UK policy with other members of the Boards of the multilateral banks, including with the representatives of the developing countries that borrow from them. The US has published new guidance on its approach to fossil fuels at the Multilateral Development Banks which is well aligned with the UK's policy on international support for fossil fuels.

■ **Inter-agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[45235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK-based international non-governmental organisations have signed up to the Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme.

Nigel Adams:

A full list of implementing organisations can be found on the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) website.

■ **Jagtar Singh Johal**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[45898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date he last met the family of Jagtar Singh Johal.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary is regularly updated about Mr Johal's case, and has consistently raised the case with his Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. The Foreign Secretary discussed the case with Dr Jaishankar most recently on 4 August. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia, is the lead FCDO Minister in Mr Johal's case, and regularly raises the case with Indian interlocutors, most recently on 23 July with the Indian Foreign Secretary, Harsh Vardhan Shringla. Lord Ahmad has met the Johal family seven times, most recently on 30 July.

Members: Correspondence**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[45816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral contribution of 9 September 2021, Official Report, in response to the urgent question on the timing of detailed responses to hon. Members regarding UK nationals and vulnerable Afghans stuck in Afghanistan, how many of the 200,000 emails were from hon. Members.

Nigel Adams:

We are rapidly working through the correspondence to ascertain the figure. Nearly 500 staff from across the FCDO and HMG have been working to clear the back-log of correspondence and ensure they are all responded to in the most appropriate way.

Military Aid**Emily Thornberry:**[\[43450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Overseas Security and Justice Assistance assessments were logged with his Department by (a) the Ministry of Defence, (b) the Home Office and (c) other departments and agencies, in relation to overseas requests for case-specific assistance in (i) 2015-16, (ii) 2016-17, (iii) 2017-18, (iv) 2018-19, (v) 2019-20 and (vi) 2020-21.

Nigel Adams:

The Overseas Security and Justice Assistance Guidance sets out which human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) risks must be considered prior to providing justice or security sector assistance. It specifies that an assessment must be made of the potential impact of any proposed assistance on those risks, as well as on reputational or political risk, prior to the provision of any assistance. The Guidance applies to both case specific assistance and broader, often longer term capacity building assistance. While the FCDO is responsible for updating and maintaining the Guidance, responsibility for completing and filing the assessment sits with the department or agency delivering the assistance. An estimate of the number of OSJAs completed each year is published in the Annual Human Rights Report.

■ NATO**Ruth Jones:** [\[42104\]](#)

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

Nigel Adams:

NATO Foreign Ministers meet regularly for meetings chaired by the NATO Secretary General - three such meetings have taken place this year. In addition, the Foreign Secretary spoke privately with the Secretary General on three further occasions in that time period to discuss security and defence issues.

■ Overseas Aid: Climate Change**Feryal Clark:** [\[42194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that covid-19 recovery plans are leveraged to increase the capacity of climate vulnerable countries to manage the effects of climate change and build resilience.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government has made tackling climate change and biodiversity loss the UK's number one international priority. As G7 and COP26 President, the UK is working to catalyse international support for climate adaptation and resilience measures for lower-income countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. COVID-19 recovery support is one important part of this. We have committed £4.8 million to the World Bank Climate Support Facility to develop the technical capacity lower-income countries need to identify opportunities to build low-carbon, climate-resilient approaches into COVID-19 recovery plans. We are also investing up to £20 million in the African Union's COVID-19 Response Fund and worked closely with the African Union on the development of their Green Recovery Action Plan to ensure Africa builds back sustainably from the pandemic.

We are committed to doubling the UK's International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion by 2025/26 aiming for a balance between mitigation and adaptation. This includes specific additional support for disaster-preparedness and resilience-building measures for the world's poorest, such as an additional £120 million in new funding for Disaster Risk Finance, announced at the G7 in June, to enable quicker responses for vulnerable people when extreme weather and climate-linked disasters hit.

■ Overseas Trade: Egypt**Emily Thornberry:** [\[43455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of the President of Egypt's ratification of death sentences against 12 political prisoners arising from the Rabaa Dispersal Case

with Egypt's commitments under Article 2 of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement, as incorporated into the UK-Egypt Association Agreement.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[44267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to take steps under the terms of Article 2 of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement, as incorporated into the UK-Egypt Association Agreement, in response to President Sisi's ratification of death sentences against 12 political prisoners arising from the Rabaa Dispersal Case.

James Cleverly:

The UK is opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances. Following recent cases, we have made clear to the Egyptian Government at a senior level our serious concern about the use of the death penalty. Government's international obligations and commitments, including on human rights, are always of paramount importance when it makes decisions on its trading relations.

■ Sarah Rainsford

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[43458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he is making to his Russian counterpart on the expulsion of the BBC journalist, Sarah Rainsford.

Wendy Morton:

This unjustified action by the Russian authorities further erodes media freedom in the country. The Foreign Secretary has written to Foreign Minister Lavrov setting out his concerns about the decision taken by the Russian authorities, and the British Ambassador in Moscow has also raised this issue with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Kremlin on several occasions.

The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office has also raised Sarah Rainsford's case with the Russian Ambassador in London, and I have raised it with my Russian counterpart.

■ Turkey: Kurds

John McDonnell:

[\[40582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent reports of Turkish military activity in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK continues to follow the situation in northern Iraq closely. The Foreign Secretary met Iraqi President Saleh, Prime Minister Kadhimi and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's President Nechirvan to discuss the stability of Iraq and the KRI during his visit to Iraq on 8-9 June. We welcome discussions between Iraqi and Turkish Defence Ministers regarding Ankara's military operations against the

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a proscribed terrorist group, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We continue to reiterate the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and Turkey to combat terrorism, ensure regional security, and protect civilians.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[41654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on ensuring that his Department has a role in supporting the Government's clean air strategy.

Jo Churchill:

While there have been no specific recent discussions, the Department for Health and Social Care and Public Health England (PHE) contributed to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' development of the Government's national Clean Air Strategy. We continue to work closely with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to provide alerts and advice during high air pollution episodes to ensure that key health messages are communicated to vulnerable groups, including those with existing lung conditions.

To assist with the development and implementation of the Clean Air Strategy, the Department commissioned PHE to undertake a review of the evidence for effective and cost-effective air quality interventions and provide recommendations for actions to improve air quality that will reduce harm from air pollution.

Geraint Davies:

[\[43376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to improve standards on indoor air quality for regulators and local authorities following the publication of the NICE guidelines on indoor air quality in 2020; and whether his Department is receiving professional guidance, including from the Institute of Air Quality Management, on improving those standards.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) worked with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) on the development of the indoor air quality guidelines which are intended to assist local authorities, medical and health professionals, and the building industry. In addition, PHE is working with NICE to develop a quality standard on indoor air quality. The standard will be published for consultation and stakeholders, such as the Institute of Air Quality Management, will have an opportunity to comment.

The Department and PHE are continuing to develop the evidence base for the health impacts of and potential interventions to improve, indoor air quality. These teams are working closely with other Government departments and with NICE and other organisations who provide scientific input and professional guidance on indoor air quality and the impact on public health.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**Wayne David:**[\[45048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the increasing trend in alcohol consumption and harm; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle that increase.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: There is a programme of work underway to address alcohol-related health harms and their impact on life chances, including the establishment of specialist alcohol care teams in hospitals and support children of alcohol dependent parents.

The new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will lead our efforts to improve treatment and support, with £80 million of new investment. We have also committed to publish a new United Kingdom-wide cross-Government addiction strategy which will consider a range of issues, including drugs, alcohol and problem gambling. We will consider the emerging evidence around increased alcohol harms during the pandemic and what further action is needed as we develop the strategy.

■ Blood Tests: Bottles**Navendu Mishra:**[\[44456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) emergency and (b) non-emergency appointments have been cancelled owing to the blood bottle shortage across the UK.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

Paula Barker:[\[45942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the national blood tube shortage affecting the NHS in England.

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 which are now in use and there continues to be stock in place to ensure clinically urgent testing continues. The Department is working closely with NHS England, the devolved administrations and the National Health Service to minimise any impact on patient care and return to a normal service as soon as possible.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Jim Shannon:**[\[44343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make a statement on the timetable for roll-out of the cancer services recovery plan.

Jo Churchill:

The findings of 'NHS Cancer Programme: Cancer services recovery plan' contributed to NHS England and NHS Improvement's 2021/22 Priorities and Operational Planning Guidance, which was published in March 2021. This guidance sets out the recovery aims for cancer - to find, diagnose and treat those who have not started treatment during the pandemic and to return the number of people waiting for longer than 62 days to February 2020 levels by the end of March 2022.

■ Cervical Cancer**Kim Johnson:**[\[43697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendations for improving cervical cancer outcomes made in Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust's report, Computer Says No, published June 2018; and what steps he is taking to improve access to cervical cancer screening and treatment services.

Jo Churchill:

Many of the recommendations made by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust have since been taken forward by the Department including those invited for a cervical screening appointment can now book at a range of primary care health settings rather than just at their own general practitioner practice and many providers now offer evening and weekend appointments. The Digital Transformation of Screening Programme has been developed to improve IT systems and accessibility and there are now trials to test the feasibility of self-sampling, initially in London via the NHS YouScreen trial, with plans for further trials nationwide.

■ Children: Vaccination**Jim Shannon:**[\[43512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) routine childhood immunisation programmes and (b) meningococcal vaccination uptake.

Jim Shannon:[\[44344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) routine childhood immunisation programmes and (b) meningococcal vaccination uptake.

Jo Churchill:

Vaccine coverage data for 2020/21 is not yet available.

Rachael Maskell:[\[45198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of take-up of (a) MMR and (b) other vaccines among under 18 year old that would normally form part of the routine vaccination programmes since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England published quarterly vaccine coverage data of routine childhood immunisations in March 2021 and June 2021. The data showed a decrease of between 0.5% to 0.7% in vaccines measured at 12 months age in October to December 2020, but coverage remained stable in January to March 2021. Vaccines measured at 24 months of age showed a decrease of between 0.8% to 1.1% in quarter four compared to the previous quarter, including a decrease of 1.0% of the first Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccine. These are the first cohorts potentially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coverage of adolescent vaccines, meningococcal ACWY, Human Papilloma Virus and tetanus/diphtheria/polio is measured annually. Figures for the 2019/20 academic year show a 20-30% decrease in coverage compared to the previous year, related to school closures during the pandemic.

Rachael Maskell:[\[45199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many children and young people under 18 year old have received vaccines as part of routine vaccination programmes, including MMR in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

The following table shows the number of children who have received first dose of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine by their second birthday.

YEAR	NUMBER VACCINATED WITH FIRST DOSE OF MMR
2019/20	589,306
2018/19	604,933
2017/18	612,692
2016/17	608,554
2015/16	609,777

Source: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics, England, 2015-16 to 2019-20

The following table shows the number of children who have received first dose and second dose of MMR by their fifth birthday.

	NUMBER VACCINATED WITH FIRST DOSE OF MMR	NUMBER VACCINATED WITH FIRST AND SECOND DOSE OF MMR
2019/20	651,969	598,626
2018/19	656,822	600,906

	NUMBER VACCINATED WITH FIRST DOSE OF MMR	NUMBER VACCINATED WITH FIRST AND SECOND DOSE OF MMR
2017/18	674,358	619,486
2016/17	671,484	618,820
2015/16	661,359	615,520

Source: Childhood Vaccination Coverage Statistics, England, 2015-16 to 2019-20

The following table shows the number of adolescents who have received the meningococcal ACWY (Men ACWY) and tetanus/diphtheria/polio (Td/IPV) vaccine over the past five eligible cohorts.

