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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

■ Business: Ellesmere Port and Neston

Justin Madders:

[45157]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total amount is of funds approved under the (a) Bounce Back Loan scheme and (b) Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme for businesses in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Paul Scully:

The analysis of final Coronavirus loan scheme data was published on July 6, 2021 on the British Business Bank website.[1]

Under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, 1,560,309 loans were delivered in total, to the sum of £47.36 billion.

Under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, 131 loans were offered in the Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency, to the sum of £31,605,525. Under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme in the same constituency, 1461 loans were offered, to the sum of £39,697,177.

In total, 1592 loans were offered across the constituency, to the sum of £71,302,701.

[1] <https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/press-release/analysis-of-final-coronavirus-loan-scheme-data-shows-79-3bn-of-loans-to-1-67m-businesses-evenly-distributed-across-whole-of-the-uk/>

■ Caravan Sites: Electricity

Justin Madders:

[45158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many mobile park home owners have been investigated by Ofgem for mis-selling or over-charging in their roles as energy resellers.

Greg Hands:

Ofgem has not investigated any mobile park home owners acting as energy resellers. Mobile park home owners acting as exempt energy resellers are exempt from the requirement to hold a supply licence, but must comply with certain duties set out in the Electricity Act 1989 and Gas Act 1986.

Ofgem are responsible for setting the maximum resale price that applies to energy resellers. The maximum resale price is the most that anyone can charge for reselling gas or electricity. The most recent direction was made in 2014:

https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/sites/default/files/docs/2014/03/mrp_direction.pdf.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[48326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many covid-19 vaccine doses COVAX has sent to the UK.

Paul Scully:

As set out in the answer given to the Hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion on 13th September 2021 to Question [41806](#), the UK committed approximately £71 million to the self-financing facility of COVAX, which enables high and upper-middle income countries to pool investments in potential vaccine candidates and supported its establishment last year. This gives us the option to buy vaccines for up to 20% of the UK population - approximately 27 million doses. The Government has separately committed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, which will distribute 1.2 billion doses of vaccines to developing countries this year.

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

The UK procured approximately 0.5 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine through COVAX, which were delivered earlier this year. These doses helped the NHS deliver our vaccination programme as quickly as possible. No further doses have been received by the UK from COVAX.

■ Deposits

Sam Tarry: [\[45943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to strengthen laws to protect consumers from businesses that hold deposits for a long period of time.

Paul Scully:

Consumer protection law requires mandatory protection of consumer deposits in a number of sectors, and particularly in the travel industry. The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 ensure arrangements are made so travellers are refunded, or where applicable repatriated, should the organiser become insolvent.

In July 2020 the Government announced that passengers who accept refund credit notes for cancelled holidays as a result of COVID-19 will be protected by the ATOL scheme if necessary. If the CMA finds evidence that companies are failing to comply with the law, it will take appropriate enforcement action.

In July, the Government published a command paper, 'Reforming Competition and Consumer Policy' that sets out a range of proposals to enhance consumers' rights, including with regard to consumer prepayments which in some cases count as deposits. The consultation closes on 1 October and can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-competition-and-consumer-policy>.

■ Energy: Meters

Justin Madders: [\[45855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what percentage of households in (a) Cheshire West and Chester (b) England have prepayment meters.

Greg Hands:

Data on electricity customers on prepayment tariffs are published as part of the Quarterly Energy Prices statistical series ([here](#)).

■ Fossil Fuels: Exploration

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[45180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the environmental impact of new fossil fuel exploration projects, such as the Cambo oil field, in the context of the publication of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Greg Hands:

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

All previously licensed fields, such as Cambo, are accounted for in terms of projected production and estimated emissions and we are confident that they can be developed, even as we seek to achieve our commitment to net zero by 2050.

Domestic production of oil and gas out to 2050 remains below that which we will consume in a Net Zero world, according to the Climate Change Committee's scenarios.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Fleur Anderson: [\[45936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many meetings he has held or attended to discuss the potential merits of introducing a scheme to replace the Green Homes Grant scheme since applications to that scheme have closed; and with whom those meetings were with.

Greg Hands:

Details of meetings held by Ministers in the Department are published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>.

■ Help to Grow Scheme**Chi Onwurah:****[48220]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much funding has been disbursed under the Help to Grow scheme to date; and how much will be disbursed in total.

Paul Scully:

Help to Grow: Digital will launch in Autumn 2021 and therefore has not disbursed any funds to date. It is expected to disburse £296 million over three years up to 2024/25.

Help to Grow: Management delivered its first course on 5 July. The total cost of the programme is £220 million up to 2024/25. Approximately £62 million of this funding is expected to be disbursed in 2021/22.

Chi Onwurah:**[48221]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) small and (b) medium sized businesses will be helped by the Help to Grow scheme.

Paul Scully:

Over the next three years, Help to Grow: Digital will support up to 100,000 small and medium-sized businesses with online advice and a voucher to help meet software costs.

Help to Grow: Management will support up to 30,000 small and medium-sized businesses leaders from across the UK to increase productivity, seize investment opportunities and grow their business.

Chi Onwurah:**[48223]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what criteria he plans to use to assess the effectiveness of the Help to Grow scheme; and whether those criteria include regional targets.

Paul Scully:

The effectiveness of both Help to Grow programmes will be assessed on the productivity benefits gained by SMEs, and early indicators of success based on criteria such as successful tech adoption and increased use of management practices within their business. Data on the geographical spread of participating SMEs, and their outcomes, will be part of the monitoring and evaluation.

■ Help to Grow Scheme: Marketing

Chi Onwurah: [\[48222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the marketing costs are for the Help to Grow scheme; and from what budget those costs have been met.

Paul Scully:

Help to Grow: Digital has a budget of £296 million over the three years of the scheme.

Help to Grow: Management has a budget of £220 million over the next three years.

■ Post Offices: Closures

Justin Madders: [\[45853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the postcodes of the 260 post office branches which were listed as closed as of 30 June 2021.

Paul Scully:

BEIS does not hold information on specific postcodes of post office branch closures.

A list of open post office branches can be found in the post office network report:

<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/secure-corporate/our-network/post-office-network-reports/#>.

■ Renewable Energy: Carbon Emissions

Sarah Jones: [\[48335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's policy is on changing market rules to enable community energy groups to supply renewable energy on a local basis; and what steps his Department is taking to support local renewable electricity generation as a way of meeting the UK's Carbon Budget.

Greg Hands:

The current Ofgem regulatory regime allows for a company to supply a specified geographic area, and small scale electricity operations may be able to operate without being regulated by Ofgem.

We are supporting community energy through the Rural Community Energy Fund and there are already mechanisms in the market to allow local supply. We will work with Ofgem to ensure that local communities can play their role in delivering Net Zero and a Green Recovery.

■ Renewable Energy: Feed-in Tariffs**Justin Madders:** [\[45856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency have received income under the feed-in tariff.

Greg Hands:

There are 953 accredited domestic Feed-in tariff (FIT) installations listed on the Central FIT Register in the Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency. Of those accredited, 927 are currently in receipt of FIT payments and 947 have received FIT payments at some point.

■ Retail Trade: Urban Areas**Daisy Cooper:** [\[45273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations of the fourth Grimsey Review, published July 2021.

Paul Scully:

The Government is fully committed to supporting the independent businesses and communities that make our town centres successful as the nation responds to the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak. Our package of support for businesses through this period totals over £352 billion including business grants, the coronavirus loan schemes and Job Retention Scheme, as well as deferral of income tax payments. This builds on major investment and action from Government to level up opportunity and prosperity across all areas of the country, including through the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund, the £220 million UK-wide Community Renewal Fund and the £3.6 billion Towns Fund.

The retail, hospitality and leisure business rates relief in England is worth over £6bn to eligible businesses in 2021/22 alone. We extended the moratorium on commercial landlords' right to forfeiture for the non-payment of rent to March 2022, and we will introduce legislation to help landlords and tenants resolve historic Covid-19 rent debt through binding arbitration if necessary.

■ Toys and Games: Internet**Margaret Ferrier:** [\[45150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that third-party toy sellers are traceable and accountable for products sold via online marketplaces to children in the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe consumer products can be sold in the UK. Product safety legislation places obligations on manufacturers,

importers and distributors and this includes overseas online retailers selling goods via marketplaces.

Under the UK Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011, a toy must be marked with the name of the UK-based manufacturer or UK-based importer, and the address at which they can be contacted. Where this is not possible on the toy, the relevant information must be present on the toy's packaging or in an accompanying document.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is taking forward a programme of work to ensure that major online marketplaces are playing their part to protect UK consumers from unsafe goods sold via third parties. OPSS works with colleagues in local Trading Standards to take action where products are identified online that do not meet the UK's product safety requirements and expects online platforms to act quickly to remove them from sale. This has recently included action taken to ensure that a number of non-compliant products, including toys, being sold by third-party sellers have been removed from sale, delisted, recalled or destroyed. In addition, we are developing a new voluntary commitment for online marketplaces to agree further actions they will take to reduce the risks from unsafe products being sold online.

OPSS is also currently conducting a review of the UK's product safety framework, including in relation to e-commerce, to ensure it remains fit for purpose, protects consumers, and enables businesses to innovate and grow. The Government issued a public Call for Evidence to support the review which closed on 17 June. Officials are currently reviewing the evidence received and we will publish a response in due course.

■ Toys and Games: Safety

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[45149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what repercussions overseas third-party toy sellers face when they sell unsafe toys to children in the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring that only safe consumer products can be sold in the UK. Product safety legislation places obligations on manufacturers, importers and distributors and this includes overseas online retailers selling goods via marketplaces.

Where products are identified online that do not meet the UK's product safety requirements, the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) works with colleagues in local Trading Standards to take action and expects online platforms to act quickly to remove them from sale. This has recently included action to ensure that a number of non-compliant products, including toys, being sold by third-party sellers have been removed from sale, delisted, recalled or destroyed.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[45151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of legislation on ensuring that toys manufactured overseas carry the address of a UK entity responsible for product safety compliance.

Paul Scully:

Where toys manufactured overseas are placed on the UK market, a UK-based importer must ensure that their name or trade name and address are marked on the product.

However, the Government recognises the challenge of third-party sales, where the retailer is based overseas. OPSS is currently conducting a review of the UK's product safety framework, including in relation to e-commerce and supply chain responsibility, to ensure it remains fit for purpose, protects consumers, and enables businesses to innovate and grow. The Government issued a public Call for Evidence to support the review which closed on 17 June. Officials are currently reviewing the evidence received and we will publish a response in due course.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Bishops

Valerie Vaz:

[\[48216\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, with reference to the Catholic Relief Act 1829, what assessment the Commissioners have made of the Prime Minister's ability to advise the Sovereign on the appointment of Anglican Bishops.

Andrew Selous:

The Church Commissioners have not made any such assessment.

Valerie Vaz:

[\[48217\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Commissioners have made of the potential merits of repealing legislation which prevents a Prime Minister who is a Catholic from advising the Sovereign on appointing Anglican Bishops.

Andrew Selous:

The Church Commissioners have not made any such assessment.

■ Churches: Marriage

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[49099\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, if the Commissioners will make representations to Church leaders on allowing people to marry in any church of their choosing.

Andrew Selous:

Since 2008 a couple can marry in a Church of England church of any parish where either of them resides or is on the church electoral roll, or any parish where either was baptised, prepared for confirmation, or had formerly lived or worshipped. They also qualify if the parents of either of them have lived in the parish of that church, or have worshipped there, or the parents or grandparents of either of them were married there. Being married in a church not only reflects the faith commitment of the couple but their connection to the communities to which they are linked, whether through present circumstances or family histories. This policy of 'qualifying connections' allows couples great flexibility in choosing their wedding venues while also maintaining those important community links. There are many positive effects of attending a church in order to get married there and the website yourchurchwedding.org encourages couples to 'just ask' to find out how they can get married in church.

DEFENCE■ **Afghanistan: Asylum****Rachael Maskell:**[\[48286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to release property from his Department's estate to house refugees from Afghanistan.

Rachael Maskell:[\[48287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to prepare properties or repurpose accommodation on his Department's estate to ensure it is fit for habitation by refugees from Afghanistan.

Leo Docherty:

The whole of government is rightly focused on delivering the best start to life in the UK for individuals who have supported the UK over the last 20 years of operations in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Defence is particularly committed to actively supporting the integration of Afghan nationals who have supported Defence wherever we can.

The Ministry of Defence has already offered Local Authorities the opportunity to lease up to one hundred units of Service Family Accommodation to house Afghan evacuees across the United Kingdom. Whilst the provision of accommodation is clearly a crucial part of the resettlement programme, of equal importance is ensuring that Local Authorities have the capacity to provide the right level of access to health and education provision to ensure the integration of Afghan evacuees.

The Ministry of Defence continues to work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, and the Home Office support on a cross-Government efforts to identify where we can best support this endeavour. This includes the provision of additional Defence accommodation where appropriate to do so.

Before a decision is made on the provision of additional Defence accommodation, we continue to work with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to assess the impact allocating additional houses to Afghan families would have on our ability to support Service families who are eligible but not currently entitled to occupy surplus Service Families Accommodation.

■ Afghanistan: Immigration

Fleur Anderson: [\[45284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of people who have qualified for relocation under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme up to 8 September 2021.

James Heapey:

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) has been one of the most generous in the world, under which approximately 7,000 Afghan nationals who supported the UK Government in Afghanistan have been relocated to the UK since April 2021.

Prior to 8 September, approximately 1,700 individual cases have been approved under the ARAP scheme. That scheme is not time-limited and will endure. As we continue to receive and assess applications we expect to identify more Afghan nationals who are eligible for relocation under ARAP.

John Healey: [\[45802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghans, eligible under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, have been evacuated to the UK since 28 August 2021.

James Heapey:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: Since the conclusion of Operation PITTING on 28 August no further evacuation flights have been conducted, however we are aware that some individuals who are eligible for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) have left the country by their own means.

The ARAP scheme is not time-limited and remains open to all current and former Locally Employed Staff (LES) who worked for the UK Government in Afghanistan. We are working to facilitate the continued relocation of ARAP eligible individuals and their dependants, from third countries if possible. To date, two individuals have been relocated to the UK. We will continue to do all we can to support those Afghans who have supported us, and we are clear that the Taliban must ensure safe passage for these people out of Afghanistan.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Ammunition

Mr Mark Francois: [\[46945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost is of a single round of 40mm armoured piercing ammunition for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 6 September to question 40704.

