



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:31 P.M., 21 September 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ British American Tobacco: Corruption

Alex Norris:

[\[50754\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether her Department's investigation into British American Tobacco in South Africa and Zimbabwe included investigating the allegations and interviewing the witnesses in the BBC Panorama programme on this topic; and whether the Serious Fraud Office plan investigating these allegations further.

Alex Chalk:

Following a three-year investigation, the SFO determined that this case did not meet the evidential tests as defined in the Code for Crown Prosecutors. As with all cases that fail this first limb of the Code, it was therefore not in the public interest to continue with the investigation. The SFO does not provide detailed commentary on how it conducts its investigations.

The SFO continues to assist our international law enforcement partners with ongoing investigations related to this matter and will assess any new material it receives.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Aerospace Industry and Defence: Manufacturing Industries

Stephen Farry:

[\[48387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the SC21 Competitiveness and Growth programme beyond the expiry date of March 2022 to enable the aerospace and automotive sectors to take into account the delays in access as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

An extension of the programme remains subject to the Department's financial position following Spending Review 2021. The Government remains committed to supporting SMEs to improve their productivity and competitiveness. Earlier this year, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £500m for the Help to Grow programme which will look to improve SME leaders' approach to management and the importance of adopting digital technologies to improve productivity.

■ **British Academy: Leasehold**

Tim Loughton: [\[50599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the terms of the funds made available to the British Academy to purchase a long lease on their building in Carlton House Terrace; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

The National Academies, including the British Academy, are an integral part of the UK's R&D landscape and provide an important contribution to securing the UK's status as a global science superpower. In 2018 a grant of £14m was provided to the British Academy to support the extension of the lease on their premises. This also enabled a private donation of £10m, which was conditional on the capital investment. The funding secured the Academy's long-term future in Carlton House Terrace, close to the other National Academies, providing an intellectual and cultural hub of world-leading knowledge and expertise. In line with usual practice, the government does not publish detailed commercial terms and conditions of grant agreements with individual organisations.

■ **Green Homes Grant Scheme**

Dame Meg Hillier: [\[903549\]](#)

What steps his Department plans to take to learn from the findings of the National Audit Office report entitled Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme published on 8 September 2021.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are considering the National Audit Office report and its recommendations, which recognise the scheme was designed as a short-term economic stimulus. This will inform existing and future schemes, as part of our £9 billion commitment to improving energy efficiency.

■ **Heating: Housing**

Justin Madders: [\[48264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's timetable is for responding to the Clean Heat Grant consultation which concluded on 5 March 2021.

Greg Hands:

The Government Response to the Clean Heat Grant consultation is expected to be published in autumn this year.

■ Newspaper Press: Competition**Derek Twigg:** [\[49955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the competitiveness of the newspaper wholesalers market in England.

Paul Scully:

Investigations into competition issues are a matter for the Competition and Markets Authority, the UK's independent competition authority.

Derek Twigg: [\[50617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will hold discussions with the Competition and Markets Authority on increasing competition within the wholesale newspaper suppliers industry.

Paul Scully:

Investigations into competition issues are a matter for the Competition and Markets Authority, the UK's independent competition authority.

■ Oil: Shetland**Caroline Lucas:** [\[903547\]](#)

If he will make it his policy to withhold consent for the development of the Cambo oil field for production.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

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

■ Post Offices: Access**Marion Fellows:** [\[49173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on meeting Post Office Access Criteria that (a) 90 per cent of the population are within one mile of the nearest Post Office branch and (b) 99 per cent of the population are within three miles of the nearest Post Office branch.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: POL operates the largest and most dispersed retail network in the UK, with more than 11,500 branches offering a portfolio of services across: mails & parcels, cash & banking, financial services, identity and telecoms markets.

Apart from during the pandemic when agreed waivers were in place, since 2013/14 Post Office has consistently met the access criteria and remains committed to meeting the access criteria and minimum branch numbers.

■ Renewable Energy**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[903542\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support the renewable energy sector.

Greg Hands:

The UK is a major global market for renewables. Last week we confirmed that this year's Contracts for Difference round will be our largest renewables auction ever with a draft budget of £265 million. We are also spending £160 million to support ports and manufacturing infrastructure for offshore wind – securing local jobs and benefits.

