



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:45 P.M., 17 September 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	2	■ Members: Correspondence	7
DEFENCE	2	■ School Day	7
■ Afghanistan: Armed Conflict	2	■ School Day: Coronavirus	8
■ Afghanistan: Asylum	2	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	8
■ Afghanistan: Refugees	3	■ Fly-tipping	8
■ Afghanistan: Unmanned Air Vehicles	3	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	9
■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing	3	■ China: Religious Freedom	9
■ Armed Forces: Influenza	4	HOME OFFICE	9
■ International Military Services	4	■ Afghanistan: Refugees	9
■ Iran: International Military Services	4	■ Migrant Workers	10
■ Ministry of Defence: Welsh Government	5	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	11
■ National Flagship: Crew	5	■ Building Safety Fund	11
■ National Flagship: Procurement	5	JUSTICE	12
■ Reserve Forces	6	■ Health and Social Care Act 2008	12
EDUCATION	6		
■ Assessments	6		

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

DEFENCE

■ Afghanistan: Armed Conflict

Mr Mark Harper:

[\[45812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral contribution on 8 July 2021, Official Report, column 1107, what the evidential basis was for the statement that there was no military path to victory for the Taliban.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: The Government made a range of assessments of the military strength and capabilities of the Taliban and the likely speed and success of their efforts to regain control over Afghanistan. However, none suggested that the Taliban assume power through military force alone. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said during the debate, the Taliban will be aware that there must be 'a peaceful and a negotiated settlement for the political crisis' as well.

■ Afghanistan: Asylum

Stephen Morgan:

[\[48342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 43388, how many Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy applications were received up to the period 1 to 31 August 2021; and how many of those applications were subsequently rejected.

James Heappey:

[Holding answer 16 September 2021]: From the start of the scheme in April to 31 August 2021, 60,000 applications for relocation to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) were received.

Approximately 52,350 were rejected, either at the initial triage or following detailed casework.

Of the total applications received during this period, 6,800 are still being processed by a casework team. In many cases, more information has been requested so that the most appropriate eligibility decision is made.

Jim Shannon:

[\[49141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what proportion of the Afghan nationals who supported the British armed forces during the conflict and requested to be relocated have now been supported in leaving Afghanistan.

James Heappey:

Under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), around 7,000 Afghans who worked in support of the UK defence and security mission were found eligible

and relocated to the UK. This is the vast majority of those found eligible for the scheme prior to OP PITTING.

Regrettably, 311 eligible ARAP applicants were not evacuated from Afghanistan as part of Operation PITTING, however 46 of these individuals have since made their way to a third country or the UK by other means.

The ARAP scheme remains open and we continue to receive and assess applications. From the conclusion of Operation PITTING on 28 August up to 14 August, a further 40 Afghan nationals have been found eligible for the scheme. All those eligible for the scheme will be supported to come to the UK.

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees**

Stephen Timms:

[\[46925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to provide support to families in Afghanistan who followed instructions to go to Kabul Airport for military evacuation but were unable to enter the Airport before the evacuation ended.

James Heapey:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: The MOD is doing everything it possibly can for those called forward but not evacuated under the ARAP scheme. We are in contact with the majority of them and are continuing to press the Taliban for their safe passage. Some may decide to make their way to third countries – we will provide whatever support we can with their journey. We have arrangements in place for their welfare in third countries and their subsequent journey on to the UK.

■ **Afghanistan: Unmanned Air Vehicles**

Hilary Benn:

[\[48146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of allegations that drones from Pakistan have been used in the recent fighting in the Panjshir valley.

James Heapey:

We continue to monitor the security situation in Afghanistan very carefully. The UK remains committed to working closely with partners in the region to promote stability and secure the best possible outcomes for Afghanistan and its people.

■ **Ajax Vehicles: Testing**

Mr Mark Francois:

[\[46935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the estimated total cost is of the new trials which have recommenced at Millbrook on the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle; and from which Top Level Budget the funding for those trials will come.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Rt Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 September to question 44327 to the Hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr Evans).