BIRTH COHORT	Td/IPV	MEN ACWY
Born 1 Sep 2005 to 31 Aug 2006	364,228	368,123
Born 1 Sep 2004 to 31 Aug 2005	543,117	546,675
Born 1 Sep 2003 to 31 Aug 2004	529,895	533,689
Born 1 Sep 2002 to 31 Aug 2003	479,921	489,826
Born 1 Sep 2001 to 31 Aug 2002	433,307	444,507

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-leaver-booster-tdipv-vaccine-coverage-estimates>

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meningococcal-acwy-immunisation-programme-vaccine-coverage-estimates>

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Medical Treatments

Catherine West:

[43607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department will publish the NICE clinical guidelines for Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome.

Catherine West: [\[43608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the publication of the NICE clinical guidelines for myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome have been delayed twice.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for developing its guidelines in line with its established methods and processes. NICE paused the publication of its updated guideline on myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome due to concerns raised by stakeholders. NICE now plans to host a roundtable event in October to better understand how it can gain support for the guideline to ensure effective implementation. NICE issued a statement with more information about the decision to pause the publication which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/news/article/nice-pauses-publication-of-updated-guideline-on-diagnosis-and-management-of-me-cfs>

Fleur Anderson: [\[45937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that NICE publishes the ME/CFS Guidelines in their current form to help prevent harm from Graded Exercise Therapy.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is an independent body and is responsible for developing its guidelines in line with its established methods and processes. NICE paused the publication of its updated guideline on myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome due to concerns raised by stakeholders. NICE plans to host a roundtable event in October to better understand how it can gain support for the guideline to ensure effective implementation.

■ Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[45194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information he holds on the (a) human organs that are being affected in the short- and long- term by covid-19 and (b) extent of those impacts.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: During 2020/21 there was 75% deceased donor activity and 78% deceased donor transplants compared to 2019/20. Living donor transplants fell by 58% during this period.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published guidance to local systems to support the restoration and recovery of solid organ transplants. Its regional teams have now developed recovery plans, which includes streamlined pathways for the provision of solid organ transplantation and the associated critical care capacity.

While COVID-19 affected the number of offered, retrieved and transplanted organs in 2020-2021, most transplants are now back to pre-pandemic levels.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing

Rachael Maskell: [\[45873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 16 June 2021 to Questions 13127, 13128, 13129 and 13130, for what reasons NHS Test and Trace continues to be used instead of local public health teams for the purpose of covid-19 contact tracing.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Test and Trace and local authorities 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.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[45808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether members of the public who received doses of Astra Zeneca 4120Z001, 4120Z002, 4120Z003 will be entitled to receive a third dose of a vaccination recognised by the European Medicines Agency.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Members of the public will not be entitled to receive a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccination on the basis of having received doses of AstraZeneca with batch numbers 4120Z001, 4120Z002, 4120Z003. All AstraZeneca vaccine doses administered in the United Kingdom are the same COVID-19 vaccine and have been authorised for use under Regulation 174, having met the strict standards on safety, quality and efficacy.

The decision to accept a particular vaccine is ultimately for individual European Union Member States. The EU has published a list of vaccines it sees as equivalent to those authorised by the European Medicines Agency for the purposes of travel includes all vaccines administered in the UK, including all batches of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines.

■ Dental Services

Navendu Mishra: [\[43691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many dental practices in England stopped providing NHS services in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: This data is not held centrally.

■ Dental Services: Ellesmere Port and Neston

Justin Madders: [\[45167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) children and (b) adults are registered for an NHS Dentist in (i) Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency and (b) England.

Justin Madders: [\[45169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current waiting time is to register with an NHS dentist in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not available as patients are not required to register with a dental practice to access services. Data on waiting lists is not held centrally.

■ General Practitioners

Andrew Rosindell: [\[41738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that everyone has access to an in-person GP appointment.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to general practitioners (GPs) on 19 July 2021, stating that GP contractors should continue to offer a blended approach of face-to-face and remote appointments, with digital triage where possible.

While we know that telephone or online consultations can provide extra flexibility and convenience for patients, their input into the choice of consultation mode should be sought and practices should respect preferences for face-to-face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary, for example the presence of COVID-19 symptoms.

To expand general practice capacity, we have made available an additional £270 million from November 2020 until September 2021 to ensure GPs and their teams are able to continue to support all patients during the pandemic.

Rachael Maskell: [\[45202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help mitigate pressure on GP services.

Jo Churchill:

To help expand general practice capacity, we have made available an additional £270 million from November 2020 until September 2021 to ensure general practitioners (GPs) and their teams are able to continue to support all patients. To ensure patients can continue to access primary care, practices are being asked to opt into the autumn booster vaccine delivery scheme only if they and local commissioners, are satisfied that practices can deliver business as usual services at the same time. Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are encouraged to make use of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, representing funding for an average of 12-

13 additional full time equivalent members of staff in post for each PCN. To further support PCNs, the recent GP contract package provides £43 million leadership and management funding for the remainder of this year.

■ General Practitioners: Workplace Pensions

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[45185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 28233 on General Practitioners: Software, what steps he is taking to reduce the time taken to correct superannuation deductions that are double deducted, incorrectly deducted or not deducted through the new Primary Care Support England (PCSE) system.

Jo Churchill:

Primary Care Support England (PCSE) Online is in its post-implementation support phase, which is intended to ensure that any early issues are identified and resolved. NHS England continues to work with PCSE, NHS Pensions and other stakeholders, including general practitioner practices, to rapidly identify and resolve any outstanding issues that have emerged since the new system has come into operation.

■ Hartismere Hospital

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[43478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) increase take-up and (b) improve efficiency of facilities at Hartismere hospital in North Suffolk.

Edward Argar:

Suffolk Clinical Commission Groups (CCGs) are looking to build on the extensive range of services already delivered at Hartismere Hospital. This will include a frailty and ophthalmology clinic.

Suffolk CCGs are determining the shape, efficiency and take up of health and care services including community hospitals such as Hartismere.

■ Health: Disadvantaged

Jim Shannon: [\[44340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the levels of socioeconomic inequalities in (a) lung cancer, (b) covid-19 and (c) respiratory health in general.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) data shows that deprived groups are at greater risk of emergency presentation and late stage diagnosis for most cancers. People in deprived areas are more likely to be diagnosed and to have poor outcomes following COVID-19 diagnosis than those in less deprived areas.

PHE's 'Atlas of Variation in risk factors and healthcare for respiratory disease in England' showed that morbidity and mortality due to respiratory disease are concentrated within deprived groups.

The new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities will systematically tackle the top preventable risk factors, improving the public's health and narrowing health disparities.

■ Integrated Care Systems

Rachael Maskell: [\[43563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of CVS organisations participating on Integrated Care System partnership boards; and what steps he is taking to monitor that number.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: We have made no such estimate and have no plans to monitor the number. However, the creation of integrated care partnerships (ICPs) strengthens relationships between the National Health Service and local authorities and with other local partners, including groups representing the community and voluntary sector.

■ Long Covid: Health Services

Rachael Maskell: [\[44396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2021 to Question 31469 on Long Covid, what additional funding has been provided to NHS Primary and Secondary Care services to manage Long Covid.

Jo Churchill:

On 15 June NHS England and NHS Improvement announced an additional £100 million expansion of care for patients with 'long' COVID-19 taking the total investment in England to £134 million. £70 million has been allocated to facilitate the expansion of 'long' COVID-19 services delivered through the Post-Covid Assessment Clinics. Integrated care systems have submitted service expansion plans and funding has been allocated. This is in addition to the £10 million invested in establishing post COVID-19 services between October 2020 and March 2021 and an additional £24 million already spent on assessment services in quarter 1 of 2021/22. £30 million has been allocated for an enhanced service for general practice. A specification for this service was published in June 2021 and a draft self-assessment template for general practice subsequently published in August 2021.

Rachael Maskell: [\[44398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is his Department's policy to recommend that each integrated care system adopts a long covid lead clinician.

Jo Churchill:

Each integrated care system has a specialist post COVID-19 service offer. There are 89 post COVID-19 specialist services across England, each with a lead clinician.

■ Lung Cancer: Screening**Jim Shannon:**[\[43520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the early detection of lung cancer on the detection of other respiratory health conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made. However, when people are assessed for lung cancer, care teams may also pick up other lung conditions.

Jim Shannon:[\[44341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for completion of the NHS trials of low dose CT scanning for lung cancer screening; and when the results of those trials will be available.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health Research is involved in two trials of low dose computerised tomography screening for lung cancer. Findings from the UK Lung Screening Trial are currently scheduled for publication in September 2021. Interim findings from the SUMMIT trial are currently estimated to be available for publication by 2023, with the full trial expected to run until 2030.

■ Medical Equipment**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[44309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of medical supplies within the NHS over the next 12 months.

Edward Argar:

The Department works closely with the National Health Service, suppliers, industry and the devolved administrations to continuously assess the availability of medical supplies as an ongoing process.

■ Members: Correspondence**Mr John Baron:**[\[41680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 9 June 2021 and chase up correspondence of 7 July 2021 and 10 August 2021 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay regarding the anniversary of the breast-milk substitutes campaign, reference JB32768.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member on 10 September 2021.

Robert Largan:[\[45315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry of 22 June 2021 from the hon. Member for Robert Largan, referenced RL23762.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 9 September 2021.

■ Meningitis: Vaccination**Jim Shannon:**[\[43513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the NHS is taking to work with educational settings to deliver catch-up meningococcal vaccination programmes before the end of the 2021-22 academic year.

Jo Churchill:

The impact of school closures due to COVID-19 has been mitigated by rescheduling them as soon as possible after schools re-opened. This includes the MenACWY vaccine for those in school years nine and ten. NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to work with Public Health England and regional commissioners to ensure routine childhood immunisations, including MenACWY, are delivered as planned in educational settings.

Jim Shannon:[\[43514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to support local meningococcal immunisation services to deliver vaccination programmes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Catch-up programmes for immunisation services impacted by the pandemic, such as MenACWY, have been taking place through community venues and closed school estates. All providers continue to work with NHS England commissioners, with clinical advice from Public Health England (PHE), to deliver all missed school aged vaccinations.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are also working with PHE and regional commissioners to ensure routine childhood immunisations, including MenACWY, continue to be delivered in primary care settings. PHE has also worked with stakeholders to raise awareness of the need for vaccination in those entering higher education this autumn.

■ NHS Trusts: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[44394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 June 2021 to Question 19625 on NHS Trusts: Finance, what recent assessment he has made of the appropriateness of the Elective Recovery Fund access thresholds.

Edward Argar:

While no formal assessment has been made, thresholds will be kept under regular review.

Rachael Maskell: [\[45872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons he has set thresholds to access the elective recovery fund.

Edward Argar:

Thresholds were set on the elective recovery fund in order for systems to increase activity returning to pre-pandemic levels and tackle backlogs in care. Access to this funding is subject to meeting these thresholds and also to meeting gateway criteria, including addressing health inequalities.

■ NHS: Finance

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[45806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) net and (b) percentage change in total NHS funding has been in each of the ten years up until 31 March 2021.

Edward Argar:

The information requested, for the years where data is available is shown in the following table.

FINANCIAL YEAR	OUTTURN	TOTAL NHS ENGLAND DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE LIMIT (£ MILLION)	PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
2020-21	Draft outturn	144,100	+16.2%
2019-20	Outturn	124,016	+8.3%
2018-19	Outturn	114,552	+4.3%
2017-18	Outturn	109,833	+3.6%
2016-17	Outturn	105,975	+5.2%
2015-16	Outturn	100,754	+3.6%
2014-15	Outturn	97,287	+3.6%

FINANCIAL YEAR	OUTTURN	TOTAL NHS ENGLAND DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE LIMIT (£ MILLION)	
			PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
2013-14	Outturn	93,876	-

Source: HM Treasury Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2018 and 2021

■ Pharmacy: Pay

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[43686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to provide English pharmacists with a bonus payment on a similar basis to those provided by the Welsh Government to pharmacists in Wales.

Jo Churchill:

We have no plans to do so.