Attachments:

1. 40704 - Ajax Vehicles; Ammunition [UIN 40704.docx]

■ Ajax Vehicles: Exports

Mr Mark Francois:[\[46948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Ministerial statement on Ajax Armoured Vehicle Procurement on Thursday 9 September, what estimate he has made of the total estimated export market for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle; and when he expects the first export sales to be achieved.

Jeremy Quin:

Preliminary Market Analysis is being carried out to identify the possible export markets for Ajax, their value to the UK and the likely timescales. Clearly successful exports are dependent on the outstanding issues being resolved.

■ Ammunition

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[48157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2021 to Question 40676 on Ammunition, what the last safe year of use is for those batches of 30mm ammunition.

Jeremy Quin:

The current service life expiry date for each type of ammunition is shown below:

TYPE OF 30MM AMMUNITION	YEAR OF LAST PURCHASE	LATEST SERVICE LIFE EXPIRY DATE
Practice	2019	1 Nov 2024
Reduced Range Practice	2014	1 Dec 2021
High Explosive Tracer	2011	1 Jun 2021
Armour Piercing	1991	1 May 2021

As is normal practise for most higher value General Munitions, an assessment process, considering both safety and performance, is ongoing to extend the service life.

■ Ammunition: Manufacturing Industries

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[48151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the ammunition for the CT40 cannon will be manufactured.

Jeremy Quin:

The ammunition for the CT40 cannon is manufactured at the BAE Systems Glascoed site in South Wales.

■ Armed Forces Compensation Scheme: Back Pain

Theresa Villiers: [\[48166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to increase Armed Forces Compensation Scheme tariffs for back injuries.

Leo Docherty:

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme tariff levels are under constant review by the Department to ensure that they remain fair and fit for purpose. As part of this process, the Independent Medical Expert Group provides impartial, evidence-based, medical and scientific advice and recommendations on these issues.

■ BOWMAN Combat Radio System

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[48155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 40635 on BOWMAN Combat Radio System, which units have (a) tested and (b) accepted BCIP 5.6.

Jeremy Quin:

BCIP 5.6 has already been tested and accepted into service. It has been fielded to all units, including those deployed on operations, who are equipped with BCIP. Full Operational Capability was formally declared in December 2020.

■ BOWMAN Combat Radio System: Costs

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[48156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 40637 on BOWMAN Combat Radio System, what the forecast RDEL (run cost) is to maintain BCIP 5.6 until its out of service date.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is not able to release financial information regarding forecasted RDEL (run cost) to maintain BCIP 5.6 until its out of service date, as this would prejudice our ability to conduct future negotiations with Industry in order to deliver best value for money.

■ Military Aid: English Channel

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[47078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Military Aid to the Civil Authorities requests have been received for assistance on operations in the English Channel in the last 12 months.

James Heapey:

Defence has collaborated with the Home Office on countering illegal migration issues in the English Channel for over a year. Defence has provided a range of support including the provision of surveillance, planning expertise, and assisting in the delivery of trials of novel tactics which could help the Border Force and Home Office better interdict and deter migrant vessels. This has currently amounted to four requests under the mechanism of Military Aid to the Civilian Authority during 2021.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Channel Four: Privatisation

John Nicolson:

[\[45155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the effect of privatising Channel 4 on (a) businesses and jobs in the UK production sector; (b) the balance in the creative economy between London and the rest of the UK and (c) UK viewers' access to original and distinctive UK content.

Nigel Huddleston:

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

We want Channel 4 to continue to be a public service broadcaster, and we want it to and continue to contribute socially, economically and culturally to life across the UK. But there is a wealth of evidence - including Ofcom's recent report - on the future challenges facing our traditional linear TV broadcasters. Linear TV viewing is down almost 60% amongst 16-25 year olds since 2010, whilst 16-34 year olds now spend almost twice as much time on YouTube and subscription VoD services than they do with broadcast content. There are now 315 channels, compared to 5 in 1982 when Channel 4 was established. Linear TV advertising revenues - which constituted over 90% of Channel 4's revenue in 2020 - have declined across the sector at a compound annual rate of 2.5% since 2015.

Channel 4 is uniquely constrained in its ability to meet these challenges while it remains under public ownership - particularly because its access to capital and ability to pursue strategic partnership opportunities is limited.

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

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

The channel's wider economic and social contributions, its role in the creative economies of the nations and regions, and its remit are among the issues we have consulted on.

The consultation opened on 6 July, running for 10 weeks, before closing on 14 September. We are currently analysing responses to our consultation, and evidence received through it, to inform our policy-making decisions. Once we have answered the questions set out in the consultation, we will know what specific impacts to assess and will therefore be in a position to carry out an impact assessment.

■ Charities: Lotteries

Philip Davies: [\[45087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department has made on the review of charity lottery reforms announced in January 2020; and when he expects the review to be concluded.

Nigel Huddleston:

Increases to society lottery sales and prize limits came into force in July 2020, and we committed to reviewing their impact after 12 months.

We have received initial data from the Gambling Commission and will respond further in due course.

■ Data Protection

Emily Thornberry: [\[45078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the UK's future data adequacy decisions will require specific assurances on UK citizens' data from partner countries.

Emily Thornberry: [\[45079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the UK's future data adequacy decisions will prohibit the onward transfer of data to countries with lower standards of data protection than the UK.

Emily Thornberry: [\[45080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of whether the data regimes of (a) the United States, (b) Australia, (c) the Republic of Korea, (d) the Dubai International Financial Centre, (e) Colombia and (f) Singapore provide equivalent protection to that of the UK.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[45082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether any future data adequacy deals will allow for the free flow of data to any country or territory in which UK citizens' data will be offered weaker protections than those currently in UK law.

Nigel Huddleston:

Data adequacy is about ensuring the high standards of data protection under the UK GDPR are not undermined when personal data is transferred to a third country. UK data adequacy assessments consider the overall effect of a third country's data protection laws, their implementation, enforcement, and supervision. Our assessments also take into account how data can be transferred from that country to other destinations.

Adequacy does not require identical laws and practices. The UK will be pragmatic in its assessments and will recognise how partners around the world protect data to high standards and share the same values as the UK but do so through different means.

Work is ongoing and while we have announced priorities and make good progress, we cannot prejudge the outcomes of the technical adequacy assessment work.

■ **Data Protection: EU Countries**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[45081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the compliance costs incurred by UK firms operating within the EU of operating under divergent UK and EU data regimes.

Nigel Huddleston:

On 10 September, the government launched a consultation on reforms to create a new, ambitious, pro-growth and innovation-friendly data protection regime that underpins the trustworthy use of data for an even better UK data rights regime.

Our proposals offer improvements within the current framework, while maintaining the UK's worldwide reputation for high data protection standards and securing public trust. The reforms presented for consultation deliberately build on the key elements of the current UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), such as its data processing principles, its data rights for citizens, and its mechanisms for supervision and enforcement.

Furthermore, one of the principles guiding the government's approach is that organisations that comply with the UK's current regime should still be largely compliant with our future regime, except for only a small number of new requirements.

An initial analysis of the expected impacts of these reforms has been published on which the government is also seeking views during the 10-week consultation period.

■ Gambling Act 2005 Review**Paul Blomfield:**[\[48215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when his Department plans to publish the gambling review.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Review of the Gambling Act 2005 was launched in December last year with the publication of a wide-ranging Call for Evidence. This closed on 31 March and received approximately 16,000 submissions. We are considering all the evidence we received carefully. The government aims to publish a White Paper setting out any conclusions and consulting on next steps by the end of the year.

EDUCATION**■ Further Education: Qualifications****Judith Cummins:**[\[44489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the proposal for the introduction of T-Levels and for subjects where there is no T-Level route, what qualifications will be available; what will be the (a) content and (b) assessment process for those qualifications; and will those qualifications be available for the start of the 2023-24 academic year.

Gillian Keegan:

Our final plans setting out the groups of qualifications that will be available alongside T Levels and A levels in future were published on 14 July.

We will fund two groups of technical qualifications alongside T Levels for 16 to 19 year olds. The first will be qualifications that are designed to enable entry into occupations where there are no T Levels. The second will be qualifications that develop more specialist skills and knowledge than could be acquired through a T Level alone, helping to protect the skills supply into more specialist industries or occupations.

Adults will be able to study a broader range of technical qualifications than 16 to 19 year olds. T Levels will be available for adults but we believe these should exist alongside a range of other high quality technical qualifications that are backed by employers. This includes smaller technical qualifications that enable entry into occupations that are already served by T Levels, and qualifications focusing on cross-sectoral skills that are transferrable across different occupations such as management, leadership, and digital. Qualifications within safety critical industries will also be available for adults.

We are phasing the introduction of reformed qualifications in line with the national rollout of T Levels, starting with a single test route (pathfinder) concentrating on the Digital route in the 2023/24 academic year. This means technical qualifications that

lead to occupations in the Digital route that are not covered by T Levels will be available for young people and adults from 2023/24.

From the 2024/25 academic year, building on learning from the pathfinder, we will scale up the introduction of reformed technical qualifications including those which lead to occupations not covered by T Levels in the Education and Childcare, Construction, Health and Science, and Engineering and Manufacturing routes. All remaining technical and academic qualifications for young people and adults, including technical qualifications that lead to occupations in routes where there is no T Level will be introduced in 2025/26.

Detailed criteria for approval including qualification content and assessment are still in development and we will continue to work with sector experts to finalise these, including the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, Ofqual, employers, awarding organisations and post-16 providers. Guidance, qualification approval criteria and funding approval criteria for qualifications approved for delivery from 2023 will be published later in 2021. Approval criteria for qualifications to be delivered from 2024 and beyond will be published in 2022.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Agriculture and Food: Migrant Workers**

Daisy Cooper:

[\[45274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to the food and farming sectors of implementing the recommendations from the Grant Thornton Report on Labour Availability on visas for horticultural and agricultural workers.

Victoria Prentis:

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is grateful to everyone who contributed to the report on 'Establishing the labour availability issues of the UK Food and Drink Sector'. We are reviewing the recommendations as part of our on-going work to address the immediate issues in the food supply chain and our longer-term strategy for the food and farming workforce.

■ **Air Pollution: Ellesmere Port and Neston**

Justin Madders:

[\[45161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of air quality in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Rebecca Pow:

Under the Local Air Quality Management Framework local authorities are required to review and assess air quality in their area. If their assessment shows that local pollution levels exceed, or are likely to exceed, local air quality objectives they must

declare an Air Quality Management Area and develop an Air Quality Action Plan with the aim of reducing air pollution to within statutory limits.

Defra's Air Quality Grant Programme provides funding to local authorities for projects in local communities to tackle air pollution. The Government has awarded over £70 million in funding since the air quality grant started in 1997. Cheshire West and Chester Council were awarded £44,000 from the 2018 Air Quality Grant Scheme for local research on domestic burning stoves and health impacts.

■ Air Pollution: Wandsworth

Fleur Anderson: [\[48372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department holds data on air quality for (a) Putney constituency and (b) Wandsworth borough for each of the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

The Mayor of London is responsible for air quality in the capital and has reserve powers under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to reflect this. Local authorities in London are required to review and assess local air quality and report their data to the Mayor.

In addition, the [London Air Quality Network](#) provides data on automatic air quality monitoring in London to the public.

■ Chemical Business Association

Ruth Jones: [\[45263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he last met representatives of the Chemical Business Association.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State last met representatives of the Chemical Business Association on 21 July 2021.

■ Dogs: Imports

Kenny MacAskill: [\[48366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the report published by the Dog's Trust entitled Puppy smuggling, a tragedy ignored, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the recommendation in that report that the number of dogs allowed under non-commercial movement rules should be reduced to two per vehicle.

Victoria Prentis:

We have introduced measures in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill to reduce the number of pet dogs, cats and ferrets that can be moved under the pet travel rules which apply to non-commercial movements, placing a limit of five pets per vehicle. We drew on People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) research and engaged with

stakeholders, including authorised pet checkers, carriers, animal welfare organisations and veterinary bodies, to determine a suitable limit that would disrupt the illegal trade whilst minimising the impact of genuine owners travelling with their pets under the pet travel rules. The limit of five pets per vehicle is also current industry practice.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[48368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to shorten the window for tapeworm treatment of dogs before entry into the UK from 24-120 hours to 24-48 hours.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has no immediate plans to shorten the window for tapeworm treatment of dogs from 24-120 hours to 24-48 hours. However, we remain aware of the concerns around tapeworm and our future policy will be guided by risk assessment.

■ Dogs: Smuggling

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[48367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 June 2020 to Question 63200 on Dogs: Imports, what the outcomes were of the (a) renewed rabies risk assessment and (b) commissioned assessments to understand the risks posed by tapeworms, ticks and tick-borne disease.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government takes the risks of disease seriously and we remain alert to concerns relating to ticks, tick-borne diseases, tapeworm diseases and other diseases. The rabies risk assessment referred to in response to the Answer of 29 June 2020 to Question 63200 on Dogs: Imports has been completed and signed off and shows that despite an increase in the number of dogs entering the UK under both the commercial and non-commercial rules, the declining number of rabies cases in EU Member States has meant that the annual probability of rabies entering the UK from EU Member States is currently very low. The *Echinococcus* (tapeworm) risk assessment has been completed and is currently at review stage. We are unable to share results at this time. The risk assessment into ticks and tick-borne diseases is ongoing.

■ Ferric Sulphate

Ruth Jones:

[\[45264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the supply of ferric sulphate in England.

Rebecca Pow:

England has an adequate supply of water chemicals, including ferric sulphate.

■ Local Government: Inland Waterways

Steve Reed: [\[48245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what information his Department holds on the local authorities in England that have responsibility for running of canals and waterways in their area.

Rebecca Pow:

There are over 30 navigation authorities in England and Wales with responsibility for varying lengths of inland waterways, ranging from the Canal and River Trust with around 2,000 miles of waterways down to privately-owned single canal companies. Within this range is a number of local authorities. However, the Government is not involved in the day-to-day running of inland waterways, which rests with the navigation authorities that own and manage them, and therefore does not hold information on them other than where there is a legal or statutory requirement.