Sally-Ann Hart:[\[903548\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support the renewable energy sector.

Greg Hands:

The UK is a major global market for renewables. Last week we confirmed that this year's Contracts for Difference round will be our largest renewables auction ever with a draft budget of £265 million. We are also spending £160 million to support ports and manufacturing infrastructure for offshore wind – securing local jobs and benefits.

■ Retail Trade: Urban Areas**Navendu Mishra:**[\[903543\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support high street businesses.

Paul Scully:

Our comprehensive economic response for business is worth over £352bn, including grants, the furlough scheme and tax deferrals. We recently published the Build Back Better High Streets Strategy, which sets out Government's long-term plan to support the regeneration of high streets across the UK.

■ Sick Leave: Coronavirus**Zarah Sultana:**[\[49295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to prevent companies using the Bradford Factor from penalising employees who are forced to self-isolate.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Government guidance is clear that employers should support employees who have to self-isolate. It is also clear that they should exercise discretion about the need for medical evidence where an employee is advised to self-isolate in accordance with public health advice.

■ Subsidy Control Bill

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[50114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what impact assessment he has conducted on the potential effect of proposals in the Subsidy Control Bill on food and drink procurement by local authorities.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[50115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what impact assessment he has conducted on the Subsidy Control Bill and its potential effect on food and drink procurement by Welsh local authorities from within their authority area.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: An Impact Assessment was published alongside the Subsidy Control Bill, which gives an overarching assessment of the impact the measures in the Bill will have on public institutions and business. It focuses on the subsidy control regime's framework, rather than the individual subsidies that may be awarded under it.

■ Toys and Games: Autism

Ed Davey: [\[49943\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people buying toys for children who are prone to sensory overload and sensitivity can easily identify which toys are most suitable for their needs.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The safety and labelling requirements of the UK Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011 require manufacturers to provide general information on issues such as age appropriateness to help consumers identify which toys are most suitable for their particular needs as well as requiring information be provided on the safe use of the toy.

■ Water Power

Richard Graham: [\[R\] \[903550\]](#)

What recent steps his Department has taken to support opportunities arising from marine energy.

George Freeman:

On Monday 13 September we confirmed that wave and tidal stream projects will be eligible to compete in this year's Contracts for Difference allocation round. We continue to assess a range of marine technologies following our Call for Evidence on marine energy.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Business: Ellesmere Port and Neston**

Justin Madders: [\[45857\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many business in Ellesmere Port and Neston Constituency placed a bid for a public contract in (a) 2020 and (b) 2021; and what proportion of those bids were successful.

Michael Ellis:

This information is not held centrally.

■ Cabinet Office: Departmental Responsibilities

Angela Rayner: [\[50673\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish the responsibilities of each Minister in his Department.

Michael Ellis:

An updated List of Ministerial Responsibilities will be published in due course.

■ Civil Service

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[49102\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the headcount of the Civil Service was in each of the last five years.

Michael Ellis:

Headline Civil Service employment figures, on both a headcount and full-time equivalent basis, are published as part of Public Sector Employment Statistics by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) each quarter. The latest dataset, containing the Civil Service headcount time series back to 1999, is available from the ONS website at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/datasets/publicsectoremploymentreferencetable>

■ Civil Service and Local Government: Pay

Rob Roberts: [\[48377\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people are employed in (a) the civil service and (b) local government with a salary in excess of £160,000 as at 13 September 2021.

Michael Ellis:

The latest available data centrally, as at 31 March 2021, shows there were 130 Civil Servants earning a full-time equivalent salary in excess of £160,000. Responsibility for employees of local government sits with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

■ Coronavirus: Public Inquiries**Sir John Hayes:** [\[41640\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the impact of the covid-19 outbreak on cancer treatment and diagnosis will be included in upcoming covid-19 inquiry.

Sir John Hayes: [\[41641\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will include an analysis of the median age and rate of cancer mortality compared to covid-19 mortality in the upcoming covid-19 inquiry.

Sir John Hayes: [\[41642\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will include an analysis of Government strategy and messaging on people coming forward for cancer diagnosis and treatment during the covid-19 outbreak as part of the upcoming covid-19 inquiry.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[42189\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on the independent statutory public inquiry on its handling of the covid-19 pandemic to start in spring 2022.