The Government has provided a comprehensive package of support for community pharmacies during the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the general support provided to all businesses. This has included the ability to claim for extra costs.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Catherine West: [\[43604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase the upper age exemption for prescription fees in England.

Jo Churchill:

The Department's consultation on aligning the upper age prescription charge with state pension age closed on 3 September. Responses to the consultation are currently being analysed.

■ Sportsgrounds: Defibrillators

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[45269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on increasing access to defibrillators at grassroots sports events in (a) County Durham and (b) England.

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[45270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to improve access to community defibrillators in (a) County Durham and (b) the UK.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: There have been no specific discussions.

The Government recognises that better provision of defibrillators and increasing the number of people trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation could help save more lives of those who have a cardiac arrest outside a hospital setting. We therefore encourage organisations across England, including in County Durham, to consider purchasing a defibrillator as part of their first-aid equipment, particularly for places where there are high concentrations of people. Provision elsewhere in the United Kingdom is a matter for the devolved administrations.

Many community defibrillators have since been provided in public locations, including shopping centres, through national lottery funding, community fundraising schemes, workplace funding or by charities.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Theresa Villiers: [\[43422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the covid-19 testing requirements for double vaccinated people arriving from green list countries.

Jo Churchill:

We currently have no plans to do so.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

Rachael Maskell: [\[43569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that quarantine hotels are safe environments.

Rachael Maskell: [\[43570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what oversight his Department has of the conditions in quarantine hotels.

Rachael Maskell: [\[43571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether breaches of (a) health and safety and (b) environmental health standards in covid-19 quarantine hotels are reported to his Department.

Jo Churchill:

To ensure all our managed quarantine hotels are safe environments, we have standard operating procedures (SOPs), testing processes and infection prevention control processes for staff and guests. Each hotel has dedicated Departmental on-site liaison officers who monitor compliance with the SOPs and report on compliance issues, breaches, opportunities to improve services including health and safety breaches.

Directors of Public Health for each area where the hotels are situated are engaged and consulted as to the infection protection measures implemented. The local environmental health teams often visit to ensure the hotels are safe environments for

both guests and staff. Any identified breaches are reported back to senior sub-contracted management to ensure rectification measures are put in place.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[43578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of the £1750 people have to pay for a covid-19 quarantine hotel place goes to (a) the hotel owner and (b) each of the other parties involved in the management of that contract; and if he will publish a breakdown of those figures.

Jo Churchill:

The notional costing of the service to 30 June based on the charge of £1,750 is divided as follows: hotel £1,190; transport £78; security £876; welfare £74; testing £102; liaison £52; 'other' £135; and administration costs £90. This gives a total notional cost of £2,597. The initial costing of £1,750 did not therefore reflect the full costs incurred by the traveller for managed quarantine and was subsidised. The cost for staying in a managed quarantine facility when arriving from a 'red list' country has now increased to £2,285 for a single adult and £1,430 for a second adult to better reflect the total costs involved with providing their quarantine.

Corporate Travel Management is currently contracted for provision of parts of the quarantine facilities that meet the required specification. They in turn negotiate and hold contracts with individual accommodation venues.

■ Vaccination: Children

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that under-18s have the opportunity to receive vaccines as part of under-18 vaccination programmes that were disrupted as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Catch-up programmes for immunisation services impacted by the pandemic have been taking place through community venues and closed school estates since August 2020. All providers continue to work with NHS England commissioners, with clinical advice from Public Health England, to deliver all missed vaccinations for under 18 year olds and to ensure routine childhood immunisations are delivered as planned in primary care and educational settings. We have raised awareness in the national media that the National Health Service immunisations are still available and worked with stakeholders on the need for vaccination in those entering higher education this autumn.

HOME OFFICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Patricia Gibson:**[\[903408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Justice on the adequacy of the regulation of nitrous oxide.

Kit Malthouse:

Cabinet colleagues and other ministers meet regularly to discuss a wide range of matters. The Government takes the supply of substances for their psychoactive effect very seriously. There are legitimate uses for nitrous oxide, such as in medicine, dentistry and as a propellant for whipped cream canisters, but those who supply nitrous oxide who know, or who are reckless as to whether, it will be used for its psychoactive effect may be subject to a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. On 3 September, the Government asked the independent statutory advisory body, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, to provide an updated assessment of the harms of nitrous oxide and adequacy of controls.

Dame Angela Eagle:[\[903416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to improve conviction rates in cases of fraud.

Damian Hinds:

The Government recognises that to improve conviction rates, there needs to be an increased pipeline of cases under investigation. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) carried out an inspection of the police response to fraud in 2019. The review found that significant improvements are required to ensure the model works more effectively and efficiently, including the need for a much more co-ordinated national approach with clear roles and responsibilities.

In August 2021, a follow up review from the HMICFRS established that the majority of their initial recommendations had been met, citing improvements across numerous areas of the law enforcement response. Despite this, we know that more needs to be done to ensure law enforcement has the capacity and capability to respond effectively to fraud. We will continue to work with partners to act on outstanding HMICFRS recommendations and improve the law enforcement response at all levels moving forward.

We are also considering all routes, including legislation, to ensure that law enforcement have all the tools they need to go after fraudsters and crucially to protect those who are vulnerable to these harmful crimes

■ Common Travel Area

Stephen Farry:

[\[44479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the revised guidance on the Common Travel Area from UK Visas and Immigration, published on 2 September 2021, whether compliance with Border Force requests to produce passports or the other listed identity and nationality documents on Common Travel Area routes is voluntary or compulsory.

Kevin Foster:

We are phasing out the use of EU, EEA and Swiss national identity cards, with certain exceptions, as a valid travel document for entry to the UK from 1 October.

As now, there will be no routine immigration controls on Common Travel Area (CTA) journeys and none whatsoever on land journeys between Ireland and Northern Ireland. However, intelligence-led operations to target potential abuse of CTA routes will continue. We want to ensure passengers have sufficient clarity on what they need to do when travelling from one part of the CTA to another, in particular British and Irish citizens who continue to benefit from their important CTA rights.

We are therefore confirming the documents people will be required to present when entering the UK from another part of the CTA as part of an intelligence-led immigration control if they are encountered by a Border Force officer.

Border Force assesses each case on its individual merits. Those who cannot provide the required documents or satisfy Border Force of their status may be refused entry and expected to leave the UK.

The full list of updated document requirements are available on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) page you refer to.

■ Crime: Rural Areas

Alberto Costa:

[\[43553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support she is providing to police forces to help tackle rural crime.

Kit Malthouse:

We are committed to driving down rural crime, which is why the Government provides funding for the police's National Wildlife Crime Unit and fully supports the National Police Chiefs' Council's Rural Affairs Strategy, which helps provide 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. As of 30 June, this year Leicestershire have recruited 206 additional officers and have been allocated a total of 177 additional officers for years one and two of the uplift.

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.

■ Fireworks: Antisocial Behaviour**Sarah Owen:** [\[45932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Bedfordshire Police on tackling anti-social use of fireworks.

Kit Malthouse:

There have not been recent discussions between the Home Secretary and Bedfordshire Constabulary regarding anti-social use of fireworks, however the Home Office maintains regular engagement with policing partners on a range of issues of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Government takes the issues associated with the sale and use of fireworks seriously. There is a comprehensive regulatory framework already in place for fireworks that controls the sale, availability and use of fireworks, as well as setting a curfew and noise limit. Enforcement powers exist for local authorities to take action when fireworks are unsafe, sold illegally, or misused.

Local authorities and the police have powers to tackle the misuse of fireworks, where it arises. This includes a range of flexible tools and powers available to local agencies 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 circumstances and specific local concerns.

It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to respond to individual crimes and local priorities.

■ Home Office: Welsh Government**Ruth Jones:** [\[43664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she last met Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Priti Patel:

I meet with a wide range of colleagues to discuss policy and operational matters. This includes colleagues from devolved governments.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[41703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether members of the public can make donations to the ARAP scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: The UK has a proud history of providing safe haven to those in need and the plans to be set out soon will also harness that generosity of spirit and the offers of support which have already flooded in from charities, businesses and the British public.

This includes the creation of a central portal where people, organisations and businesses can register their offer of support, be it volunteering, a job opportunity, professional skills to help with integration and deal with trauma or donations of items like clothes and toys. Free English language courses will also be provided in recognition that many of the dependents of former staff and Afghan translators may need this.

While the creation of the central portal is still underway, members of the public can still offer help and donations at the Government's portal for refugees, Afghan citizens, and others. (<https://www.gov.uk/help-refugees>)

Caroline Lucas: **[41803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many staff are processing (a) applications made under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) for resettlement support and (b) requests for support made by non-British nationals in Afghanistan who have been identified in a priority group for assistance outside of ARAP; what estimate she has made of the number of staff required to process the volume of applications on receipt and to achieve the fastest possible turnaround of cases; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

Staff are being deployed flexibly to ensure sufficient capacity to respond to priorities and the department will ensure that enough resource is made available to process applications.

Stephen Kinnock: **[43535]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of the Afghan interpreters who arrived in 2015 and 2016 and then submitted applications for reunion with close family from 2019 onwards have family members still stuck in Afghanistan who have been granted reunion; and how many of those family members there are in total.

Chris Philp:

Home Office Migration Statistics do not capture the number Afghan interpreters whose families went on to submit applications under Family Reunion, or how many family members of interpreters remain in Afghanistan.

To capture numbers would require a manual trawl of data and to do so would incur disproportionate cost.

Jessica Morden: **[45821]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support the Government is providing to Afghan interpreters who are already in a third country; and what her timeframe is for those Afghan interpreters (a) to receive a decision on relocation and (b) travelling to the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

We have already broadened the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) in recent weeks to allow eligible individuals to apply from third countries and updated

guidance can be found [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy)

The end of evacuation flights out of Afghanistan does not signify the end of the scheme. It remains open.

Work is underway with the MOD and FCDO to support the logistics of relocation of those accepted as eligible for ARAP who are already in third countries.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Helen Hayes:

[42034]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of requiring employers, landlords and public officials to signpost EU citizens and their family members to the EU Settlement Scheme in the event that they have reason to believe that they may be eligible for a late application to the scheme.

Kevin Foster:

The responsibility for making an application ultimately lies with the individual. However, employers, landlords and public officials have an important role to play in providing support, and the Home Office remains committed to ensuring those who are eligible for the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) can apply. £22 million of funding has been awarded to a network of 72 organisations across the UK, which includes local authorities and local government associations, and we recently undertook to provide further funding for the period between 1 October 2021 and 31 March 2022. This is to ensure information and assistance gets through to those who are hardest to reach, and no one is left behind.

As of September, the Home Office has delivered over 410 events reaching over 29,000 stakeholders, including employers, landlords, financial institutions, educational establishments, umbrella organisations, local authorities, foreign administrations and citizens, about the EUSS. We continue to work closely with employers and landlords to ensure information is effectively cascaded through stakeholder networks, listen to feedback and adapt our communications to ensure maximum effectiveness.

We have published guidance for employers and landlords, which clearly encourages them to signpost prospective or existing employees and tenants who have not applied to the EUSS and do not have any other form of UK immigration leave to make an application. For applications made from 1 July, EEA citizens and their family members are able to evidence their right to work or right to rent once they have submitted a valid EUSS application and the employer or landlord has contacted the Home Office.

To further support EEA citizens living in the UK, the Home Office has worked closely with HMRC and DWP on a programme to identify people who may not have applied to the EUSS but are eligible. Letters have been sent out to these individuals giving them step by step, practical advice on how to apply to the Scheme.

Under our flexible and pragmatic approach to late applications, where Immigration Enforcement encounter a person without status under the EUSS who appears to be eligible, they will be provided with a written notice giving them an opportunity to apply to the scheme, normally within 28 days.

■ Migrants: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [\[41800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether families with dependants that have arrived (a) under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) as a result of being Chevening scholars can stay in their quarantine accommodation until suitable housing has been found for them; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

Managed Quarantine Hotels are managed by Department for Health and Social Care.