The Inland Waterways Association, a national charity working to protect and restore waterways, and the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities maintain comprehensive lists and details of navigation authorities across the country.

■ Members: Correspondence

Robert Largan: [\[45317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 23 June 2021, referenced RL22747.

Victoria Prentis:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 9 September 2021.

■ Plants: Imports

Justin Madders: [\[45175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking at border control posts to ensure that plant inspection charges are fair and reasonable.

Victoria Prentis:

It has long been UK Government policy to charge for many publicly provided goods and services. The standard approach is to set fees to recover the full costs of service delivery. This relieves the general taxpayer of costs, so that they are properly borne by users who benefit from a service. This allows for a more equitable distribution of public resources and enables lower public expenditure and borrowing. Defra plant health services operate in line with that principle and have done for many years. Plant health fees are reviewed regularly and adjusted to ensure no under, or over, recovery of costs and amended as necessary.

Additionally, to reduce the burden on businesses, Defra took the decision to delay the introduction of inspection fees for imports of 'high-priority' plants and plant products from the EU until 1 June 2021 in England and Wales. In arriving at the decision to delay the introduction of plant health import inspection fees for these goods, officials have had to balance the need to support affected businesses, against legal considerations and the rules around managing public money. Delaying these fees until 1 June 2021 struck the right balance between these competing demands.

■ Regional Airports: Air Pollution

Sir David Amess:

[\[48127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on steps to mitigate the levels of air pollution around regional airports in residential areas.

Rebecca Pow:

There are regular discussions between DEFRA and DfT at ministerial and official levels regarding air pollution and the practical steps we can take towards reducing emissions.

The government is working to improve international standards on emissions from aircraft and to challenge airports to improve local air quality. Emissions from aircraft are strictly regulated by the International Civil Aviation Organization. The aviation industry is taking action to cut airport-related emissions by operating aircraft more efficiently, introducing new lower emission technologies and practices, reducing vehicle emissions within the airport boundary, and improving public transport links to airports.

Local authorities are responsible for assessing local air quality and to take action if local air quality standards and objectives are not met. This would include liaising with airports to manage the impact they are having including from vehicles accessing the airport.

■ Water Treatment: Chemicals

Ruth Jones:

[\[45265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the amount of chemicals required for the effective treatment of waste water.

Rebecca Pow:

The amount of chemicals required for the effective treatment of waste water varies from site to site. Chemicals used include coagulants, antifoamers and waste odour limiters, for example. There is currently no shortage of chemicals required for waste water treatment.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Asylum****Ben Lake:**[\[45246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support British nationals and eligible Afghans to leave Afghanistan, transit third countries and reach the UK; and what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in (a) Pakistan, (b) Uzbekistan and (c) Tajikistan on that matter.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The former Foreign Secretary had a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 15 and 27 August, the Tajik Foreign Minister on 2 September, and the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on 23 and 25 August and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and the Deputy Foreign Minister on 8 September. Discussions focused on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities. In addition, FCDO Rapid Deployment Teams have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan.

Claudia Webbe:[\[45305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to provide support to young people remaining in Afghanistan so that they can join their families in the UK.

Amanda Milling:

We stand by our commitment to help all Afghans who are eligible to come to the UK, including those who hold refugee reunion visas, to travel by whatever routes are available. We are clear that the Taliban must ensure safe passage for these people out of Afghanistan, and any engagement with them will emphasise this first and foremost. We are also in frequent contact with neighbouring countries, and wider partners, to help secure safe routes.

Claudia Webbe:[\[45308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that Afghan nationals are provided with a safe passage to the UK, via third countries if necessary.

Amanda Milling:

We are focused on ensuring safe passage for anyone remaining in Afghanistan who are eligible to come to the UK and wishes to leave. The former Foreign Secretary visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September to discuss safe passage via third countries. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon also visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. We have been clear to our partners in the region that we have the

capacity to process British cases, whether they are nationals or ARAP-eligible cases, and that if they permit eligible vulnerable groups across the border that we will take them directly back to the UK.

Claudia Webbe:

[\[45309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken with his counterparts of countries neighbouring Afghanistan to establish a plan to ensure the safety of Afghans seeking refuge.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The former Foreign Secretary had a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 15 and 27 August, the Tajik Foreign Minister on 2 September, and the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on 23 and 25 August and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and the Deputy Foreign Minister on 8 September. Discussions focused on securing safe passage for those fleeing Afghanistan and advancing the government's international priorities. On 3 September, the FCDO announced £30 million in additional humanitarian funding to assist the regional response to the surge in refugees.

■ **Afghanistan: Diplomatic Relations**

Ben Lake:

[\[45245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on how many occasions he has had discussions on the matter of Afghanistan with his counterparts in (a) Pakistan, (b) Uzbekistan and (c) Tajikistan in the last six months.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary visited Qatar and Pakistan from 1-3 September. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon visited Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1-3 September. The former Foreign Secretary had a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Pakistan on 15 and 27 August, the Tajik Foreign Minister on 2 September, and the Uzbek Foreign Minister on 6 September. Lord Ahmad has additionally called the Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan on 23 and 25 August and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 25 August and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan on 8 September.

■ **Afghanistan: Diplomatic Service**

Alan Brown:

[\[48277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, at what times on 12 August 2021 he spoke to the UK Ambassador in Kabul.

Amanda Milling:

As set out in the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, the former Foreign Secretary drew regularly on advice from HMA Kabul and many other Ambassadors in the region during the period from 12 August onwards.

Alan Brown:[\[48279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, at what times on 14 August 2021 he spoke to the UK Ambassador in Kabul.

Amanda Milling:

As set out in the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, the former Foreign Secretary drew regularly on advice from HMA Kabul and many other Ambassadors in the region during the period from 12 August onwards.

Alan Brown:[\[48280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, at what times on 15 August 2021 he spoke to the UK Ambassador in Kabul.

Amanda Milling:

As set out in the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, the former Foreign Secretary drew regularly on advice from HMA Kabul and many other Ambassadors in the region during the period from 12 August onwards.

Alan Brown:[\[48281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, at what times on 16 August 2021 he spoke to the UK Ambassador in Kabul.

Amanda Milling:

As set out in the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, the former Foreign Secretary drew regularly on advice from HMA Kabul and many other Ambassadors in the region during the period from 12 August onwards.

Alan Brown:[\[48282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, at what times on 17 August 2021 he spoke to the UK Ambassador in Kabul.

Amanda Milling:

As set out in the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41002, the former Foreign Secretary drew regularly on advice from HMA Kabul and many other Ambassadors in the region during the period from 12 August onwards.

■ Afghanistan: Ethnic Groups

Afzal Khan: [\[48349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of Uyghurs in Afghanistan; and what steps he is taking to help protect ethnic minorities in Afghanistan who are at risk of persecution.

Amanda Milling:

According to NGO estimates, there are around 3,500 Uyghurs in Afghanistan. Minister for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, addressed the UN Human Rights Council on 24 August to underscore the UK's commitment to protecting the human rights of all Afghan people. This commitment extends to all ethnic and religious communities, including the Uyghurs.

All those at risk of persecution in Afghanistan, including religious and ethnic minorities, are eligible to apply to the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, which will welcome up to a total of 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK over a five-year period.

■ Afghanistan: Judges

Stephen Kinnock: [\[48250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the 220 female judges who are currently in Afghanistan are brought to the UK as rapidly as possible.

Amanda Milling:

All those at risk of persecution in Afghanistan are eligible to apply to the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, which will welcome up to a total of 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK over a five-year period. Women and girls at risk and those who have stood up for the rule of law, including female judges, will be eligible for the scheme.

Afzal Khan: [\[48348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect Afghan female judges in hiding from the Taliban.

Amanda Milling:

All those at risk of persecution in Afghanistan are eligible to apply to the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, which will welcome up to a total of 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK over a five-year period. Women and girls at risk and those who have stood up for the rule of law, including female judges, will be eligible for the scheme.

■ Afghanistan: Refugees

Kim Johnson: [\[45293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to reply to submissions made by hon. Members on behalf of constituents regarding their families in Afghanistan.

Amanda Milling:

As the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa said in the House on 15 September, during the evacuation operation alone the FCDO received over 200,000 emails. Approximately 30,000 of these emails were from MPs. Hundreds of civil servants are being assigned to work through that case load, working in multiple shifts through the day, seven days a week. The FCDO aimed to complete the triage of cases to the Ministry of Defence or the Home Office, and notify Hon. Members by 16 September. It has become increasingly clear, as we work through cases, that both the volume and their complexity mean that we will have to take longer than we had originally hoped.

Claudia Webbe: [\[45306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many families were split at Kabul airport during the Government's evacuation of UK nationals and Afghan civilians from Afghanistan in August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

Our Armed Forces, FCDO, Home Office, and MoD civilian staff worked tirelessly to bring over 15,000 people to safety in the UK over the two weeks of Operation Pitting. Our priority has been to keep families together wherever possible.

Claudia Webbe: [\[45307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of necessities and support being provided to UK nationals and their families who have been evacuated from Afghanistan through third party countries.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary's visit to Pakistan and Qatar and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon's visit to Tajikistan focussed on regional diplomacy and secured cooperation to support Britons and their immediate families. Four Rapid Deployment Teams have been deployed to countries neighbouring Afghanistan and to Qatar to ensure safe onward passage to the UK. We are providing consular assistance and are working, in collaboration with the Home Office, to support the return to the UK of British nationals from Afghanistan in neighbouring countries and elsewhere through assistance on border movement, travel documentation and transport.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[48325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41124 on Afghanistan:

Refugees, whether he held meetings with counterparts in countries neighbouring Afghanistan on the needs of Afghan refugees in those countries and the support his Department could provide prior to 18 August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

Between 23 August 2019 and 18 August 2021 the previous Foreign Secretary and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon met or contacted their counterparts from Afghanistan's neighbours over fifty times to discuss Afghanistan and to advance the Government's priorities in relation to that country. Between these dates this included communication on Afghanistan with their counterparts in Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Uzbekistan and India as well as with NATO, EU states, Canada and the United States.

Amongst these, key engagements for the previous Foreign Secretary included: on 28 June 2021 participating in the Global Coalition Against DAESH Ministerial Meeting in Italy; and on 29 June 2021 meeting with India's Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar and Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu.

For Lord Ahmad, these included: meeting External Affairs Minister Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary Shringla, Justice Minister Prasad and Home Minister Reddy during a visit to India between 14 and 20 March 2021; meeting Prime Minister Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi during a visit to Pakistan between 23 and 24 March 2021; and meeting Uzbek Foreign Minister Kamilov during a visit to Tashkent on 15 and 16 July 2021.

■ **Afghanistan: Repatriation**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[48218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) UK and (b) Afghan nationals eligible for relocation to the UK have departed Afghanistan on international flights departing from Kabul Airport since 9 September 2021; and what criteria was used to select those people for those flights.

Amanda Milling:

A total of 34 British nationals left Kabul on two Qatari Government charters on 9 and 10 September. 13 British nationals, with no Afghan dependents, left from Kabul on Thursday 9 September. A second Charter successfully left Kabul on Friday 10 September. This flight included 21 British nationals, with no Afghan dependents. The eligibility criteria was set by the Qatari Government and required the principal to be a foreign passport holder. Any family members travelling with the principal had to hold the correct documentation (e.g. a foreign passport or an Afghan passport with a valid visa for their final destination). Afghan dependents could only be considered eligible if they already held a British visa in their passport. Other Afghan nationals (not dependents of foreign nationals) were not eligible.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[48252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government funded (a) the two flights that left Afghanistan for Qatar on 9

and 10 September 2021 carrying 13 and 21 British nationals respectively and (b) other flights from Afghanistan to Qatar in the last two months.

Amanda Milling:

To date the Qatari Government has not charged for their flights from Afghanistan to Qatar.

■ **Armed Conflict: Child and Maternal Mortality**

Chris Law:

[\[45152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the health of women and children living in fragile and conflict settings is prioritised in the Government's Action Plan on Ending the Preventable Deaths of Mothers, Newborns and Children.

Chris Law:

[\[45153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to mitigate the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on child and maternal mortality through the Government's new action plan on Ending the Preventable Deaths of Mothers, Newborns and Children.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains committed to supporting maternal and child health as part of our manifesto commitment to end preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children by 2030, including in fragile and conflict settings. This has become more important during the Covid-19 pandemic when essential health services have been disrupted.

Global health is a top priority for the UK government and health system strengthening, including in fragile and conflict settings, is central to efforts to enhance global health security, support countries to achieve universal health coverage or indeed ending the preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children. We are working globally with agencies such as the WHO, GAVI the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Financing Facility to support governments to strengthen health systems, provide technical assistance, improve quality of care and immunise children.

■ **Belarus: Journalism**

Catherine West:

[\[48314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Belarusian Government on journalists currently under house arrest and awaiting criminal trials in the country.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government has repeatedly called on Belarus to release journalists who have been arbitrarily detained, and to hold to account those responsible for attacks on journalists. I did so most recently on 16 August in response to the Belarusian authorities' designation of content from TUT.BY as extremist. We raise our concerns

publicly, through international fora, and in our bilateral discussions with the Belarusian authorities. We have been clear that continuing this destructive activity will only deepen the pariah status of the Lukashenko regime.

Catherine West:

[\[48316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government (a) is taking and (b) plans to take support journalists in Belarus who have experienced (i) physical violence and (ii) threats of imprisonment for their media work.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned by the continuing attacks on media freedom in Belarus. There have been more than 700 reported incidents of persecution of media figures in Belarus since the start of last year's election campaign. The Government has repeatedly called on Belarus to release journalists who have been arbitrarily detained, and to hold to account those responsible for attacks on journalists. The recent blocking of news websites, and the liquidation of key non-state media organisations, highlight the lengths the regime will go to in order to silence critical voices. We have increased financial support to civil society and independent media organisations in Belarus. By the end of this financial year, our programme funding will have almost tripled compared to 2019/pre-crisis levels, to £4.5 million by March 2022.

Catherine West:

[\[48317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government is taking steps to support journalists from Belarus who have fled that country and need assistance with (a) visas, (b) relocation funds and (c) financial support to continue their journalism.

Wendy Morton:

The UK will always defend media freedom and journalists right to do their job. We are providing up to £4.5 million support this year to independent Belarusian media, including those that have been displaced by the current situation.