Attachments:

1. 44327 - Ajax Vehicles; Testing [44327 - Ajax Vehicles Testing.docx]

■ Armed Forces: Influenza

John Healey: [\[46930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on potential use of the armed forces to transport seasonal flu vaccines in the event that the shortage of HGV drivers continues.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: The Armed Forces provide support to the civil authorities where a situation goes beyond the capacity and/or capability of local authorities and other agencies, through a process known as Military Aid Civil Authorities (MACA) process. The Secretary of State for Defence has had discussions with Cabinet Colleagues around Defence's role in winter resilience, however, at present, there has been no MACA requests for the Armed Forces to transport seasonal flu vaccines in the event that the shortage of HGV drivers continues.

■ International Military Services

Tulip Siddiq: [\[41084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date his Department provided IMS Ltd with formal notice of the reporting requirements and regulations as a designated Arms Length Body of the Government.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: IMS Ltd is fully aware of the reporting requirements and regulations associated with its status as an Arms Length Body. These are reviewed and considered through regular dialogue between the company and relevant Defence officials.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[41085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date responsibility for the day-to-day activities of IMS Ltd was transferred to his Department, as stated in its 2019-20 company accounts.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: Day-to-day activity of IMS Ltd has been overseen by permanent Defence officials since they were appointed to the Board of Directors the 4 of September 2020.

■ Iran: International Military Services

Tulip Siddiq: [\[41086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether a date has been set for the next court hearing for the IMS-Modsaf arbitration.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 10 September 2021]: We have not received a further hearing date from the court in respect of this dispute.

■ Ministry of Defence: Welsh Government**Ruth Jones:**[\[43662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he last met Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: My noble Friend Baroness Goldie is the Defence Minister with responsibility for engagement with the devolved nations. Baroness Goldie last met with Ministers in the Welsh Government on 23 March 2021 and will be meeting them again later this year. Additionally, the Minister for Defence People and Veterans met with the Welsh Deputy Minister for Social Partnership, Hannah Blythyn, on 6 July 2021, and 27 April 2020. I will be meeting with the Ministers in the Welsh Government in October this year.

■ National Flagship: Crew**Sir John Hayes:**[\[41632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to have the new Royal Yacht manned by the Royal Navy.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: The National Flagship is not a direct replacement for HMY Britannia and therefore, will not be a Royal Yacht. The National Flagship will be crewed by the Royal Navy and is expected to be in service for around 30 years.

■ National Flagship: Procurement**Sir John Hayes:**[\[41631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what criteria his Department is using to assess applicants for the tendering process for design phase one of the planned new Royal Yacht.

Sir John Hayes:[\[41633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department will take to prioritise design as a criterion in the tender process for the construction of the new Royal Yacht.

Sir John Hayes:[\[41634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the construction of the new Royal Yacht will be completed at a British shipyard by a British firm.

Sir John Hayes:

[41635]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the vessel design of the new Royal Yacht will be required to reflect Britannia's style and appointment.

Mr Ben Wallace:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: The National Flagship is not a direct replacement for HMY Britannia and will not therefore be a Royal Yacht. The design criteria against which bids will be assessed will be communicated to bidders in due course as part of the Design competition tender documentation. A wide pool of designers are being taken forward to this next stage of the competition. It would be inappropriate to place this information in the public domain ahead of its disclosure as part of the commercial process. As the National Flagship, the design of the ship must encompass innovative proposals which incorporate the most up to date and sustainable technology, reflecting the UK's status as an independent trading nation and showcasing the best of what Britain has to offer.

It is the intention of the Government that the National Flagship will be built in the UK to help contribute to the renaissance in the British shipbuilding industry.

■ Reserve Forces

James Gray:

[48135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish the 2021 annual report produced by the Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team; and if he will place a copy of that report in the Library.

James Heapey:

We are very grateful to the External Scrutiny Team for their work. The Ministry of Defence will place their 2021 report in the Library of the House in the next few weeks.

EDUCATION

■ Assessments

Helen Hayes:

[45217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps is he taking to ensure Ofqual publish final details of adjustments to the 2022 exam series as soon as possible.

Michelle Donelan:

It is the Government's firm intention that exams and assessments should go ahead in 2022. The Department recognises that those students taking exams in 2022 have had considerable disruption to their education. On 12 July, together with Ofqual, a joint consultation was published, seeking views on the proposed changes to GCSE, AS and A level exams in summer 2022 in light of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on students entering these qualifications:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-changes-to-the-assessment-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2022>. The consultation closed on 1 August. The

Department plans to announce final decisions on the changes to GCSE and A/AS level exams in summer 2022 early in the autumn term. Arrangements for VTQs were announced on 6 August:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/arrangements-for-the-assessment-and-awarding-of-vocational-technical-and-other-general-qualifications-2021-to-2022>.