Families evacuated to the UK as part of the Operation Pitting exercise who need onward accommodation once they have finished their quarantine will be accommodated in bridging accommodation until suitable housing can be found.

■ Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

John McDonnell: [\[43383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on a potential review of Neighbourhood Watch.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government welcomes the aims of the Neighbourhood Watch Network through its 5-year strategy: a) to be the authoritative voice on community-based crime prevention; b) to become the most popular gateway for citizens to engage in their locality on crime prevention; and c) to become a recognised contributor to community health and wellbeing.

This department has supported Neighbourhood Watch for over 20 years and provides grant funding annually. As part of this grant process, we maintain regular engagement with Neighbourhood Watch and relevant stakeholders to review the aims of the grant and its delivery.

■ Police: Mental Health Services

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[43459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to page nine of the report, Picking Up The Pieces, by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, published in November 2018, what plans she has to help improve the consistency and quality of mental health services available to police officers in England and Wales.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[43460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the statement, Government prioritises wellbeing and mental health of officers in new package to support police, published on 10 July 2019, what progress her Department has made in improving the mental health services available to police officers in England and Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

It is important that police officers have the training and skills to be able to identify when a person is vulnerable and intervene appropriately with people experiencing a mental health crisis. This does not mean that the police should be able to diagnose specific illnesses or disabilities, but they need to know when intervention from partner agencies – such as health professionals – may be necessary.

Training on mental-ill health is integrated throughout the initial police learning programme which all new recruits must complete. Many individual forces have also developed their own training programmes, including joint training with partner agencies, including local Mental Health trusts.

Street Triage schemes also exist, where mental health professionals and the police work together to co-ordinate the right response to people experiencing a mental health crisis. These schemes have been shown to make an immediate and positive impact on the lives of people when they are particularly vulnerable.

In relation to the mental health of police officers, the Government and police leaders take this very seriously and are working to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all police officers and staff.

This includes providing ongoing funding to the National Police Wellbeing Service in England and Wales, which is helping forces to identify where there is most risk of impacts on mental health, developing work around building resilience, as well as supporting those who need it in response to traumatic events.

Since the announcement on 10 July 2019, the Government has accelerated work to introduce a Police Covenant for England and Wales, which will ensure our police get the support and protection they need. The Covenant will be enshrined in law as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, introduced to Parliament on 9 March. The legislation provides a statutory duty for the Home Secretary to report annually to Parliament on the work undertaken. Our focus is on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families, with a real emphasis on mental health support. Our initial priorities for the Covenant include ensuring occupational health standards are embedded in forces, the consideration of appointing a Chief Medical Officer for policing in England and Wales, and the development of pre-deployment mental health support. This will all help towards improving the consistency and quality of wellbeing support police officers receive.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Ian Blackford: [\[41895\]](#)

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).

Ian Blackford: [\[41897\]](#)

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:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: 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.

■ Slavery

Holly Lynch: [\[43579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many UK citizens are in the National Referral Mechanism; and what proportion of those people are female.

Holly Lynch: [\[43580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which agencies are making referrals to the National Referral Mechanism.

Holly Lynch: [\[43581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the longest time recorded is for an individual to receive (a) a Reasonable Grounds decision and (b) a Conclusive Grounds decision.

Victoria Atkins:

Figures on the First Responder organisations making referrals into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the nationality of potential victims being referred, the gender of potential victims can be found in the published statistics.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics regarding the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). These include the average time taken to make a Country Guidance Decision. The latest published NRM statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

As outlined in the Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland, the expectation is that the Single Competent Authority (SCA) will make a Reasonable Grounds decision within five working days, where possible, of the NRM referral being received. [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61444/modern-slavery-statutory-guidance-for-england-and-wales).

Following a positive Reasonable Grounds decision, and the minimum recovery and reflection period, the Single Competent Authority makes the Conclusive Grounds decision as soon as possible and only once there is sufficient information to do so. The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics regarding the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). These include the average time taken to make a Conclusive Grounds decision. The latest published NRM statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

A First Responder Organisation is an authority that is authorised to refer a potential victim of modern slavery into the National Referral Mechanism. The list of First Responder Organisations can be found in the Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland, which also sets out their roles and responsibilities.

The SCA is currently recruiting a large number of new decision makers across the UK to increase capacity for NRM decision-making and reduce decision making timescales; this brings additional resource pressures initially (for training and upskilling) but will have substantial long-term benefits for decision making timescales.

■ Vans: Theft**Andrea Jenkyns:****[43584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle van theft in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) England.

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[43585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the theft of practical tools for employment in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) England.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government is tackling vehicle crime as a priority. We continue to work closely with police and motor manufacturers through the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, established by the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for vehicle crime and overseen by the Government's Crime and Justice Taskforce. This includes consideration of how we can reduce the number of vehicles being stolen.

Through this Working Group, a network of vehicle crime specialists has been established across all police forces in England and Wales to share expertise.

The Government is aware of the issue of tool theft and understands the negative impact this has on victims who rely on the tools of their trade to earn a living. We have established an expert Stolen Goods Working Group with the police and academia to tackle the markets for stolen goods. The group is examining ways to make property more identifiable and traceable and are working with partners to increase enforcement and encourage due diligence checks by second-hand goods traders.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme

David Mundell:

[\[43431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress her Department has made on expanding the Youth Mobility Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

We are open to negotiating Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) arrangements with other countries and territories. However, as each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK Nationals, with the detail negotiated and agreed between the relevant parties, we are unable to disclose the status of ongoing negotiations with partner countries as they occur.

Further details of additional YMS agreements will be announced once they are concluded.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Parliamentary Estate: Access

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[45805\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Broxbourne, representing the House of Commons Commission, what estimate the Commission has made of the timetable for reopening exit three from Westminster tube station.

Sir Charles Walker:

For safety reasons, exit 3 (or the underpass) must remain closed until the end of the Elizabeth Tower Conservation project, which would not be until Summer 2022. In addition, we are exploring how the exit could be best used for Parliament in a way that would benefit Members, staff, and the Estate. Any decision regarding exit three will be reviewed in the next six months.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT■ **Allotments****Steve Reed:**[\[45841\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of local authorities' levels of provision of allotments in England.

Christopher Pincher:

No national assessment of the provision of allotments in England has been made. Local authorities are responsible for allotment provision in their area.

The Government recognises through our National Planning Policy Framework the important role that allotments can provide in enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles within our communities. Our National Model Design Code states that as part of open space design for large developments there should be the consideration of allotments and community growing projects for food production, learning and community engagement.

However, our National Planning Policy Framework is clear that local planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space and opportunities for new provision, which can include allotments, and their plans should then seek to accommodate this.

■ **Evictions: Homelessness****Feryal Clark:**[\[44465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 902875 on the covid-19 evictions moratorium, how much funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant has been allocated to Enfield Council; what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of the end of the covid-19 evictions moratorium on Enfield North constituency; and what recent steps his Department has taken to protect renters and prevent homelessness in Enfield North constituency.

Eddie Hughes:

Enfield Council have been allocated £8,927,794 in Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2021/2022 (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-grant-2021-to-2022>).

Legislation was in place to prevent bailiffs from serving eviction notices and carrying out evictions, except in the most serious circumstances between November 2020 and the end of May 2021. The ban has now been lifted, reflecting the easing of national restrictions and ensuring that landlords are able to exercise their right to justice. However, renters continue to be protected by longer notice periods of 4 months except in the most serious cases until the end of September, and new arrangements where a claim for possession is made in the county court, such as a new Review stage where tenants can access free legal advice, will remain in place until at least the end of November.

Evidence shows that the measures which the government has taken to protect renters during the pandemic have been successful in reducing evictions and preventing homelessness. Landlord repossession reduced by 80% in May to June 2021 compared to the corresponding Quarter in 2019, whilst claims for possession decreased by 74%, indicating a drop in the number of cases which can progress to the stage at which someone can be evicted. This data is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-april-to-june-2021>

The Statutory Homelessness statistics for 2020-2021 show that there was a 41.4% reduction in households owed a homelessness duty following the end of an assured shorthold tenancy in 2020/21 compared with 2019/20.

■ Historic Buildings

Steve Reed:

[45843]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of local authorities' ability to protect and conserve historic sites.

Christopher Pincher:

Local planning authorities have strong powers through the designation and planning systems to protect historic sites. In the recent Planning White Paper, *Planning for the Future*, we have committed to reviewing and updating the current planning framework for listed buildings and conservation areas, to ensure their significance is conserved while allowing, where appropriate, sympathetic changes to support their continued use and address climate change. Our detailed proposals will be announced.

■ Housing: Somerset

David Warburton:

[43622]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the achievability of housing targets across Somerset in the context of the time taken to process planning applications as a result of nutrient neutrality requirements in the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar catchment area.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework implemented a standard method for calculating local housing need in order to give a clear understanding of the minimum

number of homes an area needs to plan for. The method provides a minimum number of homes, not a maximum, and does not provide a target. Authorities are expected to use it as the starting point in the process of planning for new homes. Once this has been established, local authorities will still need to consider the constraints they face locally, which could include nutrient pollution, to assess how many homes can be delivered in their area. If they cannot meet all their need then they should work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities to see if need would best be met elsewhere. At the end of this process the authority will finalise their housing target and this will be tested by planning inspectors for robustness.

The Government is working to tackle nutrients pollution. Together with DEFRA, we have set up a monthly Government task force involving Natural England and the Environment Agency to ensure a clear action plan is in place, focusing on solutions for both permitting housebuilding to resume while not compromising the condition of Protected Sites. Alongside this, we are continuing to support Local Planning Authorities through the work of the Planning Advisory Service.

■ Local Government: Meetings

Tim Farron: [\[44276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what his planned timetable is for publication of the results of his Department's consultation on local authority remote meetings.

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.

■ Planning: Floods

Rachael Maskell: [\[43557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposals in the Planning for the future consultation, published 6 August 2020, on future trends in the number of flooding events.

Christopher Pincher:

As set out in the *Planning for the Future* consultation, we committed to assessing the extent to which our planning policies and processes for managing flood risk may need to be strengthened.

This assessment process has already started. Our review of policy for development in areas of flood risk found that there are robust measures in place to protect people and property from flooding which all local planning authorities are expected to follow.

Informed by interim findings of our review, our National Planning Policy Framework was updated to clarify that all sources of flood risk should be considered when making planning decisions. The Framework is clear that flood risk assessments are

needed for all areas where development is proposed that are at risk of flooding, from all sources, both now and in the future. Areas at little or no risk of flooding from any source should always be developed in preference to areas at higher risk of flooding.

As also set out in the review, we will use the final findings to inform a future more detailed review of the National Planning Policy Framework which is likely to be required, to support implementation of the Government's proposals for wider reform of the planning system. The Government is committed to maintaining robust protections, in line with our ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk.

■ Waking Watch Relief Fund

Royston Smith: [44402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much was allocated to applicants to the Waking Watch Fund who applied during the first application window of 31 January to 14 March 2021.

Royston Smith: [44403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much was allocated to applicants to the Waking Watch Fund who applied during the second application window of 26 May to 24 June 2021.

Christopher Pincher:

Data on the Waking Watch Relief Fund, including the amount of funding allocated and approved, is published at: www.gov.uk/guidance/waking-watch-relief-fund#waking-watch-relief-fund-data. The data is updated monthly and the next update will be on 16 September 2021 which will show data to the end of August 2021.

The majority of the Fund is administered by local and regional authorities, who are responsible for providing the allocated funding to buildings in their area.

■ Waste Management

Steve Reed: [45844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities in England have an area waste strategy.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy for Waste states that waste planning authorities should prepare Local Plans which should identify sufficient opportunities to meet the identified needs of an area for the management of waste, aiming to drive waste management up the Waste Hierarchy. It should ensure that suitable sites and areas for the provision of waste management facilities are identified in appropriate locations.