■ Central Asia: Press Freedom

Catherine West:

[\[48318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to his counterparts in Central Asia to raise concerns on the (a) safety of media workers and (b) importance of freedom of press.

Amanda Milling:

The FCDO remains committed to the Global Media Freedom campaign launched in 2018. Through the UK's co-chairing of the Media Freedom Coalition we are working to improving media freedom domestically and internationally. In Central Asia, we work to achieve this principally through our programming, which supports the development of an independent media landscape through capacity building

assistance. The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon discussed issues relating to media freedom during his meeting with Uzbek Justice Minister Davletov in Tashkent on 15 July. FCDO officials regularly hold open and frank conversations with representatives of Central Asian governments on this and other human rights issues, including through our engagement in international organisations such as the UN Human Rights Council.

■ Chevening Scholarships Programme

Caroline Lucas: [\[48182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2021 to Question 41804 on Chevening Scholarships Programme: Coronavirus, with reference to the liaison between the Chevening Secretariat, universities, local authorities and the Home Office, by what date outstanding questions from universities and local authorities seeking (a) confirmation of the immigration status of family members of Chevening scholars who have arrived in the UK, (b) confirmation of their recourse to public funds and (b) answers to other queries will be answered.

Amanda Milling:

All Afghan Chevening Scholars who arrived in the UK have been given conditions of permission which allow them to start their course of study. The Chevening Secretariat is in contact with all Afghan Chevening scholars and their families, and will continue working closely with them to answer all of their queries.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[48327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many covid-19 vaccines the UK has donated to low income countries as of 16 September 2021.

Wendy Morton:

At least 80% of UK donations will ultimately go to COVAX who are best placed to allocate to countries most in need. As of 14 September, over 9 million UK vaccine doses have been delivered to developing countries. The World Bank defines 27 countries as low income. Of these, 2,096,640 UK doses have been donated to: (the) Democratic Republic of Congo (51,840), Ethiopia (1,520,640), Malawi (119,040), Niger (105,600) and Uganda (299,520).

■ Ghana: Coronavirus

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[48313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many covid-19 vaccines his Department will be providing to Ghana.

James Duddridge:

The UK has a strong partnership with Ghana and we are supporting the COVID-19 pandemic response there. I [Minister Duddridge] discussed UK support to Ghana in a meeting with Ghana's Minister for Health in Accra earlier this month. I [Minister Duddridge] am delighted to confirm that on 18 August a shipment of 249,600 UK-donated AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines arrived in Ghana. These vaccines will help protect frontline health workers, vulnerable people most at risk from COVID-19, and those in need of their second vaccine dose.

Iran: Human Rights**Henry Smith:**[\[45099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to use UK's Global Human Rights sanctions regime against (a) Ebrahim Raisi and (b) other members of the Iranian Government in response to human rights violations in Iran.

James Cleverly:

Iran is a Human Rights Priority Country for the FCDO. We regularly raise human rights with the Iranians at all levels and take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record. It would not be appropriate to speculate which individuals may be designated under the Global Human Rights sanctions regime in the future. To do so could reduce the impact of designations.

Israel: Palestinians**Rosie Cooper:**[\[45085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will conduct further research using programme budgets and evaluations as recommended by DME for Peace's report entitled, Research Study for the Department for International Development, Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine, published in March 2021.

James Cleverly:

We are taking forward relevant recommendations in the research study undertaken by the Department for International Development "Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine". We firmly believe a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. That is why we support steps to increase understanding and dialogue between the parties that can help create the conditions for meaningful negotiations. We will continue to fund peacebuilding projects focused on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and have increased our focus on monitoring and evaluation within these projects.

■ Kashmir: Politics and Government**Afzal Khan:** [\[48350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) implications for his policies of the Indian Government's recent lockdown on Kashmir after the death of activist, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and (b) human rights situation in Kashmir.

Amanda Milling:

The restrictions that were imposed following Mr Geelani's death have reportedly been lifted. We are monitoring the situation in Kashmir. We recognise that there are human rights concerns in both India-administered-Kashmir and Pakistan-administered-Kashmir. We encourage all states to ensure that domestic laws are in line with international standards and that any allegation of human rights abuse is investigated thoroughly, promptly, transparently and independently.

■ Members: Correspondence**Robert Largan:** [\[45312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon Member for High Peak, dated 12 May 2021, reference RL22521.

James Cleverly:

The answer provided by the department on 16 July to your previous PQ 29179 was incorrect. It stated that the FCDO had not received your enquiry RL22521 of 12 May. In fact I had already replied to your enquiry on 14 June.

Your enquiry and my reply reference MC2021/11985 had been mis-recorded under the name of your constituent. My officials have sent you a copy of my reply.

■ North Korea: Cruise Missiles**Stephen Kinnock:** [\[48251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to (a) make representations on North Korea's recent testing of a new 1,000 mile cruise missile at the UN Security Council and (b) have cruise missiles included in the scope of weapons that are considered to be endangering regional and world peace.

Amanda Milling:

These tests are a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolutions and a threat to regional peace and security.

North Korea must change course and take immediate steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. Alongside our allies and partners, the UK is committed to peace on the Korean Peninsula, upholding the rules-based international system and securing an end to North Korea's unlawful activities.

We urge North Korea to refrain from further provocations, and to return to dialogue with the US.

■ **Russia: Journalism**

Catherine West: [\[48315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has raised reports of Russian police searching the homes of investigative journalists with his Russian counterpart.

Wendy Morton:

The deteriorating human rights situation in Russia is deeply concerning, in particular the crackdown on independent media outlets and journalists. We have previously expressed our deep concerns about the use of Russia's legislation on "undesirable organisations" and "foreign agents" to suppress dissenting voices at the Council of Europe, OSCE, and UN Human Rights Council, and directly with the Russian government. The Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to freedom of expression and supporting independent media to the Russian Foreign Minister in June. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office continues to urge the Russian authorities, at all levels of engagement, to uphold the safety of all journalists in accordance with the international human rights commitments they have signed up to.

■ **Sri Lanka: Police Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[48369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a copy of the letter sent from Police Scotland's ACC Gary Ritchie to the British High Commission in Colombo on 28 May 2021 on the decision to pause activities with Sri Lanka police.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office has no plans to publish this correspondence. The UK's police training programme has focused on developing community policing, supporting women in the Sri Lankan police service, and improving the response to sexual and gender-based violence. All UK assistance is subject to robust Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) assessments that analyse the potential human rights, international humanitarian law, political and reputational risks of any proposed assistance to ensure that it supports our values and is consistent with our domestic and international human rights obligations. Our police training is currently undergoing a review. Police Scotland officers have not travelled to Sri Lanka since the start of the coronavirus pandemic for public health reasons. More information on our programme work can be found online.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[48370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a copy of the letter supplied by Police Scotland on 10 June 2021 to the British

High Commission in Colombo giving formal notification of the pause of the programme of work being undertaken by Police Scotland in Sri Lanka; and whether that letter was faxed to the Inspector General of Sri Lanka Police.

Amanda Milling:

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office has no plans to publish this correspondence. The UK's police training programme has focused on developing community policing, supporting women in the Sri Lankan police service, and improving the response to sexual and gender-based violence. All UK assistance is subject to robust Overseas Security and Justice Assistance (OSJA) assessments that analyse the potential human rights, international humanitarian law, political and reputational risks of any proposed assistance to ensure that it supports our values and is consistent with our domestic and international human rights obligations. Our police training is currently undergoing a review. Police Scotland officers have not travelled to Sri Lanka since the start of the coronavirus pandemic for public health reasons. More information on our programme work can be found online.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Asthma: Medical Treatments

Yvonne Fovargue: [\[44318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the eligible population among severe asthma sufferers for biologic treatments.

Yvonne Fovargue: [\[44319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many severe asthma patients are receiving biologic therapies through (a) the severe asthma networks and (b) other services.

Yvonne Fovargue: [\[44320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the geographical variation in the prescribing of biologics for severe asthma.

Jo Churchill:

No estimate has been made and information on the number of severe asthma patients are receiving biologic therapies is not available in the format requested.

Clinicians are responsible for making prescribing decisions for their patients, taking into account the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's technology appraisals and guidance on management of asthma and the local commissioning decisions. Prescribing of biologics for severe asthma is co-ordinated through severe asthma centre multi-disciplinary teams to ensure current treatments are optimised and all appropriate treatments are considered with use of biologics as part of the treatment review for each patient.

■ Autism: Social Services

Steve Reed: [\[48243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the number of local authorities that have published autism strategies.

Helen Whately:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Blood Tests: Bottles

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[42020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has issued on the blood tube shortage to (a) GPs and (b) the NHS on how to prioritise patients' blood tests to ensure a parity in service across the country.

Edward Argar:

Guidance has been issued to the National Health Service on 10 August recommending actions for medical directors, nursing directors, general practitioners and pathology laboratories to optimise resources for pathology laboratory work. Further guidance was issued on 26 August advising of anticipated short-term shortages on certain product types and how to safely reduce demand of all tubes in order that clinically urgent testing can continue.

Helen Hayes: [\[43595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the shortage of blood test sample bottles in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: 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.

■ Breast Cancer: Solihull

Saqib Bhatti: [\[45938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there are an adequate number of radiologists in clinics and hospitals in the Solihull Borough available to scan women at risk of breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:

Warwickshire Solihull and Coventry Breast Screening service has received funding from NHS England and NHS Improvement to increase its mammography, radiography and radiology staffing capacity. Further to this locally targeted action,

regional partners including Health Education England and NHS England and NHS Improvement have undertaken a workforce review of breast screening to tackle current shortages of trained staff. This will support all breast screening services, including the Warwickshire Solihull and Coventry service to have sufficient and sustainable staffing into the future.

Saqib Bhatti: [\[45939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the provision of breast cancer screening in the Solihull Borough after the four-month closure of the Warwickshire Solihull and Coventry Breast Cancer Screening Service as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Warwickshire Solihull and Coventry Breast Cancer Screening Service is working to screen all women who have missed an appointment by 31 March 2022, with NHS England and NHS Improvement monitoring progress.

The service has been able to gradually increase its capacity through the offer of open invitations rather than fixed time appointments and increasing the levels of permanent, third party and trainee staff, allowing the service to offer screening at additional times.

■ Care Homes: Influenza

Mr Mark Harper: [\[R\] \[45814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care whether, with reference to the Government's consultation entitled making vaccination a condition of deployment in the health and wider social care sector, launched 9 September 2021, whether he plans to extend the requirement of flu vaccinations to the groups for whom a covid-19 vaccination will be required to enter a CQC registered care home under The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2021.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: 'Making vaccination a condition of deployment in the health and wider social care sector' consultation is currently open and seeks views on proposals where Care Quality Commission-regulated health and care settings can only deploy staff who were fully vaccinated. The consultation also explores whether flu vaccination should be a condition of deployment in health and social care settings to protect those who are at a higher risk of flu.

■ Care Homes: Viral Diseases

Sarah Owen: [\[45930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of influenza-like illness outbreaks in care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: Many of the measures we have implemented to tackle COVID-19 will also be effective against flu, such as hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, social distancing, environmental cleaning and use of personal protective equipment.

Public Health England's local health protection teams investigate notifications of suspected influenza/respiratory virus outbreaks in care homes and alongside making recommendations on infection prevention and control measures, can recommend that local services consider prescribing antivirals to prevent and treat flu where needed.

■ Carer's Allowance**Rachael Maskell:**[\[47013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on increasing carer's allowance in respect of forthcoming proposals for social care.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: Ministers have regular discussions with their counterparts in the Department for Work and Pensions on a range of issues.

■ Coronavirus**Rachael Maskell:**[\[45193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 34543 on Organs: Coronavirus, for what reason the Government is not collecting data on the short- and long-term effect of covid-19 on human organs; and whether the Government is monitoring the findings of scientific research into the impact of covid-19 on organs.

Jo Churchill:

COVID-19 is a new disease and therefore it is not yet clear what the physical, neurological, psychological and rehabilitation needs will be for those experiencing the long-term effects of the virus.

The Government has invested £50 million in research to help build our understanding of 'long' COVID-19. One of the funded studies, Stimulate-ICP, will assess the use of magnetic resonance imaging scans to help diagnose potential organ damage in those recovering from COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus Act 2020**Dawn Butler:**[\[45056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the two-monthly report on the status of the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020, published on 21 July 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of maintaining emergency powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: A thorough six-month review of the remaining temporary provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 is taking place in September. All provisions that are not essential for managing the pandemic will be recommended for expiry.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [46978]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the two-monthly report on the status of the provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 published on 21 July 2021, what recent assessment he has made of the merits and demerits of maintaining powers under (a) section 52 and (b) Schedule 22 of that Act.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: The Government intends to expire section 52 and Schedule 22 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 as it pertains to England.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Luke Pollard:****[41242]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to recognise further ways of individuals proving double covid-19 vaccination status other than by a NHS letter and the NHS app.

Jo Churchill:

We plan to explore how third-party integrations can be facilitated to support COVID-19 status in other apps in the future, including secure identity management credentials which adheres to the emerging international standards.

In England, the NHS COVID Pass is currently available via the NHS App, NHS.UK and via letter.

Andrew Rosindell:**[45055]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of approving covid-19 vaccines administered in Australia to allow people vaccinated in Australia to be recognised as fully vaccinated and not be required to isolate for 10 days upon arrival from an Amber list country.

Jo Churchill:

We are taking a phased approach to restarting international travel from 'amber' countries and extending quarantine free entry to Australia and other countries as outlined in the Global Travel Taskforce report published in April.

We continue to work closely with medical and public health experts and with international partners ahead of following the next Global Travel Taskforce Review in October.

■ Dementia: Music

Mr Clive Betts: [46928]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of music-based interventions on people living with dementia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Clive Betts: [46929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will include in the National Dementia Strategy explicit recognition of the benefits of music-based interventions in the care of people living with dementia.

Simon Baynes: [47075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the benefit of music-based interventions in the care of people living with dementia.