In deciding on an approach to grading next year, the Department will be asking Ofqual to be as fair as possible to students taking qualifications next summer and to those who took them in previous years or will take them in the future. We recognise the need to give certainty to students, teachers and organisations that rely on qualifications as soon as possible, and Ofqual will be giving a clear indication of that grading system in October.

Whilst the Department remains firmly committed to exams going ahead in 2022, we are also working with Ofqual, the exam boards and stakeholders on contingency plans in the unlikely event that this does not prove possible. We will consult on the details in the autumn term.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Paul Maynard:

[\[45091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 21 May 2021 from the hon Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys on childcare support for student nurses.

Michelle Donelan:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys.

■ **School Day**

Peter Kyle:

[\[48311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on the average length of the school day by (a) local authority, (b) region and (c) nationally.

Peter Kyle:

[\[48312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, by what date he plans to publish his Department's review into the impact of the length of the school day on education recovery.

Michelle Donelan:

The Department has collected information on the length of the school day from the school snapshot survey panel by region. The school snapshot panel is a regular online survey which gathers views from head teachers and classroom teachers in state-funded primary and secondary schools. The panel consists of around 4,500 members who have agreed to participate in short, regular research surveys on topical issues in education. The Department intends to publish the results of the survey in

the autumn of 2021. The Department does not collect information regarding the length of school days from local authorities.

The Government is committed to an ambitious, long-term education recovery plan. The next stage includes a review of time spent in school and 16-19 education, and the impact this could have on helping children and young people to catch up. The findings of the policy review will be used to inform the Spending Review later in the year.

■ School Day: Coronavirus

Peter Kyle: [\[48310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information his Department holds on the number of schools that have altered the length of their school day since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

In the 2020/21 academic year, schools made use of staggered start and finish times as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department does not hold data on the number of schools who made temporary changes to their school day during this period.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Fly-tipping

Justin Madders: [\[45858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the cost of fly-tipping to local authorities.

Rebecca Pow:

Research conducted by Eunomia on behalf of Defra estimated the total costs of fly-tipping for all UK authorities to be £103 million per annum. However, the report notes that better information on incident type, size, composition and clean-up cost would be necessary to provide more certainty around this 'very indicative, initial estimate'. This report can be found at: [WRAP-eunomia-financial-cost-of-packaging-litter-phase-2-2021](#)

Until 2016/17 Defra estimated the cost of clearing fly-tipping to local authorities in England each year as part of Defra published statistics. The estimated cost in 2016/17 was £57.7 million. These cost estimates are no longer produced but figures for previous years can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fly-tipping-in-england](#)

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ China: Religious Freedom****Carla Lockhart:**[\[45948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure freedom of religious expression in China in response to reports of the sentencing in January 2021 of four Christians for selling audio bibles in that country.

Amanda Milling:

We are aware of reports of the sentencing of four Christians in China for selling audio bibles. We remain deeply concerned about the persecution of Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners and others on the grounds of their religion or belief in China. The freedom to practise, change or share ones faith or belief without discrimination or violent opposition is a human right that all people should enjoy. The former Foreign Secretary personally raised our serious concerns about the human rights situation in China with his Chinese counterpart, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on a number of occasions, most recently on 27 May.

HOME OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[46919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether places on the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme will be prioritised according to the degree of risk faced by applicants; for what reason at-risk applicants accepted for inclusion in the scheme will not all be brought to the UK during its first year; and by what means at-risk applicants for the scheme who are still in Afghanistan will be expected to keep themselves safe while awaiting the second and third years of the scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

On Monday 13 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 confirms that the following groups of people will be prioritised through the ACRS:

- those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law; and
- vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+).

To help identify those most at risk, the Government is working closely with the UN's Refugee Agency, UNHCR, to identify and resettle refugees who have fled Afghanistan based on their protection and humanitarian needs. The Government is

also working with international partners and NGOs in the region to implement a referral process for people inside Afghanistan, where safe passage can be arranged, and for those that have recently fled to other countries in the region.