MHCLG does not hold statistics on the number of waste strategies currently prepared.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Exports

Emily Thornberry: [\[43441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, in which years from 2016-17 to 2020-21 was it the practice of her Department to include export wins amongst the performance data used to calculate incentive payments for departmental suppliers of export support services over the course of their contracts.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade supports exporting businesses through a number of delivery partners who are contracted on the basis of outcomes with incentive payments aligned to their delivery. The outcomes used every year since 2016 include export wins.

Emily Thornberry: [\[43442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, in which years from 2016-17 to 2020-21 was it the practice of her Department to include export wins amongst the performance data used to calculate end of year bonus payments for members of departmental staff involved in export support roles.

Greg Hands:

Performance at the Department for International Trade (DIT) is assessed against objectives that relate to corporate and leadership activities, aligned to DIT values and the grade of an individual. Both the delivery and behaviours – the ‘what’ and ‘how’ – are considered equally when assessing performance. Whilst export wins may be one of a range of factors taken into account when considering eligibility, these would not solely determine the eligibility for end of year bonus payments for staff involved in export support roles.

Emily Thornberry: [\[43443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how much was spent by her Department on incentive payments for departmental suppliers of export support services in (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19, (d) 2019-20 and (e) 2020-21.

Greg Hands:

For each of the financial years between 2016/17 and 2020/21 the Department for International Trade made the following contracted incentive payments across 11 export support services contracts.

	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
	TOTAL INCENTIVE PAID				
£ Total	1,360,330	3,819,996	4,220,000	4,223,743	1,650,000

JUSTICE**■ Employment Tribunals Service: Standards****Wera Hobhouse:**[\[43625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Section 1 of the HM Courts & Tribunal Service annual report and accounts 2020-21, published in July 2021, HC 405, what actions have been taken as a result of the establishment of the ministerial taskforce to improve capacity, efficiency and productivity of the Employment Tribunal system.

Chris Philp:

Despite the enormous challenges they have faced, the employment tribunals remained open throughout the pandemic. We have harnessed the benefits of technology to ensure that the tribunals remain safely operational and accessible. We have maximised our use of remote hearings in the employment tribunals, which are now the largest user of the cloud video platform across all tribunals.

However, significant challenges remain. We are working closely with the judiciary to continue to improve our disposal rate through maximising judicial capacity and driving further recruitment of judges. The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy have also been working closely through a joint taskforce on what further measures we can introduce to take the employment tribunals towards recovery.

The taskforce is carefully considering what further actions we can take to support recovery across the employment dispute system, and to enhance its resilience and sustainability in the longer term. We expect to be able to announce the first part of the taskforce's work on further actions we can take to support the recovery of the system in due course.

■ Judiciary and Legal Profession: Afghanistan**Ruth Jones:**[\[43656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on ensuring the safety of (a) judges and (b) other legal professionals in Afghanistan.

Chris Philp:

I am in regular contact with the Foreign Secretary, and we are agreed on the need to support judges and those that have committed themselves to building rule of law and supporting human rights in Afghanistan. A number of judges have already been resettled in the UK, and further details of eligibility under the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme will be published in due course.

■ Prisoners' Release

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[43468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Swaleside, published on 3 September 2021, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of resettlement services offered at HMP Swaleside.

Lucy Frazer:

There is room for improvement in the resettlement service offered at HMP Swaleside.

The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) noted that 26 prisoners were released from Swaleside directly into the community without having spent time at a resettlement prison prior to release.

However, it should be noted that these men were provided with support in preparation for their release, including assistance with securing accommodation on release, setting up bank accounts and obtaining ID cards. Additionally, all prisoners are appointed a Community Offender Manager (COM), more commonly known as a Probation Officer when they are seven months from release or seven months from their parole date. The COM supports ex-offenders to help prevent them from re-offending after they leave prison.

The Offender Management in Custody (OMiC) model was implemented from April 2018 as a framework to co-ordinate a prisoner's journey through custody and back into the community. OMiC intends to put rehabilitation at the centre of custodial and post-release work to reduce reoffending and promote community reintegration. The Governor of HMP Swaleside, Mark Icke, and his team are committed to the success of this framework and are looking at ways to engage the population and local services to assist with resettlement opportunities.

■ Prisoners: Coronavirus

Ellie Reeves:

[\[43636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of covid-19 restrictions on the (a) physical and (b) mental health of prisoners.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government takes the health and wellbeing of prisoners very seriously.

Maintaining the safety and wellbeing of prisoners has remained a priority throughout the pandemic.

When regime restrictions were introduced in prisons to control the spread of COVID-19 and save lives, we recognised that these measures could exacerbate the mental health needs of those in our care.

To address anxiety and boredom, we have made available distraction packs, in cell activities and a range of self-help materials, including a Wellbeing Plan, created with input from mental health charity Mind. We also gave staff resources for assisting prisoners who might be struggling, such as guidance for understanding and

supporting someone who is self-harming and wellbeing checks for vulnerable and priority groups of prisoners. The Samaritans phone service has remained available and we are working with them to ensure their Listener scheme continues to facilitate peer support between prisoners.

We have also acted quickly to ensure that prisoners could stay in touch with their loved ones, rolling-out secure mobile handsets, providing every prisoner with £5 PIN credit per week and introducing secure video calls.

The [National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services](#) sets out how we will take decisions about easing Covid-19 restrictions, and the different Regime Stages prisons will operate at. Prisons continue to progress wherever safe to do so; the majority of prisons are now operating at Stage 2 of the Framework and the first prisons have reached Stage 1, which involves the lowest degree of restrictions.

■ Prisoners: Females

Ellie Reeves:

[\[43632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to tackle the disproportionality of women of ethnic minorities in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

We want people to have confidence in a justice system that is fair and open – one where no person suffers discrimination of any sort.

The over-representation of ethnic minority women in prisons, and in the justice system more widely, is a real concern and we continue to prioritise understanding and tackling disparities they may face.

The Female Offender Strategy (FOS), a comprehensive programme of work to improve outcomes for women at all points of the CJS, included a clear commitment to look at how the distinct needs of ethnic minority women can be better addressed, and work is underway to deliver this commitment.

We have established a specific Female Offender Minority Ethnic (FOME) Working Group to better understand the issues faced by ethnic minority women in the CJS. This brings together policy and operational leads with expert voluntary sector colleagues with experience of supporting this cohort of women.

Work includes developing specific staff training centred on the needs of ethnic minority women, user-centred research focusing on the earlier experiences ethnic minority women face in understanding the legal processes they face up to the pre-sentencing stage, supporting those voluntary sector organisations who work with this cohort, and taking forward the recommendations of Lord Farmer's Review.

More generally, the Department has published two updates to our work on tackling racial disparities detailing the full range of activities to address race disparity in the CJS including specific sections focused on work relevant to the disparity faced by ethnic minority women.

Ellie Reeves:

[\[43633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support is being offered to female offenders to reduce the number of women in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

The Female Offender Strategy emphasises both the importance of diversion and community solutions and the need to provide support for offenders who are in or have left prison.

Since publication of the strategy in June 2018, we have invested £7 million of Strategy funding in women's community sector services across England and Wales to sustain and enhance current services and provide properties for new women's centres which provide an important route to diversion from prison.

Under the probation dynamic framework, we have also awarded almost £46 million to charities to deliver wraparound support to women in the criminal justice system over the next three years.

This year we are also boosting funding to steer more women away from crime and prison. £2.5 million will be awarded to community services which tackle root causes of offending and cut crime.

■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[43470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Oakwood by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, published on 3 September 2021, what steps he is taking to support Prisoner Led Initiatives in prisons in England and Wales.

Lucy Frazer:

Peer led services are increasingly popular across prisons and many of these are supported nationally, such as the Listener Scheme run in partnership with Samaritans to provide peer support. Many more local initiatives offer a range of peer education; support; mentoring and signposting roles. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) continues to look at peer led initiatives to support consistency and good practice.

HMPPS is trialling peer led initiatives as part of a joint project with Penal Reform Solutions to look at peer led activities in a challenged prison environment, and closely record their progress and effectiveness. Lessons learned from this trial will be shared with HMPPS colleagues by December alongside development of tools and learning products to support and strengthen initiatives across the estate.

Drug Strategy leads have recently been introduced at HMPs Durham, Berwyn, New Hall and Guys Marsh. Part of their focus will be to develop a range of peer led initiatives to promote recovery, health and wellbeing outcomes.

■ Prisons: Complaints

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[43467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Swaleside, published on 3 September 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of enabling Independent Monitoring Boards to monitor the progress of Confidential Access complaints under the Prison Rules.

Lucy Frazer:

A prisoner complaint submitted under confidential access must be sent to either the Governor or Director of the prison where the prisoner is held, the Prison Group Director or the Director's line manager in a contracted prison, or the Chair of the local Independent Monitoring Board (IMB). It is a prisoner's decision who they direct a confidential access complaint to, and it

should only be opened by the person it is addressed to. The person responding is required to keep a copy and make a record, although they must not share details of the complaint.

Although IMB members do not have access to details of confidential access complaints that are not addressed to them, they are able to access locally held data records, including those held at HMP Swaleside, about the number of these being raised.

■ Prisons: Contracts

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[43464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP North Sea Camp, published on 3 September 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that failures by contracted out service providers result in penalties to encourage compliance.

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[43465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP North Sea Camp, published on 3 September 2021, what steps he is taking to increase the space allocated to prisoners sharing rooms.

Kit Malthouse:

The Ministry of Justice is currently preparing the draft response to the Independent Monitoring Board's Annual Report on HMP North Sea Camp and will respond in due course.

We are working with contractors and the Governor at HMP North Sea Camp to ensure recommendations and policies are reviewed with the aim of providing better services and accommodation for those in our care at the prison establishment.

■ Prisons: Females**Ellie Reeves:** [\[43631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the announcement of 26 November 2020 that £315 million will be allocated to enhance the condition of the existing prison estate, whether that includes spending on the announced 500 prison places for women in the existing estate.

Lucy Frazer:

No, the programme to deliver up to 500 new places in women's prisons is being funded out of the MoJ's 3-year capital allocation for additional prison capacity. The £315m in capital funding for 2021/22 announced last November is being invested in refurbishment and renewal of the existing prison estate, including temporary accommodation to replace a number of units recently taken out of use that no longer meet current fire safety standards. We expect to spend over £21m of the £315m on works to improve conditions in women's prisons.

■ Prisons: Overcrowding**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[43466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the HM Prison and Probation Service Annual Digest 2020/21, published on 29 July 2021, if he will published information his Department holds on projected future changes in the crowding rate within prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

We remain committed to reducing crowding across the estate. In the year to March 2021, the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation was 20.2%, down from 22.5% the previous year and levels of around 25% experienced since 2004.

The government is investing more than £4 billion to make significant progress in delivering 18,000 additional prison places across England and Wales by the mid-2020s. This includes creating four new prisons over the next six years whilst also expanding a number of other prisons over the next three years. Additionally, construction is well underway on HMP Five Wells, the new prison in Wellingborough in Northamptonshire, and Glen Parva in Leicestershire, creating more than 3,300 places.

This additional capacity will have a positive impact on lowering the proportion of crowding within the prison estate. However, the extent to which the proportion of prisoners held in crowded accommodation will reduce will always be dependent on levels of demand in the system.

■ Prisons: Visits**Ellie Reeves:** [\[43634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of limited visitations on the (a) welfare and (b) health of women in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

We recognise the importance of positive family contact for all prisoners in custody. When regime restrictions were introduced in prisons to control the spread of COVID-19 and save lives, we acted quickly to ensure that prisoners could maintain family contact despite the exceptional circumstances.

Visits in exceptional circumstances and visits to children in custody continued throughout. Women's prisons were prioritised for the roll-out of secure video calling, and additional access to video calls and phone credit were provided to promote communication with family, especially children. Closed women's prisons were also prioritised in the roll out of in-cell telephony.