Simon Baynes: [47076]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to include in the National Dementia Strategy recognition of the benefits of music-based interventions in the care of people living with dementia.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: The Department has commissioned research on living well with dementia from the National Institute for Health Research, which includes the methods and effectiveness of music therapy. NHS England and NHS Improvement have published guidance for social prescribing link workers to expand music prescriptions, which is available at the following link:

<https://musicfordementia.org.uk/advice-resources/toolkits-resources/toolkits-resources-for-social-workers-and-link-workers/>

We will be setting out our strategy on dementia for England for future years in due course.

■ Earwax: Medical Treatments

Catherine West: [47032]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide people on low incomes with financial assistance to pay for the removal of earwax build-up.

Edward Argar:

General practitioner (GP) practices offer National Health Service ear wax syringing services if they consider it clinically necessary or the patient will be referred to an appropriate local NHS service depending on the arrangements in place in the local area. The NHS would not charge eligible patients who need this treatment. GP practices are increasingly recommending self-care methods as the primary means to support the safe removal of ear wax. Local commissioners are responsible for

meeting the health needs of their local population and should continue to ensure there is appropriate access to ear wax services.

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [\[47014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the length of the covid-19 outbreak on plans to reduce the NHS backlog.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: No formal assessment has been made. We continue to engage with NHS England and NHS Improvement to build capacity and to reduce the backlog, with a further £1 billion announced to tackle waiting lists.

■ Healthy Start Scheme: Migrants

Gareth Thomas: [\[46926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many families with no recourse to public funds his Department is supporting through the Healthy Start scheme as a result of the extension of eligibility for that scheme announced on 30 June 2021.

Jo Churchill:

Since 30 June 2021, the Department has sent out 228 application forms and associated documents to families, or their representatives, who may have no recourse to public funds based on the initial information shared. There are currently no families with no recourse to public funds in receipt of Healthy Start benefits.

■ Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[45828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 37414, on Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments, by what date (a) those nine centres will have been commissioned and (b) the clinical teams at those centres will have received sufficient training for those services to commence.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[45829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 37409, on Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments, what timeline NHS England and NHS Improvement have set for the commencement of formal provider selection.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[45830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 6 September 2021 to Question 37413, on Heart Diseases: Medical Treatments, what timeline NHS England and NHS Improvement have set for the consideration of the commissioning of percutaneous mitral valve leaflet repair for functional mitral regurgitation.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement have not yet confirmed the date for commissioning the nine centres. Where services currently have insufficient clinical expertise to prepare for the commencement of those services, local cardiac networks will consider establishing a preceptorship programme with an established centre

There is currently no timeline for the commencement of formal provider selection. Each NHS England and NHS Improvement regional team has been asked to take responsibility for selecting a formal provider, supported by national clinical advisors. The selection process is expected to take at least three months, with each region working to their own prioritised timetable, taking into account local circumstances.

A proposal has been submitted to NHS England and NHS Improvement in relation to functional mitral regurgitation and is receiving consideration. It is anticipated that such a policy review could take at least 12 months for completion, taking into account clinical evidence and engagement with appropriate stakeholders

■ HIV Infection: Drugs**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:****[48328]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of uptake of the HIV prevention drug, PrEP, among different population groups, including women and black African communities.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) is analysing the data on uptake of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for the prevention of HIV among different population groups, including women and black African communities. The GUMCAD STI Surveillance System collects data on PrEP eligibility, offer and use and prescriptions. GUMCAD data are submitted to PHE on a quarterly basis, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gumcad-clinical-guidelines>

PHE is currently reviewing and analysing data reported for January to March 2021.

Holly Mumby-Croft:**[48389]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on ensuring that PrEP can be accessed in other health settings beyond sexual health clinics.

Jo Churchill:

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is now routinely available in the specialist sexual and reproductive health services throughout the country. The settings in which PrEP might be made available outside of sexual health services is being considered as part of the development of the new Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and the HIV Action Plan, which we plan to publish later this year.

■ Hospital Beds

John Redwood: [\[48121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospital beds are available in NHS England; and what the level of occupancy is at 13 September 2021.

Edward Argar:

The latest general and acute bed data available is for Quarter 1 2021/22. This shows the average daily number of general and acute beds open overnight was 96,998 with an average occupancy rate of 85.4%.

■ Hospitals: Energy

Rachael Maskell: [\[47009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of issuing all hospitals an energy efficiency assessment and score.

Edward Argar:

All hospital buildings with an internal usable space over 250 metres square are required to have a Display Energy Certificate that identifies the energy intensity of the building. This is accompanied by a recommendation report updated every seven years which outlines how the energy efficiency of the building can be improved.

The National Health Service collects annual energy usage data for its sites through ERIC Estates Returns Information Collection. This data is fed into an internal system which allows organisations to compare their performance. The NHS is working to release additional tools which will help with the evaluation of buildings and improvements to reach net zero carbon. These will be announced in due course.

■ Influenza: Care Homes

Sarah Owen: [\[42158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the (a) testing and (b) surveillance in care homes during the covid-19 pandemic for the implications of his policies on preventing influenza in that setting.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 September 2021]: There was negligible circulation of influenza in care homes in 2020-21 due to the measures designed to stop the spread of COVID-19. Existing systems for multi-virus testing of care homes remain in place and can be deployed when required.

Sarah Owen: [\[45278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to protect care home residents during the forthcoming winter flu season.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: Measures are in place to monitor and reduce the spread any influenza outbreaks within care homes. All care home residents and

staff are eligible for flu vaccination and measures that are effective for COVID-19 work for flu. Hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, social distancing, environmental cleaning, use of personal protective equipment and other COVID-19 precautions provide protection against flu. Public Health England's local health protection teams investigate notifications of suspected influenza/respiratory virus outbreaks in care homes and alongside making recommendations on infection control measures, can recommend that local services consider prescribing antivirals to prevent and treat flu where needed.

■ **Ladders: Injuries**

Rachael Maskell: [\[44395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 July 2021 to Question 23249 on Ladders: Injuries, what data is collected on injuries presented at emergency departments and minor injury units; and how is any connection between that data and ladder accidents recorded.

Edward Argar:

The Emergency Care Data Set categorises the incident leading to injury, including the status and type of activity being undertaken as well as the cause of the injury. While a connection between the injury and ladder accidents can be established through these categories, there is no specific entry for ladders as a cause of injury.

■ **Medefer**

Justin Madders: [\[45848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the per patient cost is for a referral to Medefer.

Edward Argar:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **NHS: Reorganisation**

Rachael Maskell: [\[44399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to engage with (a) primary care networks and (b) other local practitioners on the effect of NHS reorganisation on the ability of those practitioners to deliver services.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement engages regularly with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) through the NHS Confederation. NHS Confederation carried out an engagement exercise with clinical and care professionals in March 2021 which NHS England participated in and considered their feedback in the development of guidance of the role of primary care in integrated systems.

■ Prostate Cancer: Coronavirus**Bob Blackman:** [\[45839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September to Question 41823 on Prostate Cancer: Diagnosis, for what reason no formal assessment has been made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of referrals for suspected prostate cancer; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Data on prostate cancer is not available as a separate data set. It is published monthly as a subset of data on urological malignancies, which includes a number of different possible cancers.

The Department continues to work with the National Health Service to improve services. There are now 11 urology or prostate rapid diagnostic centre pathways either under development or operational to help recover these services.

■ Prostate Cancer: Nurses**Bob Blackman:** [\[48191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many grants were awarded by Health Education England to enable existing and aspiring nurses to train as non-medical practitioners to support the prostate cancer workforce in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 September 2021 to Question [41820](#).

■ Social Services: Fees and Charges**Mr Mark Harper:** [\[45811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the publications entitled, 'Building Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care, Command Paper 506, what comparative assessment he has made of how the (a) cap on care costs, and (b) increase in asset thresholds for those who pay for social care will differ between pensioners and working age adults.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: The cap on care costs and increase in the capital limits will benefit all those who access adult social care, as the reform changes will be universal. We will be publishing an equalities impact assessment in due course.

■ Social Services: Pay**Rachael Maskell:** [\[47010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set a minimum wage for care workers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: We have no current plans to do so.

■ **Social Services: Training**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[47012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for new training initiatives to support recruitment and retention of social care staff.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: We will invest at least £500 million in new measures over three years to provide support in professionalising and developing the workforce, including hundreds of thousands of training places, certifications for our care workers and professional development for the regulated workforce.

■ **Surgery: Coronavirus**

John Redwood:

[\[48124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the level of NHS elective surgery (a) as at 13 September 2021 and (b) prior to the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

While no formal comparative assessment has been made, surgery performance is monitored regularly.

Through the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund, we are supporting the National Health Service to increase activity to pre-pandemic levels. We have also provided additional funding to deliver approximately 30% more elective activity by 2024-25, compared to pre-pandemic levels.

■ **Travel: Quarantine**

Sarah Owen:

[\[45280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to assist people who have fled the Taliban regime in Afghanistan with the cost of managed covid-19 hotel quarantine.

Sarah Owen:

[\[45281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing people who have (a) fled Afghanistan and arrived in the UK and (b) assisted the British Armed Forces to stay at managed covid-19 hotel quarantine facilities for free.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: There is a cross-Government effort to design a package for arrivals from Afghanistan, including the support that is needed to help these families relocate to the United Kingdom. The cost of managed quarantine is being considered in these discussions.

Mr Steve Baker: [R] [\[46976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish a breakdown of the cost of £2285 for Government-approved covid-19 quarantine hotels.

Jo Churchill:

The notional costing from 12 August based on the charge of £2,285 is comprised of: room and board £1,217; security £651; testing £96; liaison £69; airport costs £92; welfare costs £51; transport £38; administration £49; and 'other' and contingency £22.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[48159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people who have one dosage of a covid-19 vaccine as part of the Covishield programme administered by the UN are still required to quarantine when travelling to the UK from amber list countries.

Jo Churchill:

Covishield is a two-dose vaccine and therefore we require people to have received both doses and completed the course before they are able to travel to the United Kingdom from an 'amber list' country without the need to quarantine.

HOME OFFICE

■ Birth Certificates: LGBT People

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[45184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has plans to update birth certificates to enable parents of the same sex to register the birth of their child.

Kevin Foster:

The Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953, and associated regulations, prescribes the information to be recorded in a birth entry in England and Wales. The information collected during a birth registration relates to the event as it happened at the time the child was born and includes information about the mother who has carried and given birth to them.

Same-sex female couples can register their child's birth to include both their names, subject to certain conditions being met. There are no current plans to change the information relating to parents recorded in a birth entry in England and Wales, however same-sex male couples can obtain a parental order from the court to be registered as parents.

■ British Nationality: Hong Kong

Charlotte Nichols: [\[45285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the British citizenship application process is for those who have successfully received a Hong Kong British

National (Overseas) visa; and how long those people who hold that visa will need to live in the UK to be eligible to apply for British citizenship.

Kevin Foster:

The Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa is valid for up to five years. After five years in the UK and, provided they have stayed free of criminality, have supported themselves financially and otherwise complied with the terms of the visa, they will be able to apply for permanent settlement. After a further year they may apply to register as a British citizen, six years' residence in all.

For citizenship they will need to have been resident in the UK without significant absences in the five year period before making the application, and be of good character. They will not, however, need to pass the Life in the UK test or have an English language qualification in the same way as those applying for naturalisation.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Afghanistan**

Claudia Webbe:

[\[45299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether British nationals and their families, who are non-British nationals, who have been evacuated from Afghanistan through third-party countries have been given a clear timeframe for when they will be repatriated to the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK's evacuation operation helped over 15,000 people to safety including British nationals, Afghan interpreters, and other vulnerable people. Whilst the success of that operation exceeded our assumptions, we know that there are many left in difficult circumstances. Colleagues in the UK and overseas continue to work urgently with international partners, including those in neighbouring countries, to secure safe routes as soon as they become available.

■ **EU Nationals: Identity Cards**

Stephen Crabb:

[\[46956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of a short transition period from the 1 October 2021 deadline to allow for EU citizens to travel to the UK using a national ID card.

Stephen Crabb:

[\[46957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her European counterparts on the potential merits of a short transition period from 1 October 2021 to allow for EU citizens to travel to the UK using a national ID card.

Kevin Foster:

The UK has left the EU, ended free movement and is aligning the entry of EU and non-EU citizens. Citizens from outside the EU (and other EEA countries and Switzerland) cannot use national identity cards for travel to the UK and EEA national identity cards are, as a rule, less secure documents than national passports, hence

they dominate the figures for document abuse detected at the border. Their continued use presents a risk to border security which we are no longer obliged to accept.

All visitors from outside the EU are expected to hold a passport (and visa where necessary) and those visiting from EU countries will be expected to do the same.

We have provided almost a year's notice for this change to allow people to plan ahead and obtain a passport, if they need to, before they travel. Our assessment is therefore a short transition period from 1 October 2021 is not appropriate and, consequently, there have been no discussions on this point with EU Member States.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan

Lisa Nandy:

[44330]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many calls have been made to the helpline for non-British nationals in need of assistance in Afghanistan as of 7 September 2021; what the average wait time has been for calls to be answered to that helpline; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of her Department making that helpline free to call.

Victoria Atkins:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: From 20 August 2021 to 7 September 2021 there have been 5,357,322 calls made (offered) to the helpline. The Home Office brought in 250 extra staff to help ensure average waiting times were kept to a minimum.

The telephone number (02475 389 980) is a geographical number therefore call charges vary depending on the phone provider and whether a landline or mobile is used to make the call. Further information can be found on GOV.UK at:

www.gov.uk/call-charges

When setting up the helpline the primary focus was to ensure it was easily accessible for those calling from the UK and abroad – A freephone option would not have provided that accessibility.

The department continues to closely monitor and review the volume of calls being made to the helpline; as the volumes have significantly reduced over this period there is currently no scope to move the helpline to a freephone number however this decision will remain under review.

Claudia Webbe:

[45298]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals have been processed by the UK visa and immigration service (a) prior to and (b) since August 2021.

Kevin Foster:

Home Office Migration Statistics do not specifically capture the information on how many Afghan nationals have been processed. Data on the number of applications received up to June 2021 can be accessed at [Migration statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/migration-statistics)

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found at immigration - Research and statistics - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Claudia Webbe:

[\[45301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of how long Afghan families who have been relocated to the UK will have to wait until they are permanently housed.

Victoria Atkins:

On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced the launch of a new bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), to welcome up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans to the UK. The scheme will focus on those most at risk and in its first year will resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans.