Further details on eligibility and selection can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

■ Migrant Workers

Daisy Cooper:

[45958]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations of the Grant Thornton Report on Labour Availability to (a) introduce a 12 month covid-19 recovery visa to enable supply chains to recruit critical roles and (b) commit to a permanent, revised and expanded Seasonal Worker Scheme for UK horticulture.

Kevin Foster:

The independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) found some roles in the food production, supply and agricultural sectors meet the RQF3 skills threshold for the Skilled Worker route so are eligible to be sponsored for a Skilled Worker visa, whereas others do not. The threshold was previously set at degree-level jobs. Modelling by the MAC suggests the new, broader RQF3 threshold strikes a reasonable balance between controlling immigration and business access to labour.

The Government position therefore remains we will not be introducing a short-term visa route such as the 'Covid recovery visa' as has been suggested. Most of the solutions are likely to be driven by industry, with a big push towards improving pay, conditions and diversity needed. We will continue to monitor the labour needs of other sectors and the Government agreed with the Migration Advisory Committee to have a more regular pattern of minor and major reviews of the Shortage Occupation List, with the first major review taking place no earlier than 2023.

Beyond the Points Based System, there is the existing UK labour market, which includes those who come to the UK through our Youth Mobility Schemes (which we are looking to expand), our new British National (Overseas) visa for those from Hong Kong, dependants of those arriving under the expanded skilled worker route, as well as over 6million applications under the EU Settlement Scheme and those who arrive through other routes, such as our family visa ones, who all have access to the UK labour market.

As a transitional measure, to help farm businesses adjust to changes to the UK labour market, the Seasonal Workers Pilot was extended into this year with 30,000 visas available (which, as yet, have not all been taken up). Decisions on the future of the pilot will be taken in due course, however, there are no plans to expand the pilot further

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Building Safety Fund****Luke Pollard:****[45912]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the latest Building Safety Fund will open for applications.

Christopher Pincher:

The announcement on 10 February of an additional £3.5 billion of funding for remediating unsafe cladding on buildings 18 metres and above means that leaseholders and residents in eligible buildings can be reassured that unsafe non-ACM cladding on their blocks will be replaced. For any buildings that may have missed the original registration deadline for the Building Safety Fund we will be reopening for registrations in the Autumn.

Luke Pollard:**[45913]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support is being offered to (a) leaseholders and (b) freeholders of buildings awaiting access to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

Leaseholders in buildings eligible for the Building Safety Fund can be reassured that unsafe non-ACM cladding on their blocks will be funded and replaced. The £30 million Waking Watch Relief Fund will pay for the costs of installing an alarm system in buildings where a waking watch is in place while waiting to have unsafe cladding removed

The Government has also allocated additional funding to Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE) to provide independent, free, initial advice to leaseholders on building safety issues to ensure they are aware of their rights and are supported to understand the terms of their leases. Building owners are supported in their applications to the Building Safety Fund by Delivery Partners and we also provide those planning and undertaking eligible remediation work expert construction consultation.

Luke Pollard:**[45915]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria will be used to prioritise applications to the Building Safety Fund.

Christopher Pincher:

The criteria used for the Building Safety Fund is set out in the Building Safety Fund Prospectus, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remediation-of-non-acm-buildings#prospectus---outlining-eligibility-for-the-fund>.

All buildings that meet the Building Safety Fund criteria are treated as a priority for remediation funding. Leaseholders in buildings eligible for the Building Safety Fund can be reassured that unsafe non-ACM cladding on their blocks will be funded and replaced.

JUSTICE**■ Health and Social Care Act 2008****Justin Madders:****[45861]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average turnaround time has been for first tier tribunals in relation to section 31 proceedings under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 in the latest period for which those figures are available.

Kit Malthouse:

Information about the the First-tier Tribunal (Care Standards) is published at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics

For the period April – June 2021, the latest period for which data are available, the average turnaround time ¹ for the Care Standards Tribunal in relation to section 31 proceedings under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 was 10 working days.

1 Average turnaround time is the average time from receipt to disposal.

Data are taken from a live management information system and can change over time. Data are management information and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics.

The data provided are the most recent available and for that reason might differ from any previously published information.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the details are subject to inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale case management system and are the best data available.