We produced tailored guidance for supporting specific groups of people in prison whose wellbeing may be more impacted by Covid-19 measures, including women. We also produced a range of products to support Governors in devising and implementing local safety and welfare plans.

From March 2021, prisons resumed social visits where it was safe to do so, as they moved to Stage 3 of the National Framework for Prison Regimes and Services. All prisons are currently offering in-person prison visits and we continue to maximise the use of video calling to support positive family ties.

Ellie Reeves:[\[43635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his planned timetable is for recommencing in-person prison visits; and for what reason he has decided upon that timetable.

Ellie Reeves:[\[43637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has a roadmap for the easing of covid-19 restrictions for inmates in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

Our plan for easing restrictions in prisons (and re-introducing them where necessary) will be guided by public health advice alongside an operational assessment of what can be safely implemented, whilst ensuring we can keep staff and prisoners safe.

The National Framework for prison regimes, which sets out in detail how we will take decisions about easing coronavirus-related restrictions in prisons, was published on GOV.UK on 2 June 2020 and updated 18 August 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-national-framework-for-prison-regimes-and-services>

We had to suspend routine social visits to adults in prisons over the winter, due to the risks from Covid-19, although visits in exceptional circumstances and visits to children in custody continued. From March 2021, prisons resumed social visits where it was safe to do so, as they moved to Stage 3 of the Framework. All prisons are currently offering in-person prison visits, with physical contact allowed for all people aged under 11, to reflect public health advice on the lower transmission risks for that age group and particular needs of children. In addition, two adults from two different

households are now able to visit together, making it easier for prisoners to see more people.

We are also conducting a national rollout allowing visitors to Stage 2 prisons to produce a negative rapid test result in order to have physical contact with the person they are visiting and access to refreshment facilities. Social distancing measures will remain in place at this time for those aged over 11 who cannot provide a negative test result.

We continue to maximise the use of video calling to support positive family ties.

■ Probation: Databases

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[43461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling probation staff using the ViSOR database for risk assessment and monitoring purposes in multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) level cases to transfer information directly to and from probation case management systems.

Lucy Frazer:

The existing method for transferring information from the Probation case management system (Delius) must be carried out manually and, as such, Offender Managers use a tick box method for the entry they want to be transferred into ViSOR which is stored in a separate section in Delius. Administrative staff then convert the data into a Word format document for attaching into the ViSOR system.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service are currently looking at how this process can be improved between existing Ministry of Justice (MoJ) databases including Delius, OASys (offender assessment system) NOMIS, Mercury, and their successors.

■ Probation: Vetting

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[43463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of enabling (a) existing probation staff and (b) potential probation recruits to take up roles in the Unified Probation Service that do not require access to the ViSOR database if they do not pass the new police vetting requirement for ViSOR access.

Lucy Frazer:

Non-Police Personnel Vetting (NPPV) level 2 has been in place for over a decade in HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) for ViSOR users and is a level of vetting agreed by Police and, at the time, the National Offender Management Service as a minimum requirement for using ViSOR.

Potential probation recruits whose role will require the use of ViSOR undergo NPPV at recruitment stage, however we do not review or support failed vetting applications at that stage. Potential probation recruits whose role will not require the use of ViSOR do not undergo NPPV.

Every applicant is entitled to appeal a negative decision which is heard by a panel chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable of Warwickshire and have access to advice to the Vetting Support Officer who understands the necessary requirements for a successful application. This ensures no loss of integrity highlighted by the vetting process.

In the event of a failed application, there is a procedure in place for any further investigations in the process, including examining the applicant's original recruitment level vetting. The review is based on a review of a risk to the service and further considerations on employment and redeployment within the HMPPS, MoJ or the wider civil service.

■ **Standford Hill Prison and Swaleside Prison: Catering**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[43469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Swaleside, published on 3 September 2021, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of kitchen capacity at (a) HMP Swaleside and (b) HMP Standford Hill.

Lucy Frazer:

I am grateful that the Chair of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) at HMP Swaleside has raised legitimate concerns regarding the adequacy of the kitchen capacity at HMP Swaleside. The requirement for HMP Swaleside to providing a catering service for the prisoners located at HMP Standford Hill has created a pressure on the catering and refrigeration facilities at Swaleside and to some extent also impacts on the prison regime. Significant planning is taking place to explore the opportunities to building a dedicated on site catering centre at Standford Hill to meet the catering needs of the prisoners there. As a consequence of the current operating pressures, additional kitchen appliances have been provided to HMP Swaleside. I am informed that this has significantly improved the capability and capacity of the Swaleside catering operation.

I am grateful to the Governor at Swaleside and his catering team for the support they have provided to Standford Hill. In the longer term it is anticipated that the opening of a catering centre at Standford Hill will significantly reduce the catering operational pressures at Swaleside.

TRANSPORT

■ **Airports: National Policy Statements**

Dan Carden:

[\[45908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will take steps to review the Airports National Policy Statement in light of the Government's commitment to net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050.

Robert Courts:

On 6th September the Secretary of State wrote to those stakeholders who had requested a review of the Airports National Policy Statement under the Planning Act 2008, communicating that it is not appropriate to review the ANPS at this time. The issue of whether to review the ANPS will be reconsidered after the Jet Zero Strategy has been finalised and we have more certainty about the longer-term impact of Covid-19 on aviation.

■ Biofuels: Ferries**Jim Shannon:**[\[44347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of amending the definition of inland waterway vessel in the Energy Act 2004 to allow biofuel suppliers to claim Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates on biofuel supplied to ferries operating solely on UK inland waterways.

Jim Shannon:[\[44348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the potential effect on the UK's levels of net greenhouse gas emissions of amending the Energy Act 2004 to allow biofuel suppliers to claim Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates for biofuel supplied to ferries operating solely in UK inland waterways.

Jim Shannon:[\[44349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the potential effect on pollution levels around the River Thames and London of amending the Energy Act 2004 to allow biofuel suppliers to claim Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates on biofuel supplied to ferries operating solely on UK inland waterways.

Rachel Maclean:

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) does not extend to fuels used in ferries, and there are no plans to widen the scheme so that biofuel supplied in ferries which operate solely on inland waterways would be eligible for Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates (RTFCs) under the RTFO scheme.

Earlier this year the Department consulted on changes to the RTFO including expansion to new transport modes. The consultation "The Role of the RTFO in Domestic Maritime" explains that whilst biofuels can have a role in reducing maritime emissions, it is the Government's current view that the RTFO should not be used to stimulate the uptake of biofuels in maritime transport.

The availability of biomass used to produce biofuels is limited, and these finite resources are best used in those sectors of the economy where greater greenhouse gas savings can be achieved, or sectors that have fewer decarbonisation options than maritime, such as aviation. Therefore, the main focus of our RTFO support is to maximise greenhouse gas emissions savings from biofuels in road transport and to grow the supply of renewable aviation fuels where biomass will be needed in the longer term.

The Department is supporting Research and Development in low emission shipping technologies for vessels, including inland waterways craft, and infrastructure as part of a £20m Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition.

More generally, to tackle the pollution levels around the River Thames and London the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) uses a combination of monitoring and modelling to annually assess air quality in the UK. This Modelling allows Defra to assess levels of pollutants both now and in future years in order to develop policies across government to continue to improve air quality in the UK. Additionally, the Mayor of London is responsible for air quality and transport strategies in the capital, including local air quality monitoring, and Transport for London is responsible for managing traffic on the river. Local Authorities also carry out their own assessments of air quality.

■ **Bus Services: Standards**

Sam Tarry:

[\[44472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report by Professor Philip Alston entitled Public transport, private profit: the human cost of privatizing buses in the United Kingdom, published on 19 July 2021, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding in that report that the Government's National Bus Strategy amounts to a series of half measures that do not address the structural problems of the ongoing bus crisis or guarantee quality service.

Rachel Maclean:

Our National Bus Strategy, backed by £3 billion of investment, is the biggest reform and support package for buses in generations. It will deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered. Enhanced Partnerships and franchising arrangements will bring together the important skillsets and contributions of local transport authorities and bus operators, critical to a strong bus network. All local transport authorities have confirmed, as the strategy asked, that they are developing one or both of those approaches. Bus Service Improvement Plans for all areas, which will influence the share of the £3 billion which authorities receive, are being developed for the 31 October deadline.

■ **Cycling: Training**

Steve Reed:

[\[44359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what data his Department holds on the number of cycle training sessions local authorities have provided in each of the last ten years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Data on the numbers of schoolchildren who have taken part each year in Bikeability training courses in each local highway authority area in England is available via the Bikeability Trust's website at <https://bikeability.org.uk/support/publications/>. The total

number of children trained across England rose from around 134,000 in 2009/10 to around 420,000 in 2019/20. The Department is providing an unprecedented £18 million of funding for the Bikeability programme in 2021/22 to allow even more training to be delivered.

The Department does not hold data on the number of adult cycling training sessions delivered in each local authority area each year, but is providing around £30 million of revenue funding in the current financial year to local authorities in England to enable them to deliver a wide range of programmes including adult cycle training courses.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Tests

Bill Esterson: [\[45962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision of HGV tests by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency to meet demand by region in last six months.

Bill Esterson: [\[45963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the (a) supply of and (b) demand for HGV Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency tests by region in last six months.

Rachel Maclean:

In line with the Statistics and Regulations Service 2007, The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) expects to publish official statistics covering April 2021 to June 2021 on or around 23 September 2021. The DVSA will also publish statistics covering July 2021 to September 2021 on or around 23 December 2021.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Free Movement

Tim Farron: [\[44279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the total amount spent by his Department to research the impact of ending free movement on the haulage industry.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has regular discussions with the road haulage industry. We are working together to address the current HGV driver shortage, which is an issue common to many European countries.

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.

■ Public Transport: Coronavirus

Zarah Sultana: [\[45933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage the use of public transport following the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is working closely with operators to support measures to increase passenger confidence and encourage a return to the network.

We are continuing to ensure we maintain reliable levels of service and the Department, with operators, is supporting passenger safety through enhanced cleaning, providing hand sanitiser and supporting ventilation where possible, alongside positive communications and messaging including the rail campaign 'Getting Back on Track' and the TfL campaign 'Welcome Back London.'

The Department has also issued safer travel guidance for passengers and operators which provides advice to passengers about how to travel safely during the pandemic to support a return to the network.

■ Transport: Carbon Emissions**Helen Hayes:**[\[43592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the role of local authorities in the decarbonisation of transport.

Rachel Maclean:

There is no uniform approach to decarbonisation and each place has its role to play in ensuring the UK meets its target of net zero by 2020. Using place-based solutions for emissions reduction is one of the six strategic priorities in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan. We recognise that for transport, local and regional level organisations are often best placed to make the decisions that will deliver practical change. Local authorities are a key part of this picture, and we have committed to publish a Local Authority Toolkit that will provide guidance to support local areas to deliver more sustainable transport measures. We will support decarbonisation by investing more than £12 billion in local transport systems over the current Parliament, enabling local authorities to invest in local priorities, such as improving electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

■ Travel: USA**Theresa Villiers:**[\[43426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress he has made on talks with his US counterpart on further opening up of international travel between the UK and the US since the G7 transport leaders conference.

Robert Courts:

At the G7 in Carbis Bay, the Prime Minister and President Biden made clear the importance of bringing about the return of safe trans-Atlantic travel as soon as possible.

The UK/US Experts Working Group (EWG) has ambitious objectives and has established a productive dialogue. It will continue to meet regularly to develop meaningful options to ensure the return of safe and sustainable international travel.

The reopening of transatlantic travel to vaccinated US passengers reflects the impact of the US-UK EWG's extensive activity to work through the detail of our respective inbound systems and provide the platform to kickstart the economy as we recover from the pandemic.

TREASURY

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Aviation

Justin Madders: [\[45862\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on employment in the airline sector.