The time in temporary accommodation is contingent on the number of offers from local authorities with offers of permanent accommodation for families and ensure that families are moved into these homes as soon as they become available. I set out on 13th September the detail of how local authorities can offer support to Afghans.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Sarah Olney:

[\[48323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will provide EU citizens in the UK who are granted Settled or Pre-Settled Status with physical proof of their migration status.

Kevin Foster:

I refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave to UIN 48558 on 20 May 2020.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Claudia Webbe:

[\[45300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timetable is for (a) publishing the full details of the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme and (b) opening that scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has worked at pace to develop and launch the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will provide 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 – one of the most generous schemes in British history.

On Monday 13th September the Government published a policy statement which set out further details on the policy and operation of the ACRS, and the package of integration support that will be offered to those arriving through the Scheme.

This policy statement confirmed that some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at

particular risk – including women’s rights activists, prosecutors and journalists - will be resettled under the ACRS

Claudia Webbe: [\[45302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to establish a specific programme to support Afghan refugees to settle in the UK, including help to find employment.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has worked at pace to develop and launch a new and bespoke Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable people in its first year, rising to up to 20,000 over the coming years – one of the most generous schemes in British history.

On Monday 13th September the Government published a policy statement which set out further details on the policy and operation of the ACRS, and the package of integration support that will be offered to those arriving through the Scheme.

This statement confirmed that all of those brought to the UK under ARAP and ACRS will receive a comprehensive package of support that will help them to acclimatise to the UK, learn English and find work.

Claudia Webbe: [\[45304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will work with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to help ensure that mental health services are made available to Afghan refugees as soon as possible on their arrival to the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

The safety and wellbeing of those who arrived from Afghanistan is of the utmost importance and we will work closely with accommodation providers and other partners to prioritise their safety and wellbeing.

We are providing £3 million to ensure Afghan receive the healthcare they need. This includes access to prescriptions, wound care and dressings, maternity care, mental health support, and screening for infectious diseases.

We will also offer the protection of a COVID-19 vaccination as they settle and rebuild.

Caroline Lucas: [\[45834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she is having with his Pakistani counterpart on ensuring that people who have crossed the border into Pakistan from Afghanistan, who fall into priority groups recognised under the UK’s Afghan citizens resettlement scheme, will be able to remain safely in Pakistan until their resettlement applications have been processed; and what support will those people receive on the ground from the Government during this period.

Caroline Lucas: [\[45835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the target timeframe will be to process applications submitted to the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has worked at pace to develop and launch a new and bespoke Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable people in its first year, rising to up to 20,000 over the coming years – one of the most generous schemes in British history.

On Monday 13th September the Government published a policy statement which set out further details on the policy and operation of the ACRS, including in relation to the eligibility and selection of people under the Scheme.

Given the complex picture in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, it is important that the Government fully considers the operational delivery of the scheme with its international partners. We are working at pace to do that.

Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**Daisy Cooper:**[\[48365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether visa applications from red list countries will continue to be processed while covid-19 restrictions on international travel remain in place.

Kevin Foster:

Applications for transit visas and visas for work, study or residence in the UK continue to be processed from all red, amber and green list locations.

UKVI continues to accept applications for visit visas from red, amber and green countries, yet the processing and issuing of visit visas for travel from red list countries is paused until travel restrictions are lifted on the nation concerned.

Requests relating to urgent travel for compassionate reasons are considered on a case-by-case basis

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**Beaches: Monitoring****Steve Reed:**[\[48244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the number of beach patrols undertaken by local authorities in England.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

Buildings: Insulation**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[45178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 22 June 2021 to Question 15286 on Buildings: Insulation, whether there

is a list of HPL cladding products approved by his Department; and where that list is located.

Christopher Pincher:

High Pressure Laminate (HPL) panels can have a wide range of fire performance and so the Department has not published a list of approved HPL products.

However, following the test carried out by the Department in 2019, an advice note was published to provide advice to building owners on the fire performance of HPL cladding system. This advice note was then included in the Consolidated Advice Note which is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869532/Building_safety_advice_for_building_owners_including_fire_door_January_2020.pdf

The Secretary of State has confirmed that we will shortly retire the consolidated advice note in favour of the development of new more risk-proportionate guidelines for fire risk assessors including PAS 9980 which will include information on HPL.

■ **Community Ownership Fund**

Catherine West: [\[45232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the £150 million Community Ownership Fund to further support industries that have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

The Community Ownership Fund is a UK Government initiative to help ensure that communities across the United Kingdom can support and continue benefiting from the local facilities, community assets and amenities most important to them.

Community groups can bid for up to £250,000 matched-funding to help them buy or take over local community assets or amenities at risk of being lost, to run as community-owned businesses. We will review the first round of the fund and consider potential changes to ensure that, in future rounds, the fund is able to best support communities across the whole of the United Kingdom.

■ **Community Ownership Fund: Greater London**

Catherine West: [\[45230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of 2020 first round applications for the Community Ownership Funds were for projects based in London.

Eddie Hughes:

The first round of the Community Ownership Fund has now closed. Bids are now being reviewed and will be announced in due course.

Catherine West:

[\[45231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the £150 million Community Ownership Fund for projects based in London, to take into account the comparatively high cost of property in the capital.

Eddie Hughes:

The Community Ownership Fund is a UK Government initiative to help ensure that communities across the United Kingdom can support and continue benefiting from the local facilities, community assets and amenities most important to them. We will review the first round of the fund and consider potential changes to ensure that, in future rounds, the fund is able to continue to best support communities across the whole of the United Kingdom.

■ **Floods: Ellesmere Port and Neston**

Justin Madders:

[\[45173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing grants and support to Ellesmere Port and Neston constituents affected by flooding in January 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

Following severe weather events which have significant and wide area impacts, support may be made available to impacted local authorities through the activation of the Flood Recovery Framework

Before activating the Framework, Government considers many factors - such as the severity, duration, and the extent of reported impacts and how these compare to past events. The overall reported impacts affecting areas including Ellesmere Port and Neston following Storm Christoph in January 2021 were far lower than the trigger for previous activations in November 2019 and February 2020, and therefore the Framework was not activated.

■ **Homelessness**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what lessons the Government has learnt from its covid-19 homeless strategy having enabled people to (a) live in single-person accommodation and (b) gain confidence in independent living.

Eddie Hughes:

We are regularly taking into account the lessons learned from our ongoing pandemic response, including Everyone In and the Protect Programme.

Everyone In provided a unique opportunity to support people sleeping rough and has transformed local provision in many areas, such as through the continued use of single-person accommodation. This year we are providing £202 million for the Rough

Sleeping Initiative (RSI) which will build on past successes and provide ongoing support to those who need it. However we are clear that local authorities are best placed to make decisions about how to support their cohort. The RSI 21/22 through its design allows us to continue to work closely with local authorities to ensure tailored support is offered to all individuals, alongside stable, affordable accommodation.

We have also announced a £3 million Homelessness Transformation Fund to enable community and faith groups to provide single-room COVID-secure accommodation this winter. The £433 million Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme will also provide 6,000 move-on homes, available as long-term assets, and accompanying support services to those who are rough sleeping or who have a history of sleeping rough.

Rachael Maskell:

[45210]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the Government's policy is to support step programmes to tackle homelessness; and what comparative assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of such step programmes and Housing First.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government has committed over £750 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in England this year, including over £202 million for the 2021/2022 Rough Sleeping Initiative. Local authorities use this funding to deliver their homelessness strategies, and the funding supports a wide range of interventions to support people at risk of rough sleeping, including Housing First, other housing-led solutions, emergency accommodation, outreach and floating support.

Housing First is a model in which rough sleepers with the most complex needs are provided with stable, affordable accommodation and intensive wrap-around support to help them recover from complex issues and sustain their tenancies. Government awarded £28 million to pilot Housing First in three areas, including up to £2.7 million for a comprehensive external evaluation of the pilots.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), initially launched in March 2018, seeks to reduce the levels of rough sleeping by working with local authorities to provide specialist services, tailored to local circumstances, to help vulnerable people off the streets. An impact evaluation reported a 32% reduction in rough sleeping in areas that received RSI funding in 2018/19, compared to estimated rates had RSI funding not been in place.

The needs of people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness or rough sleeping vary, and it is right that central and local government support a range of interventions that recognise and meet the differing needs of individuals.

Rachael Maskell: [\[45211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it his policy to ensure that people who are street homeless this winter are given accommodation as they were at the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Eddie Hughes:

We are committed to make sure that rough sleepers will be offered the support they need to get off the streets and are protected from the cold this winter.

Our work to support rough sleepers is not limited to the winter months. We made huge progress working with local authorities and their partners to protect rough sleepers during the pandemic. This work has not stopped, and by the end of January, we had supported over 37,000 people with over 11,000 in emergency accommodation and over 26,000 already moved on into longer-term accommodation.

To make sure rough sleepers do not return to the streets, we are funding 6,000 long-term move-on homes for rough sleepers by the end of parliament, with the majority becoming available this year.

This year the Government has provided over £202 million across England for the 2021/22 Rough Sleeping Initiative, this is more than an 80% increase from the £112 million provided last year and funding will provide up to 14,500 bed spaces and 2,700 support staff. We are also providing £3 million Transformation fund to support faith and community groups to deliver better quality provision this year to be ready for people sleeping rough by winter 2021/22.

All of this provision is designed to provide an off the street offer and protect rough sleepers, including in extreme weather.

Rachael Maskell: [\[48283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he has made on repealing the Vagrancy Act 1824; and what the timeframe is for the repeal of that Act.

Rachael Maskell: [\[48284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people have been prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act 1824 in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire and (c) York in each of the last 10 years; and what steps he is taking to reduce the number of prosecutions.

Rachael Maskell: [\[48285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the penalties that have been served under the Vagrancy Act 1824 in the last five years.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is clear that no one should be criminalised simply for having nowhere to live and the time has come to reconsider the Vagrancy Act.

Work is ongoing to look at this complex issue and it is important that we look carefully at all options. We know from our engagement with stakeholders that there are diverging views about the necessity and relevance of the Vagrancy Act, and it may not be a question of simply repealing the 1824 Act and putting nothing in its place.

We will update on our findings in due course.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government does not centrally hold data on prosecutions under the Vagrancy Act over the last 10 years. The Ministry of Justice outcome by offence tool, which is publicly available, holds some of this information:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987715/outcomes-by-offence-2020.xlsx

■ Housing First

Rachael Maskell:

[45208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Housing First pilot programme; and whether his Department has plans to support wider roll out of that pilot.

Eddie Hughes:

Housing First has an impressive international record in helping people with complex needs to recover and stay off the streets for good, which is why we awarded £28 million to pilot it in three areas (the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region).

We also commissioned a consortium, led by ICF, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot programme.

The overall evaluation programme includes a process evaluation, quantitative assessment of client outcomes, a cost-benefit analysis, and a programme of assessments, undertaken by Homeless Link, to review each Pilot's fidelity with the seven Housing First principles developed by Housing First England for the England context.

Four reports have been published. The first interim process report centred on pilot development, preparation and early delivery, and provides learning and recommendations at both the central and local level. The second report focuses on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the pilots and service users. The Mobilising Housing First toolkit provides information for those looking to implement Housing First and includes examples of good practice in the pilot areas. The most recent interim report (published July 2021) builds on the first interim report and focuses on the embedding of the pilot approaches in each area and the resulting key learning. The reports are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-first-pilot-national-evaluation-reports>

We recognise that rough sleeping is a nationwide challenge, and that is why it is important that we consider the findings of our evaluation, together with our

experiences from the three pilots, to ensure that we know how it could work best on a larger scale.

The Government committed to expanding Housing First in its latest manifesto and we will use the findings of our evaluation, together with our experiences from the three pilots, to inform next steps.

■ **Local Government Services: Gardens**

Steve Reed:

[\[48242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information his Department holds on the provision of assisted garden maintenance services by local authorities in England.

Eddie Hughes:

Assisted garden maintenance services, such as hedge or grass trimming, can be provided to support people who are unable to look after their garden themselves (such as the elderly or people with disabilities). They can be offered free of charge or for a small fee. MHCLG does not collect information on which councils provide these services, as it is a matter for local authorities.

■ **Local Government: Meetings**

Steve Reed:

[\[48241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help local authorities hold meetings in a covid-19 safe manner.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government recognises that councils have delivered above and beyond throughout the pandemic. To support the reopening of local authority buildings and the return to face-to-face meetings, we advise use of the 'Working Safely During Coronavirus' guidance available on gov.uk which provides advice on precautions to manage risk.

Meetings where councils deem in-person attendance is not required can continue virtually. This would include non-statutory or other informal meetings.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-pacific Partnership**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[45083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has (a) sought and (b) received legal advice on the compatibility of UK GDPR with the electronic commerce chapter of CPTPP.

Graham Stuart:

HM Government is committed to maintaining high standards of protection for personal data, including when it is transferred across borders. The rights of UK data subjects will not be impacted by the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). UK data protection rules, enshrined in the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation, will continue to apply.

HM Government takes a range of legal advice across policy areas, which is subject to legal privilege. HM Government does not generally comment on whether legal advice has been sought or received on a specific area.

Trade and Agriculture Commission**Drew Hendry:**[\[45191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent progress has been made towards the establishment of the Trade and Agriculture Commission.

Graham Stuart:

I refer the Member to the answer given to the Right Honourable Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich on 10 September, UIN 40833.

JUSTICE**Begging and Vagrancy: Prosecutions****Layla Moran:**[\[48346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions have been made in (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Thames Valley and (d) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency under the Vagrancy Act 1824 in each calendar year since 2015.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions under the Vagrancy Act 1824, up to December 2020, in the 'Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code' data tool, available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987731/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2020.xlsx

In the data tool linked above, you can use the 'Offence code' filter to select the offences of interest. The following is a list of offences that fall within the Vagrancy Act 1824:

- 104/31 – Resisting or obstructing a constable in execution of duty - offences under the Vagrancy Act 1824
- 182/00 – Wandering abroad or being in any street etc to beg or gather alms or causing or procuring any child so to do

- 183/00 – Wandering abroad and lodging in any barn, outhouse, deserted or unoccupied building, etc. or in the open air, etc.
- 185/01 – Being on enclosed premises for an unlawful purpose
- 188/01 – Any petty chapman or peddler trading without a licence
- 188/05 – Collecting alms or endeavouring to procure charitable contributions by fraudulent pretence
- 188/99 – Offences against Vagrancy Act 1824.

To isolate data for a specific region, use the 'Police force area' filter to do the following:

1. For England, select all except those in Wales (North Wales, South Wales, Dyfed-Powys and Gwent)
2. For Wales, select only those in Wales (as above)
3. For Thames Valley, select only 'Thames Valley'.

We are unable to isolate individuals prosecuted in the Oxford West and Abingdon constituency as the Courts Proceedings Database uses the location of the court at which a case was dealt as a proxy for location. The nearest court to this constituency is Oxfordshire Magistrates' Court, which has a broad catchment area including other surrounding constituencies. We are therefore unable to disaggregate individuals from Oxford West and Abingdon constituency from those from other surrounding constituencies.

■ Downview Prison

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[48330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 13 July 2021 to Question 29877, Downview Prison, and with reference to the evidence quoted in the judgment in R (FDJ) v the Secretary of State of 2 July 2021 that biologically female prisoners have been allocated to HMP Downview's E Wing alongside biologically male transgender prisoners, what the circumstances are under which a biologically female prisoner may be considered for placement on E Wing.

Lucy Frazer:

HMP Downview's E Wing currently provides separate accommodation in the women's estate specifically for transgender women with Gender Recognition Certificates (GRC) who pose, or face, too high a risk to be located in the general women's population. Decisions on allocation of this nature can only be made via a Complex Case Board, chaired by a senior prison manager, as detailed in 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender' policy framework

It is not Ministry of Justice and HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) policy to place women on E Wing who do not hold a GRC. In exceptional circumstances, such as those seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains open to HMPPS to utilise accommodation differently where it is considered operationally necessary. However,

any women placed on E Wing in such circumstances would always be held separately from others on the unit.

■ **Police Custody: Legal Opinion**

Alex Cunningham: [\[48219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure legal defence practitioners are able to provide in-person attendance to all suspects in police custody.

Alex Chalk:

In April 2020 the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), Crown Prosecution Service, The Law Society, Criminal Law Solicitors' Association and London Criminal Courts Solicitors Association agreed a joint protocol to facilitate the provision of remote legal advice for suspects being interviewed under caution in police stations during the pandemic. As a contingency measure, the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) agreed temporarily to pay for remote police station work as if it were provided in person.

From 17 May 2021 children under 18 and vulnerable adults were removed from the scope of the protocol and receive in-person advice.

The protocol is expected to be modified further shortly, at which point legal advice will be provided in person at a police station and in interview other than in rare and extraordinary circumstances (as defined in a revised protocol).

■ **Prisoners: Gender Recognition**

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[48331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what research his Department has approved that analyses criminal justice policy from the perspective of trans offenders.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[48332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what research his Department has approved that analyses the efficacy of prison placement policy of transgender people from the perspective of the prison management systems of (a) male and female prison officers and (b) female offenders in prisons.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[48333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what research his Department has approved that analyses how risk assessment panels understand the (a) risks being assessed and (b) needs of the female prison population when making decisions on placement of transgender people.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has not commissioned any relevant research since the current version of the policy framework 'The Care and Management of Individuals who are Transgender' was published in 2019. However, this policy was formulated following consultation with a range of stakeholders including staff and external groups

representing the interests of prisoners, and after consideration of the existing evidence on transgender people in prison, including internal data. Decisions regarding transgender prisoners continue to be made on a case-by-case basis, and all known risk factors (including any risk to the person, risk to others and risk of self-harm) are thoroughly assessed in each case.

The MoJ recognises the importance of good quality data and evidence and this will continue to be considered, as part of the ongoing implementation review, where evidence gaps are highlighted.

■ **Styal Prison: Fire Hazards**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[48172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Styal 2021, how many women and girls at HMP/YOI Styal are held in one of the 16 house blocks that have been classified as a red fire risk.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[48173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP/YOI Styal 2021, published on 8 September 2021, what steps he is taking to protect prisoners and staff at HMP/YOI Styal from serious fire risks.

Lucy Frazer:

The house blocks are currently considered safe for occupation and there are approximately 300 prisoners held there. Survey work carried out in March, however, identified fire risk issues. As a result of this the national fire safety team produced an action plan which set out measures to be taken to mitigate these risks. Action has been taken to prevent the spread of fire such as fire stopping works. To mitigate the impact of any potential fires all fire doors are regularly tested, and smoke detectors have been installed. The effectiveness of escape routes has also been confirmed and staff and prisoners are aware of appropriate actions in the event of a fire.

In order to obtain a more thorough picture of the risks involved an invasive survey is due to be undertaken shortly to identify the composition of the walls. This will enable identification of what, if any, structural building work is required.

The Ministry of Justice is currently preparing a response to the Independent Monitoring Board's Annual Report on HMP Styal and will reply in due course.

PRIME MINISTER**■ Members: Correspondence****Afzal Khan:****[48347]**

To ask the Prime Minister, what proportion of correspondence sent to him by hon. Members received a substantive response within the service standard in each month of (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Boris Johnson:

This information is not centrally collated in the form requested. Where a Hon. Member writes to me about a matter that is directly the responsibility of another Department, it has been the long-standing practice of successive administrations for that matter to be passed to that Department for a substantive reply, on my behalf.

This means that the data on such response times will be included in that Department's broader figures.

Further information on departmental performance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-on-responses-to-correspondence-from-mps-and-peers>

SCOTLAND**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Marion Fellows:****[903455]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness of the operation of the Sewel Convention and (b) ability of the Scottish Parliament to carry out its legislative functions on devolved matters.

Mr Alister Jack:

Scotland's two governments continue to work well together in line with the established practices of the Sewel Convention, a convention that has been used hundreds of times since the creation of the devolution settlement. The Scottish Government supported legislative consent motions for 19 UK Government bills in the last UK Parliamentary session.

The UK Government fully respects the devolution settlement as set out in the Scotland Act 1998, including the Scottish Parliament's competence to legislate in respect of devolved matters.

TRANSPORT**■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[48183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he is having with the Welsh Government ahead of the publication of his Department's electric vehicle charging infrastructure strategy.

Rachel Maclean:

I have regular discussions with Ministerial colleagues from different Devolved Administrations (DAs) about various aspects of the government's support for the transition zero emission driving. During the development of our EV infrastructure strategy, officials have been working closely with colleagues in the DAs to ensure that there are strong and coordinated plans in place for electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the country.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licenses**Mike Amesbury:**[\[45909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that HGV drivers currently awaiting the renewal of their licence are not hindered by lack of documentation when driving in the EU.

Rachel Maclean:

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has led to delays for customers Drivers are advised to take their driving licence with them when driving abroad in order to produce their licence if required.

Industrial action and Welsh Government social distancing requirements at the making paper applications. The DVLA is working hard to process paper applications as quickly as possible and is prioritising licence applications from HGV drivers. The latest information on turnaround times for paper driving licence applications can be found online.

■ South West Railway Line: Timetables**Sarah Olney:**[\[48321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of South Western Railway on the potential impact of timetable changes proposed for December 2022 on areas near to affected stations with planned local development projects that have been designed on the basis of current public transport provision levels.

Sarah Olney:[\[48322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to reconcile the population increases resulting from the London Plan's targets for house

building with proposed reductions to rail services that will affect (a) Richmond Park and (b) other constituencies in London.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is in regular dialogue with South Western Railway and monitoring very closely developments on the Dec-22 Timetable Specification. Stakeholders are encouraged to reference future developments in their responses to the consultation to help South Western Railway plan for future demand.

The industry is committed to working with local communities and stakeholders to match capacity to demand in the future, based on robust plans that can demonstrate value for the taxpayer.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[48390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department is having with the Department of Health and Social Care on the red list travel restriction-status of (a) Pakistan and (b) Bangladesh.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport works closely with the Department for Health and Social Care and other government departments on matters related to international travel. Decisions on Red, Amber or Green List assignment and associated border measures are taken by Ministers, who take into account Joint Biosecurity Centre risk assessments of countries and territories, alongside wider public health factors.

These are intended to be temporary measures and the government keeps data for countries and territories under regular review.

TREASURY

■ **Carbon Emissions**

Sarah Jones:

[\[48334\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the level of spending required in 2021-22 for the transition to achieve net zero.

John Glen:

The Spending Review 2020 allocated funding for 2021/22, and the full settlement can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents>. Spending Review 2021 is currently ongoing and is due to be published on the 27th October. This will include allocation of spending up to 2024/25.

At Spending Reviews, departments follow Green Book guidance to both understand the wider strategic context of their policies, including their contribution to Net Zero, and assess all costs and benefits of their bids, including climate and environmental impacts. At the Treasury we consider these impacts when we assess the value for money of different spending programmes and the benefits they would deliver.

At Spending Review 2020, we required departments to improve the information they provided about the impact on greenhouse gas emissions from their spending bids. We have written out to departments with our expectations to improve data collection on emissions for Spending Review 2021.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Feryal Clark:

[\[45289\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the potential impact of the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on the number of jobs that will be retained.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was designed as a temporary, economy-wide measure to support businesses while widespread restrictions were in place. Providing support to the end of September strikes the right balance between continuing to support the economy as it opens up and ensuring incentives are in place to get people back to work as demand returns.

This approach has worked; at the start of this crisis, unemployment was expected to reach 12 per cent or more. It is now expected to peak at about half of that level. That means almost 2 million fewer people out of work than previously feared. The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Report (MPR) forecasts that the unemployment rate will on average be around 4.7% across Q3 and Q4, a downwards revision from the May MPR which projected unemployment to peak at 5.4% in Q3 and below the OBR Spring forecast (6.5% in the final quarter of 2021).

Moreover, the labour market is recovering rapidly with reopening of the economy in line with the roadmap. Flash HMRC PAYE data for July showed the number of paid employees increased for the eighth consecutive month. The unemployment rate stood at 4.7% in the 3 months to June 2021, down from a peak of 5.2% in the 3 months to December 2020.

Vacancies in the three months to July 2021 continued to rise, reaching record levels and are now up 18% (rising by 142,000 to 953,000) on the three months to February 2020.

In order to support people into work, as part of its comprehensive Plan for Jobs, the Government has announced the £2 billion Kickstart scheme which will create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people, and the new three year Restart programme, which will provide intensive and tailored support to over one million unemployed Universal Credit claimants across England and Wales and help them find work.

■ Maternity Allowance and Parental Pay**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[45154\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many new parents received (a) statutory paternity pay, (b) statutory maternity pay and (c) maternity allowance in each financial year since 2010-11.

Jesse Norman:

The information is not held in the form requested. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) do hold information on claimants of statutory parental payments, but this is not limited to new parents and will include claimants in each year in which they received statutory payments.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publish statistics about benefits, including Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-expenditure-tables>.

■ UK Internal Trade: Northern Ireland**Carla Lockhart:** [\[45951\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (a) how many businesses have signed up to the Trader Support Service and (b) and what the cost to the public purse has been of operating that service since that service was launched.

Jesse Norman:

The Trader Support Service (TSS) currently has 41,446 Traders registered to use the service. The total spend on the Trader Support Service, since the service was launched to August 2021, is £164 million (including VAT).

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme****Ed Davey:** [\[48133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of whether there has been a change in the average time taken to process Access to Work payments in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer to my response to [PQN/21-22/2021/73119](#)21-

Access to Work aim for customers to be paid within 10 days of receipt of claims and all supporting evidence.

Following postal delays during July and August, we are seeing payment clearance times returning to normal levels.

■ Carers: Unpaid Work

Justin Madders:

[\[45854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps is she taking to ensure that unpaid carers in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency are supported to remain in work.

Mims Davies:

This Government is committed to promoting the benefits of retaining unpaid carers in the workforce, for both carer and employer. DWP has been working with national employer organisations to support and encourage employers, including small and medium sized enterprises, to retain employees who are carers, recently hosting a series of webinars delivered by the Business Champion for Older Workers and Employers for Carers.

Recognising that many carers experience considerable challenges balancing work with caring responsibilities, Government has also consulted on proposals to introduce a new employment right to one week of additional leave for unpaid carers, to support working people to balance employment with their caring responsibilities. We are now analysing the responses and will issue our response in due course, setting out the way forward.

■ Child Maintenance Service

Mr David Davis:

[\[45796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle issues raised in the Independent Case Examiner's Annual Report 2020 on the Child Maintenance Service, including the findings on the way that Service presents its accounts information.

Guy Opperman:

Since the report was published in October 2020 the Child Maintenance Service has been running at a reduced level and has been focussed on frontline activity serving our customers due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

However, we are now starting to increase that service and have introduced a Transformation Programme that will constantly review how we work and help to automate lots of processes.

We are continually improving our contact channels and we plan to improve our calculation letters in line with our online portal and system. This is so that all lines of communication between Child Maintenance Group and customers present information to customers in the same way to reduce confusion.

There are also proposed changes to our online portal that surround explaining the calculation and explaining the payment plan to our customers, these changes are planned for Quarter 3 of the financial year.

■ Children: Maintenance**Jessica Morden:** [\[45823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average time taken by the Child Maintenance Service to recover arrears for child maintenance was in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Guy Opperman:

We do not hold this information due to the complex nature of our unpaid Child Maintenance (previously known as arrears) negotiations. When arranging for unpaid Child Maintenance to be recovered, caseworkers speak to both the Paying Parent and the Receiving Parent to agree an affordable and acceptable amount for both parties.

Marion Fellows: [\[46996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support is available through the Child Maintenance Service for parents-with-care who have evidence that a non-resident parent is working when they have claimed they are not.

Guy Opperman:

The Child Maintenance Service (CMS), introduced a Financial Investigations Unit (FIU) in April 2014. They are responsible for investigating allegations of criminal or civil activities that negatively impact the correct amount of child maintenance being calculated. The FIU deal with a variety of different cases such as, allegations of fraud when attending or supplying a DNA test and allegations that the Paying Parent (PP) has failed to report their true level of income.

The FIU deploy a range of different investigative techniques that are tailored to the allegation and circumstances of the case. This involves gathering independent evidence from a range of sources and where applicable working with stakeholders such as Counter Fraud and Compliance Directorate (CFCD) in joint operations. Once an investigation is concluded, where a discrepancy in income is found, the CMS will recalculate the amount of maintenance due to be paid.