Virginia Crosbie: [\[45955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until April 2022 for the travel industry; and what additional steps he is taking to provide ongoing support to the travel industry.

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 travel sector is being supported with over £12 billion that has been made available through loan guarantees and support for exporters. 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.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Travel**

Carla Lockhart: [\[43703\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the travel and aviation industry to explore the potential merits of extending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for those sectors.

Carla Lockhart: [\[43704\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on employment levels in the travel and aviation sectors.

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.

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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.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45871\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people who are still furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in (a) York and (b) York Central constituency.

Jesse Norman:

It is not possible to answer the question directly as data on the number of people furloughed whose jobs have been supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is not available. However, data is available for the number of employments furloughed with the support of the CJRS (a person may have multiple employments).

HM Revenue and Customs publish statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme regularly. The latest statistics were published on 9 September 2021 and can be found on GOV.UK.

Figures from these statistics, the latest available, show that on 31 July 2021, 3,900 jobs were on furlough in York Unitary Authority while 2,200 jobs were on furlough in York Central Parliamentary Constituency. These are provisional figures.

■ **NHS England and NHS Improvement**

Paul Bristow:

[\[44455\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 9 July 2021 to Question 25963 on NHS England and NHS Improvement, whether the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has received the information he sought from NHSEI; and whether a meeting has been arranged with the Chief People Officer or other relevant senior officials in NHSEI.

Steve Barclay:

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury is committed to spending taxpayers' money responsibly and delivering value for money for them. To support his work, he has requested that NHSEI, like other ALBs, share a detailed organisation breakdown, including the grade number, cost and relevant job descriptions broken down by team in each directorate. He has asked for a meeting with the Chief People Officer and other relevant Senior Officials in NHSEI to discuss this and hopes that one can be agreed as soon as possible.

■ Public Expenditure: Education

Helen Hayes: [\[43590\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Education and (b) the Prime Minister on allocating additional funding at the next Spending Review for education recovery.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury Ministers regularly meet with other government departments, which includes discussions around education. The government is providing £1.4 billion over the next three academic years for education recovery, including £1 billion to support up to six million, 15-hour tutoring courses for disadvantaged school children. This is on top of £1.7 billion education recovery funding committed for academic years 20-21 and 21-22, as well as the 3-year school funding settlement announced at the 2019 Spending Review – delivering an increase of £7.1bn to core budgets in 22-23 compared to 19-20 funding levels, the biggest funding boost for schools in a decade.

■ Uniforms: VAT

Carla Lockhart: [\[43705\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment has been made of the potential merits of the removal of VAT on school uniforms to assist disadvantaged families.

Jesse Norman:

Under the current VAT rules, all children's clothing and footwear designed for young people less than 14 years of age, including school uniforms, attract a zero-rate of VAT, meaning that no VAT is charged on the sale of these items.

Extending these reliefs would impose additional pressure on the public finances, to which VAT makes a significant contribution. VAT raised around £130 billion in 2019/20, and helps to fund key spending priorities. Any reduction in tax paid is a reduction in the money available to support important public services, including the NHS and policing.

There are no current plans to change the VAT treatment of children's clothing and school uniforms. However, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

Carla Lockhart: [\[43706\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much revenue was raised as a result of VAT on school uniforms in each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC do not hold information on VAT revenue from specific products or services because businesses are not required to provide figures at a product level on their VAT returns, as this would impose an excessive administrative burden.

■ VAT Exemptions

Jonathan Edwards: [\[45836\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has received representations from the Welsh Government in respect of a VAT exemption on new build homes in Wales under the terms of the One Planet Development policy.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[45837\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with HMRC on a VAT exemption for new build dwellings under the Welsh Government's One Planet development policy.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer and other Treasury ministers engage with the Welsh Government and all of the devolved administrations regularly on a range of subjects, including VAT.

The Government currently maintains a zero rate of VAT on new-build residential properties.

The Government is committed to greening the economy; and investing in new affordable housing is a priority.

The Government is investing £12.2 billion over five years through the Affordable Homes Programmes; this is the largest cash investment in affordable housing for a decade and will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Cold Weather Payments

Drew Hendry: [\[45868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the level of the Cold Weather Payment to help offset (a) the suspension of the pension triple lock in the 2022-23 financial year and (b) increasing fuel costs.

Guy Opperman:

The Social Security (Up-rating of Benefits) Bill ensures those who rely on the new State Pension, basic State Pension and Pension Credit Standard Minimum Guarantee have their spending power preserved. They will be protected from the higher costs of living by increasing at least with the rise in inflation or 2.5%, whichever is higher. This was also the case last year when we took legislative action to increase State Pension rates despite the fall in earnings which would otherwise have meant that they would have been frozen.

The UK Government is committed to supporting older people and vulnerable households to keep warm, and it has a strong package of policies already delivering to those in need.

This includes Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments available in Scotland until the Scottish Government has built the capacity to deliver replacements for them.

■ Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia: Community Development

Martyn Day: [\[45888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether officials in her Department have had recent discussions with representatives from the congenital adrenal hyperplasia community.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department has not had any recent meetings with representatives from the congenital adrenal hyperplasia community. We meet regularly with disabled people, people with health conditions and their representatives, to ensure their voices are put at the heart of policy making and service design. To support the Health and Disability Green Paper we are currently running public events in locations around the country to hear about people's experiences with our services and to get their views on the Green Paper proposals. These are accompanied by a series of virtual public events for those who would prefer to engage with us in that way.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Welsh Government

Ruth Jones: [\[43660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she last met Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Justin Tomlinson:

There is a well-established working relationship between the Department for Work and Pensions and The Welsh Government, ensuring that we work together on devolved and reserved areas effectively. The Secretary of State met with the Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales and the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture on December 10th 2020.

■ Employment: Disability

Ruth Jones: [\[44443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps she has taken to help ensure equal employment opportunities for disabled people in Newport West constituency.

Justin Tomlinson:

This Government is committed to improving the lives of disabled people and delivering the most ambitious disability reform agenda in a generation. DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) delivers a range of national programmes, as well as initiatives in partnership with the health system, to support disabled people to stay in or move into work. These include the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support. Within Jobcentre Plus and aided by

Disability Employment Advisers, Work Coaches tailor support to each claimant's individual needs, taking account of local provision, training, and employment opportunities.

■ Food Banks

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[42063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government is taking to end the need for food banks in the UK.

Will Quince:

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the Department for Work and Pensions does not have any role in their operation. There is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level.

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, and continues to do so through many measures, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending over £111 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22.

This year, we are also investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has been expanded to every Local Authority across England. Participating children will benefit from a range of support, including a healthy and nutritious meal as well as fun and engaging activities covering the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. We also increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 in April, which helps eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins.

As the economy recovers, our ambition is to help people move into and progress in work as quickly as possible based on clear evidence around the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. Through Plan for Jobs, the Government is investing over £33bn in measures to create, support and protect jobs. This included over £2bn investment in the Kickstart programme and an additional 13,500 Work Coaches in our Jobcentres, as well as other measures focused on boosting work search, skills and apprenticeships.

■ Food Poverty

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[45070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she will take to support people in food poverty following the removal of the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, and continues to do so through many measures, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending over £111 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22.

This year, we are also investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has been expanded to every Local Authority across England. Participating children will benefit from a range of support, including a healthy and nutritious meal as well as fun and engaging activities covering the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. We also increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 in April, which helps eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins.

As the economy recovers from the impact of the pandemic, our ambition is to help people move into and progress in work as quickly as possible, based on clear evidence around the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. Through our Plan for Jobs, the Government is investing over £33bn in measures to create, support and protect jobs. This includes over £2bn investment in the Kickstart programme and an additional 13,500 Work Coaches in our Jobcentres.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[45905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason Kickstart job offers involving a person working home are tagged as national by default rather than local jobs.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pension's Kickstart is creating valuable jobs for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. To ensure that as many young people across Great Britain can access a Kickstart opportunity, jobs that require a young person to work from home are listed as 'national' roles. This also supports the employer with a wider range of candidates. Any requirement for a young person to attend a workplace in person is made clear in the job advert and as such would be allocated to the appropriate geographical location.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[45906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the standard of communications with the employer at each stage of the process from submission to the gateway to the publication of the job advert as part of the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

The Department of Work and Pensions continues to work closely with employers participating in the Kickstart Scheme. We are pleased that as of 08/09/2021 we have made over 188,000 jobs available for young people to apply to.

Officials continue to assess the effectiveness of this process and have developed a suite of products to support employers during the application process. These products are regularly reviewed and updated to provide the most up to date advice and guidance.

In addition, we have established a network of Kickstart District Account Managers (KDAMs) in every Jobcentre Plus district to support employers and who act as points of contact. Our KDAM network complements our existing National Employer Partnership managers who engage with a wide portfolio of employers to provide support on Kickstart and the Government's Plan for Jobs initiatives.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Swansea

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[45907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the benefit of the Kickstart scheme to local jobs in the city and county of Swansea.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pension's Kickstart Scheme is having a positive impact on both national and local labour markets by providing young people at risk of long-term unemployment with the experience they need to find sustainable work.

As of 08/09/2021 over 10,600 jobs have been made available for young people to apply for in Wales and over 3,390 have started. 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, to do so now would be at a disproportionate cost.

■ Pensions

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[45181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact on defined benefit pension scheme members' (a) costs and (b) returns of the decrease in the proportion of defined benefit pensions scheme assets invested in company equities and increase in the proportion invested in government debt over the period 2008 to 2020.

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[45182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact on UK economic growth and economic productivity of the decrease in the proportion of defined benefit pensions scheme assets invested in company equities and increase in the proportion invested in government debt over the period 2008 to 2020.

Guy Opperman:

It is for trustees to decide how funds in defined benefit (DB) occupational pension schemes are invested. They have a fiduciary duty to do so in the best interest of all their members. As most DB schemes are now closed, and the time available before benefits must be paid is reducing, a gradual shift towards investment in lower risk assets is to be expected.

It is the responsibility of the sponsoring employer to fund the promised benefits in a DB scheme, and these are not dependent on investment performance.

While DB provision has been in long term decline, since the introduction of Automatic Enrolment in 2012, defined contribution pension schemes have grown rapidly. As

they are typically much less mature than DB schemes, they will tend to invest in higher proportions of return seeking assets such as equities. This Government is removing barriers to schemes investing directly in the UK economy through private markets, including by encouraging consolidation and requiring schemes to publish the net returns of their default arrangements.

■ Poverty: Children

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[45219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an estimate of the impact of removing the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit on child poverty levels in England.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

The Government has always been clear that the £20 increase was a temporary measure 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 we announced the temporary uplift as part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22. Our focus now is on our multi-billion Plan for Jobs, which will support people in the long-term by helping them learn new skills and increase their hours or find new work.

■ Social Security Benefits

Patrick Grady: [\[45866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many social security claimants have migrated payment of their claims from a Post Office Card Account (POCa) to a bank account since the closure of the POca scheme has been announced.

Guy Opperman:

The Department does not hold information on the number of claimants who have migrated from a Post Office card account to a standard account.

The number of active Post Office card accounts has reduced from 1 million in August 2019 to less than 350k in August 2021.

■ Social Security Benefits: Post Office Card Account

Patrick Grady: [\[45865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many social security claimants receive their payments into a Post Office Card Account.

Guy Opperman:

As of August 2021 the Department makes payments into less than 350k active Post Office Card Accounts. This is down from 1 million in 2019.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays**Andrew Gwynne:** [\[45809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 41749 on State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays, what the average waiting time is for initial payments as at 9 September 2021.

Guy Opperman:

This information is only available at disproportionate cost to The Department for Work & Pensions.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[45810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 41749 on State Retirement Pensions: Administrative Delays, when she first became aware of the backlog; and what steps her Department took to notify those people facing payment delays.

Guy Opperman:

The number of State Pension claims awaiting processing increased as a result of Pandemic and its consequences.

We are prioritising any State Pension claims that are currently overdue and claims where the customer is close to their date of entitlement.

We send an SMS text message to customers to let them know that their claim has been received and is being processed, with written confirmation of their award by post.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Telephone Services**Drew Hendry:** [\[45867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) appropriateness of access rights to claimant information when third parties make alternative enquiry requests to the State Pension Claim phoneline and (b) adequacy of support available under those rules from third party organisations for claimants who are unable to make applications independently to the phoneline.

Guy Opperman:

The DWP Agents, Appointees, Attorneys, Deputies and third parties guide is used by staff to ensure that communications from customer representatives are processed in line with guidance. This includes the instances when State Pension claims are made by a customer's official representative.

Official customer representatives can make enquiries to DWP via our helplines, as well as making written requests to the DWP Mail Opening Unit address, which is available online at GOV.UK

DWP also operates secure email links with Local Authorities in the instances when they act as Corporate Appointee to make a claim on behalf of a customer or to share information.

■ Statutory Sick Pay: Newport West

Ruth Jones: [\[44445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of expanding eligibility for statutory sick pay on the people of Newport West constituency.

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. The same qualifying conditions apply to employees across all regions. Some employers may also decide to pay more, and for longer, through Occupational Sick Pay.

■ Universal Credit

Ruth Jones: [\[42129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will reverse her plans to remove the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit.

Jim Shannon: [\[43515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons it remains his Department's policy not to extend the universal credit uplift of £20 beyond autumn 2021.

Will Quince:

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.

Neil Coyle:

[\[45135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to inform claimants of the planned removal of the £20 per week uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: We have always been clear the uplift for Universal Credit was a temporary measure, responding to extraordinary circumstances and ensuring the welfare safety net was there for those encountering financial hardship. Now with record vacancies and the successful vaccination rollout, it's right that we switch our focus to getting people back into work and improving their prospects.

In July 2021, DWP updated around 6 million Universal Credit statements to show claimants that they have been receiving an additional £20 a week in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Further messages are being sent this month and in October as the temporary uplift comes to an end, and as Work Coaches interact with their claimants they will be highlighting this change. We will continue to communicate with people via both their statement and their journal to inform them when their assessment period ends. These messages will also link to the page in the claimant's account that signposts to organisations that can help with managing money and budgeting.

We are also issuing a bespoke communication to offer advice to those with phone claims prior to the removal. We advise claimants to speak to their Work Coach if they need particular help.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[45818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the planned end to the £20 per week uplift to universal credit on the (a) educational outcomes, (b) living standards and (c) economic opportunities for children in low-income households and deprived communities.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[45819\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the planned end to the £20 per week uplift to universal credit on regional inequality.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[45820\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the planned end to the £20 per week uplift to universal credit on poverty levels in (a) Yorkshire and Humber and (b) Kingston upon Hull North constituency.

Will Quince:

No such assessments have been made of the impact on poverty levels in those areas, on regional inequality or on educational outcomes, living standards and economic opportunities for children in low-income households.

The latest poverty figures (2019/20) demonstrate that absolute poverty rates (both before and after housing costs) for working-age adults in working families have fallen since 2009/10. In 2019/20, 8% of working age adults in working families were in absolute poverty (before housing costs), compared to 9% in 2009/10.

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 and record job vacancies, it is right that 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; Restart, which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year; and JETS, which provides light touch employment support for people who are claiming either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseekers Allowance, for up to 6 months, helping participants effectively re-engage with the labour market and focus their job search. We have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job. In total, our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

■ Universal Credit: Families**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[45817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of research conducted by Action for Children and Child Poverty Action Group on the effect of the £20 per week universal credit increase on recipient working families.

Will Quince:

The latest poverty figures (2019/20) demonstrate that absolute poverty rates (both before and after housing costs) for working-age adults in working families have fallen since 2009/10. In 2019/20, 8% of working age adults in working families were in absolute poverty (before housing costs), compared to 9% in 2009/10.

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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.

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WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Energy Infrastructure Planning Projects

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng):

[\[HCWS286\]](#)

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by AQUIND Limited for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the UK elements of a 2,000MW bi-directional subsea electrical power interconnector between Normandy in France and Lovedean in Hampshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The deadline for the decision on the AQUIND Interconnector application was 8 September 2021.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 21 October 2021 for deciding this application to allow an opportunity for further information in respect of compulsory purchase powers to be provided and considered.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Border Controls

Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt):

[\[HCWS285\]](#)

My noble Friend, the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office (the Rt Hon Lord Frost CMG), has today made the following written statement:

On 31 December 2020, the UK left the EU's Single Market and Customs Union. The Government put in place the staffing, infrastructure, and IT to ensure a smooth transition. Thanks to the hard work of traders and hauliers, we did not see disruption at our ports; and, despite dips in trade value with the EU in the early months, the monthly value of exports to the EU has recovered strongly.

Now the UK is an independent trading country, our intention is to introduce the same controls on incoming goods from the EU as on goods from the rest of the world.

The Government initially announced a timetable for the introduction of the final stages of those controls on 11 March. The Government's own preparations, in terms of systems, infrastructure and resourcing, remain on track to meet that timetable.

However, the pandemic has had longer-lasting impacts on businesses, both in the UK and in the European Union, than many observers expected in March. There are also pressures on global supply chains, caused by a wide range of factors including the pandemic and the increased costs of global freight transport. These pressures are being especially felt in the agrifood sector.

In these circumstances, the Government has decided to delay further some elements of the new controls, especially those relating to Sanitary and Phytosanitary goods.

Accordingly:

- The requirement for pre-notification of agri-food imports will be introduced on 1 January 2022 as opposed to 1 October 2021.
- The new requirements for Export Health Certificates, which were due to be introduced on 1 October 2021, will now be introduced on 1 July 2022.
- Phytosanitary Certificates and physical checks on SPS goods at Border Control Posts, due to be introduced on 1 January 2022, will now be introduced on 1 July 2022.
- The requirement for Safety and Security declarations on imports will be introduced as of 1 July 2022 as opposed to 1 January 2022.

The timetable for the removal of the current easements in relation to full customs controls and the introduction of customs checks remains unchanged from the planned 1 January 2022.

The Government will work closely with the Devolved Administrations on the implementation of this new timetable, given their devolved responsibilities for agri-food controls.

Full guidance to stakeholders will be provided on GOV.UK shortly.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment)
(Nadhim Zahawi):**

[\[HCWS288\]](#)

The UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme is a recognised success. As of 12 September 2021, 89% of people aged 16 and over in the UK have received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and 80% have had their second dose. Public Health England estimate over 143,600 hospitalisations and 108,600-116,200 deaths have been prevented to date by the vaccination programme in England to date.[1]

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published its advice on COVID-19 booster vaccinations. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) has accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK intend to follow the JCVI's advice.

In JCVI's view, the primary objective of a 2021 COVID-19 booster programme is to maintain protection against severe COVID-19 disease, specifically hospitalisation and

deaths, over winter 2021/22. They have noted that this is exceptional advice aimed at maintaining protection in those most vulnerable, and to protect the NHS.

The JCVI's advice is based on evidence from a number of sources, including UK data on the duration of vaccine-induced protection against severe COVID-19. The Committee note that, as not enough time has passed to enable a clear understanding of the level of protection 6 months after completion of the primary vaccine course in all persons, extrapolation of some data has been required. Taking a precautionary position, JCVI considers that on balance, it is preferable to ensure protection is maintained at a high level throughout the winter months in adults who are more vulnerable to severe COVID-19, rather than implement a booster programme too late to prevent large increases of severe COVID-19 in previously double vaccinated individuals.

JCVI advises that for the 2021 COVID-19 booster vaccine programme individuals who received vaccination in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 vaccination programme (priority groups 1-9) should be offered a third dose COVID-19 booster vaccine. This includes:

- Those living in residential care homes for older adults
- All adults aged 50 years or over
- Frontline health and social care workers
- All those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 (as set out in the Green Book) and adult carers
- Adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals

As most younger adults will only have received their second COVID-19 vaccine dose in late summer or early autumn, the benefits of booster vaccination in this group will

be considered at a later time when more information is available. In general, younger, healthy individuals may be expected to generate stronger vaccine-induced immune responses from primary course vaccination compared to older individuals. Pending further evidence otherwise, booster doses in this population may not be required in the near term. JCVI will review data as they emerge and consider further advice at the appropriate time on booster vaccinations in younger adult age groups, children aged 12 – 16 years with underlying health conditions, and women who are pregnant.

JCVI advises that the booster vaccine dose is offered no earlier than six months after completion of the primary vaccine course, and that the booster programme should be deployed in the same order as during Phase 1, with operational flexibility exercised where appropriate to maximise delivery. Persons vaccinated early during Phase 1 will have completed their primary course approximately 6 months ago. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the booster vaccine programme to begin in September 2021, as soon as is operationally practicable.

JCVI advises a preference for the Pfizer vaccine to be offered as the third booster dose irrespective of which product was used in the primary schedule. There is good evidence that the Pfizer vaccine is well tolerated as a third dose and will provide a strong booster response.

Alternatively, individuals may be offered a half dose (50µg) of the Moderna vaccine, which should be well tolerated and is also likely to provide a strong booster response. A half dose (50µg) of Moderna vaccine is advised over a full dose due to the levels of reactogenicity seen following boosting with a full dose within the CoV-Boost trial.

Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered e.g. due to contraindication, vaccination with AstraZeneca vaccine may be considered for those who received AstraZeneca vaccine in the primary course.

With deployment of booster vaccines imminent, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine supply via this statement and a Departmental Minute containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Given the proximity between receiving JCVI advice and deployment, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of the planned booster vaccination in the UK.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that these vaccines have satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

A Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

[1] PHE Covid-19 vaccine surveillance report: 9 September 2021:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report>

■ COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment)

(Nadhim Zahawi):

[\[HCWS287\]](#)

Her Majesty's Government (HMG) has decided, based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and further advice from the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), that a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine should be offered to all children and young people aged 12-15. This is the remaining group not already eligible for vaccination under earlier JCVI advice on 12-15 year olds at risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19.

The JCVI advised on 3rd September that for healthy 12-15 year olds the health benefits from vaccination were marginally greater than the potential known harms but that the margin of benefit, based primarily on a health perspective, was too small for the Committee to advise a universal programme of vaccination. The JCVI suggested that the Government might wish to seek further views on the wider societal and educational impacts from the CMOs of the four nations.

The CMOs worked with a range of experts including representation from the JCVI looking at this wider picture. The advice, received on 13 September, sets out that overall the view of the UK CMOs is that the additional likely benefits of reducing educational disruption, and the consequent reduction in public health harm from educational disruption, on balance provide sufficient extra advantage in addition to the marginal advantage at an individual level identified by the JCVI to recommend in favour of vaccinating this group. The CMOs recommend that on public health grounds that Ministers extend the offer of universal vaccination with a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to all children and young people aged 12-15 not already covered by existing JCVI advice.

HMG has accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK expect to follow the advice and align their deployment in each nation.

For children and young people, the risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 is much lower than for older people and we recognise that decisions on vaccination for this group are therefore much more finely balanced than for adults.

All 12 to 15-year-olds will now be offered a first dose of Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine. The JCVI will be asked to consider in due course whether a second dose is appropriate taking into account emerging international evidence. This is in addition to the existing offer of two doses of vaccine to 12 to 15 -year -olds who are in 'at-risk' groups as described in Public Health England's Green Book, last updated on 3 September 2021.

I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine deployment to this group via this statement and a Departmental Minute containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme for the vaccine the JCVI has recommended should be used in those aged under 18, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage COVID-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to

vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that this vaccine has satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

Given the proximity between the announcement and deployment to this group, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of the planned vaccination of these groups in the UK.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other COVID-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

A Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.