■ Employment Schemes**David Linden:** [\[48340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her oral contribution in response to the hon. Member for Glasgow East of 13 September 2021, what guidance her Department issues to Work Coaches to help them move people who are already in work into better paid work; and if she will place in the Library a copy of that guidance.

Mims Davies:

Work Coaches receive training to support all claimants and have access to guidance, a complex needs toolkit and district provision toolkit, that provide local support for claimants who require additional and specialist support.

This guidance will be published under the latest version of National Provision and placed in the House of Commons Library early October 2021.

Any work related provision which will support the claimant is identified and can be a single activity or several activities which address problems like debt, health or basic skills.

David Linden: [\[48341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her oral contribution in response to the hon. Member for Glasgow East of 13 September 2021, what estimate she has made of the number of people who were already in work and have moved into better paid work as a result of assistance from a Work Coach in (a) Glasgow East constituency, (b) Scotland and (c) the UK in the last three months.

Mims Davies:

No estimates have been made. We have recruited an additional 13,500 Work Coaches in our Jobcentres in the UK to help support people of all ages to find a job, retrain, or gain vital practical experience to move into better jobs from unemployment.

■ Kickstart Scheme

David Linden: [\[45248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish her Department's monitoring of the characteristics of people who participate in the Kickstart scheme.

David Linden: [\[45249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to record the experiences of (a) disabled people and (b) other participants in the Kickstart scheme.

David Linden: [\[45250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons her Department has not included statistics on disability in its publication on characteristics in relation to the Kickstart scheme.

David Linden: [\[45251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 28 May 2021 to Question 6283, for what reasons her Department does not use information it holds on the number of universal credit claimants on the Kickstart scheme who have declared a disability to record data on disability for Kickstart scheme participants.

Mims Davies:

The Kickstart Scheme was launched quickly and in response to the impact of the pandemic as part of a comprehensive package of support for young people. The scheme supports eligible 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit at risk of long term unemployment, regardless of disadvantage or disability. Mechanisms that record the number of disabled young people participating were not included within the initial

design of Kickstart, however disability status is recorded on the wider Universal Credit systems.

The information requested is not currently collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. This is due to data being contained across multiple systems and in some cases being provided voluntarily, meaning it would require a significant level of gathering and quality assurance.

The Department of Work and Pensions plans to track the success of Kickstart amongst young people on the scheme who have a disability or health condition and will do this as part of the evaluation. The evaluation will include surveys to capture the views and experiences of Kickstart participants. It will look at their experiences within their Kickstart job and track changes in views, attitudes and employment status. We will publish the evaluation once it has been completed.

David Linden:

[\[45252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the kickstart scheme was not extended to legacy benefit claimants.

Mims Davies:

Kickstart is aimed at young people on Universal Credit at risk of long term unemployment. Young people in receipt of legacy benefits may be less likely to benefit from Kickstart over other provision, as such Jobcentre Work Coaches identify those most in need of extra support and discuss with them the most appropriate path forward, this would include accessing Kickstart if they are eligible.

Kickstart is part of the Government's Plan for Jobs and Youth Offer which allows Job Centre Plus Work Coaches to find the best route for each young person, this includes our Youth Employment Programme and dedicated Youth Employment Coaches and the Youth Hubs, which we aim to have 150 open by the end of the year. This combined offer ensures that young people looking for work have access to the support they need.

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[45903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the timescale and average speed of a submission to the government approved gateway to the publication of the job advert at the job centre under the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: The Department of Work and Pensions works closely with employers participating in the Kickstart Scheme to ensure that jobs are created for young people as quickly as possible. A Kickstart job can start at any time over the lifetime of the scheme and some employers choose to delay the commencement of roles for a variety of reasons.

Our data indicates that between the 27/07/2021 and 08/09/2021 the average time between receipt of an application by DWP to confirmation of its approval was 14 days. Within the same period the average time between receipt of an application and the job being made available for young people to apply for was 43 days. A significant

portion of this time includes engagement with employers to return grant funding agreements and job description templates promptly so that applications can be progressed.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [\[45904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how long her Department takes on average to make a decision on accepting or declining a job advert under the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: The Department of Work and Pensions works closely with employers participating in the Kickstart Scheme to ensure that jobs are created for young people as quickly as possible. A Kickstart job can start at any time over the lifetime of the scheme and some employers choose to delay the commencement of roles for a variety of reasons.

Our data indicates that between the 27/07/2021 and 08/09/2021 the average time between receipt of an application by DWP to confirmation of its approval was 14 days. Within the same period the average time between receipt of an application and the job being made available for young people to apply for was 43 days. A significant portion of this time includes engagement with employers to return grant funding agreements and job description templates promptly so that applications can be progressed.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Disability

David Linden: [\[45247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

Young people on Universal Credit with a disability or health condition can access the Kickstart scheme and any reasonable adjustment they require with either a Work Coach, Youth Employability Coach or Disability Employment Adviser. If adjustments are required to enable the young person to take up a Kickstart job these are then discussed and agreed with the Kickstart employer.

If the young person does have a Work Coach assigned to them and they wish to find out more about Kickstart opportunities this can be arranged with their local Jobcentre.

■ Social Security Benefits**Margaret Ferrier:**[\[45147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of establishing an independent body to advise the Government on the adequacy of welfare support.

Guy Opperman:

The Government, as required by parliament already passes all relevant regulations pertaining to social security benefits to the Social Security Advisory Committee for independent scrutiny. The Committee also provides impartial and independent advice on a range of social security matters.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses**Stephen Timms:**[\[48131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims awarded under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness have been reviewed by her Department following the end of their three-year award duration in each of the last five years.

Justin Tomlinson:

Claims can be awarded under Special Rules for Terminal Illness (SRTI) across a range of DWP benefits. The information requested in relation to reviews of SRTI awards is not readily available across all of these benefits, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ State Retirement Pensions**Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[48253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the timeliness of the delivery of the state pension to an eligible person on reaching the state pension age.

Guy Opperman:

DWP is aware that a small number of new State Pension claims have been subject to delays in receiving payment.

The Department is working hard to clear the current backlog, many of which have accrued since the Covid Pandemic.

We are prioritising overdue payments and payments that are imminent within the next few weeks. Normal service will be resumed by the end of October 2021.

Claimants don't need to act, we have identified the cases and will process them as soon as possible.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Females**

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[48128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's findings on the Department for Work and Pensions' communication of changes to women's state pension age, published on 20 July 2021, that changes to the State Pension age for women were not satisfactorily communicated after 2004 affecting the notice period for those changes, what plans her Department has to compensate people affected by that maladministration.

Guy Opperman:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has not completed his investigation. This a multi staged process and the report published on 20 July 2021 concludes stage-one of the investigation.

It would not be appropriate to comment on the PHSO's report whilst the investigation is ongoing; and section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

■ **Tax Credit: Fraud**

Hilary Benn: [\[48145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department will complete its investigation into the fraud allegedly committed against the hon. Member for Leeds Central's constituent ML and reinstate her tax credits.

Will Quince:

The Department takes fraud very seriously. Where it does enter the benefit system, there are dedicated teams on hand to investigate potential fraud. The Department provides a clear message to claimants on Gov.uk as to what constitutes benefit fraud and what action we will take if benefit fraud is suspected. This can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/benefit-fraud>

All cases are progressed as quickly as possible, but some cases are complex and can take time to resolve. We cannot provide an update on any particular case by way of a parliamentary response, nor can we provide details on any ongoing fraud investigation. However, we would invite the Rt. Hon member to write to us about the case that has prompted his concerns, which will allow us to respond accordingly.

■ Universal Credit**Margaret Ferrier:**[\[45145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has been made of the impact of ending the £20 universal credit uplift on children living in households in receipt of that benefit.

Will Quince:

No impact assessment has been made.

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £407 billion in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

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.

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.

Dame Diana Johnson:[\[48167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her comment on BBC Breakfast on 13 September 2021 that £20 a week is about 2 hours' extra work every week, how that calculation was made.

Dame Diana Johnson:[\[48168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of additional hours a person who is in work and claiming universal credit would need to work to make up for the removal of the £20 uplift to that benefit.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[48169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her interview with BBC Breakfast on 13 September 2021, what modelling she used to assess that the reduction of the £20 uplift was the equivalent of two hours of work where the applicable universal credit earnings taper rate is at 63 per cent.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[48170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support universal credit beneficiaries to obtain employment that is sufficiently well-paid to enable them to offset the ending of the £20 uplift by working two additional hours each week.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit is a benefit where the amount received by claimants and the way this fluctuates in line with earnings will depend on individual household circumstances. This range of circumstances will affect how increased earnings for entering or progressing in work will translate into a rise in net income.

The National Living Wage is currently £8.91 an hour for workers aged over 23, where 2 hours in work should mean gross earnings of nearly £20; many individuals will receive an hourly pay rate greater than this.

In Universal Credit, those with children or limited capability for work are entitled to a Work Allowance of either £293 or £515 a month. This means that the taper rate does not apply to their earnings below this level and they do not see any reduction in their Universal Credit award. As a consequence, many claimants can keep all their earnings from their first several hours of 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: Rutherglen and Hamilton West**

Margaret Ferrier: [\[45146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential effect on the ending of the £20 weekly universal credit uplift on benefit recipients in Rutherglen and Hamilton West constituency.

Will Quince:

No impact assessment has been made.

The Chancellor announced a temporary six-month extension to the £20 per week uplift at the Budget on 3 March to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. Universal Credit has provided a vital safety net for six million people during the pandemic, and the temporary uplift was part of a COVID support package worth a total of £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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office Update

Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):

[\[HCWS293\]](#)

On 12 April, the Government announced that the Prime Minister had asked Nigel Boardman to investigate the development and use of supply chain finance in government, especially the role of Lex Greensill and Greensill Capital (including associated companies or companies in its group) and any related issues that Mr Boardman considered were in scope. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, Mr Boardman provided the Prime Minister with Part 1 of his report which sets out Mr Boardman's findings of fact. This was [published](#) on 22 July (Paper reference DEP2021-0641).

The purpose of the Review was to establish the facts and any lessons to be learnt. Mr Boardman has now delivered the second part of his report, including making recommendations. These recommendations and wider suggestions, for institutions in public life to consider, are being published today.

As Mr. Boardman's report recognises, the Government has already committed, through the Declaration on Government Reform, to continually reinforce high standards of conduct in public life through proper process and transparency so that the public can have trust and confidence in the operation of Government at all levels.

The Government notes the work of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs, Treasury and Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committees, as well as the forthcoming Standards Matter 2 report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life. We will consider their work alongside Mr Boardman's recommendations, and set out a substantive Government policy statement to Parliament in due course.

I am depositing a copy of the report in the Libraries of both Houses, and publishing it on GOV.UK.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ COVID-19 Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care) (Jo Churchill):

[\[HCWS291\]](#)

Shielding was introduced at the start of the pandemic as one of the few interventions available to support those who, at the time, were considered clinically extremely vulnerable.

We know shielding advice is extremely restrictive and has a significant impact on people's lives and their mental and physical wellbeing. It was right to take this step to

protect the most vulnerable during the initial waves of the virus, and we put in place support for those who were advised to shield to help them to do so.

We now know much more about the virus and what makes someone more or less vulnerable to COVID-19. We are also in a different situation than we were at the beginning of the pandemic. The vaccine continues to be successfully rolled out, with millions of people having received both doses and a booster programme about to commence. We also have proven, effective treatments, such as dexamethasone and tocilizumab, to support improved outcomes in clinical care pathways.

We have not advised people to shield since 1 April. Since 19 July, the guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people has been to follow the same advice as everyone else, with the suggestion of additional precautions people may wish to take. Those patients who are at risk from infectious diseases more generally and who can also remain less protected after other vaccinations may wish to discuss this with their specialist as part of their routine care.

Due to the success of the vaccine rollout, improvements in treatment and clinical care, and growing understanding of the virus, the government has accepted expert clinical advice and decided to end the shielding programme and the requirement for centralised guidance for people who were considered clinically extremely vulnerable.

This moves us towards the situation pre-Covid where individuals managed their own conditions with their health professionals. We believe this is a proportionate decision based on the success of the vaccine programme and the protection it offers, the availability of effective treatments and the highly restrictive impact of shielding on people's mental health and wellbeing.

TRANSPORT

■ Legislation - Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

[\[HCWS292\]](#)

The haulage sector has been experiencing a shortage of HGV drivers worldwide for some time. The issue has been further exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic as driver testing had to be suspended for much of last year, meaning the shortage increased further.

This country enjoys a robust and resilient supply chain. Nevertheless, there is no room for complacency and this Government is determined to do what it can to mitigate the effects as far as is possible. It is therefore vital that we expedite legislation that will expand and accelerate testing - while at the same time acknowledging that the road haulage industry must play its part in improving recruitment and training by offering better pay and conditions.

The Department for Transport and other Government Departments have worked closely with the haulage sector considering a range of options to improve the number of HGV

drivers. As part of these measures a consultation closed on 7 September on change to streamline the HGV driving licence regime and removing a separate trailer test for car drivers. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has already taken administrative action to increase capacity and offer more practical HGV tests but more is needed.

The first of these measures will be addressed via a draft affirmative statutory instrument that will be laid before Parliament today and will mean that car drivers will no longer need to take another test to tow a trailer or caravan, freeing up some 30,000 test slots annually. This additional capacity can be used to reduce the backlog in HGV testing.

To make rapid progress on this, we are making use of the urgent procedure under paragraph 14(6) of Schedule 8 to the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. I am of the opinion that, by reason of urgency, the requirements for the statutory instrument to be published in draft 28 days before it is laid, and for a scrutiny statement to be made before laying, should not apply.

Accelerating the legislation by forgoing the 28-day publication period will allow earlier laying of the legislation than would have otherwise been possible and strengthen the steps we have already taken to increase testing capacity and ease supply chain issues as quickly as possible. Arrangements will be in place to ensure that the changes made by the legislation are operationally effective as soon as the legislation is in force.

Road safety continues to be of paramount importance. We will engage with training providers and insurers to test the response to this change and to explore how we can seek to ensure that any road safety concerns are addressed. We will also explore options for an industry led accreditation that could offer a standardised testing approach if that would be welcomed by the market, insurers and consumers.