Michael Ellis:

On 12 May, the Prime Minister confirmed to this House that a public inquiry into COVID-19 would be established on a statutory basis, with full formal powers, and that it will begin its work in spring 2022. Further details - including in respect of the inquiry's terms of reference - will be set out in due course.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Dan Jarvis:** [\[48234\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what definition his Department plans to use to define venues that will be required to make people show covid-19 vaccine certificates for entrance; when his Department plans to publish that definition; and what plans his Department has to provide financial support to those venues required (a) to implement and (b) enforce those entrance checks.

Angela Rayner: [\[48248\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what ministerial responsibility he holds for covid-19 status certification.

Angela Rayner: [\[48249\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the oral statement of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, the Minister for Covid-19 Vaccine Deployment, of 8 September 2021, Official Report, column 307, if he will publish a copy of the equality impact assessment of covid-status certification.

Michael Ellis:

At the request of the Prime Minister, the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, led a review into COVID-status certification, which concluded in July.

As published in the [COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan](#) on 14 September, in order to help businesses prepare their own contingency plans, the Government will shortly publish more detail about the proposed certification regime that would be introduced as part of Plan B.

Members: Correspondence

Robert Largan: [\[45318\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak of 11 June 2021, reference RL23222.

Michael Ellis:

This letter was transferred to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 9 September 2021.

Public Sector: Artificial Intelligence

Ruth Jones: [\[45919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps has he taken to promote algorithmic accountability in the public sector.

Michael Ellis:

Building on the existing work on algorithmic and data ethics, the Government is developing appropriate and effective mechanisms to deliver more transparency on the use of algorithmic assisted decision making within the public sector.

To further support responsible data and AI innovation in the public sector, we have launched a new Data Ethicist role for the Digital, Data and Technology Capability Framework.

Public Sector: Procurement

Angela Rayner: [\[48246\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish his Department's response to the consultation Transforming Public Procurement, which closed on 10 March 2021.

Angela Rayner: [\[48247\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish the Procurement Bill.

Michael Ellis:

Over 600 responses to the Green Paper were received, which have been analysed in detail; the feedback received has been invaluable in helping us to develop our thinking in a number of areas. We continue to work with key stakeholders on the details of our proposals. The plan is to publish the formal Government response to the consultation in the coming months, in advance of introduction of the Procurement Bill. The Bill will be introduced when Parliamentary time allows.

UK Commission on Covid Commemoration**Justin Madders:**[\[48271\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the (a) membership and (b) terms of reference is for the UK commission in Covid Commemoration.

Charlotte Nichols:[\[48374\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to have the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Group included in the membership of the UK Commission on Covid Commemoration.

Michael Ellis:

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

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

The Government recognises the need for bereaved families to be represented on the Commission and are committed to ensuring this happens. I am grateful to them for all their efforts throughout the pandemic. The Government will set out the Commission membership and terms of reference in due course.

COP26**Environment Protection****Darren Jones:**[\[42071\]](#)

To ask the President of COP26, how many times the (a) Climate Action Strategy Committee, (b) Climate Action Implementation Committee, (c) Climate Change National Strategic Implementation Group, (d) National Strategic Implementation Group Net Zero Sub-Group, (e) National Strategic Implementation Group Domestic Adaptation and Resilience Sub-Group and (f) 25 Year Environmental Plan Board have met in each of the last 12 months.

Alok Sharma:

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

The DEFRA-led Cross-Government 25 Year Environment Plan Board was established in December 2020. The Board meets every two months and has had five meetings to date.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Asylum****Rachael Maskell:**[\[48288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of building bespoke housing for refugees on his Department's unused estate as an alternative to selling that land as part of the Better Defence Estate Programme.

Leo Docherty:

In accordance with the principles of disposing of excess land, all surplus Defence land is made available to other Government Departments for alternative public use. We continue to engage across Government to make them aware of surplus land before it is released onto the open market. The Ministry of Defence also 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 how we can best support Local Authorities in their endeavour to home Afghan evacuees across the United Kingdom. This includes the provision of additional Defence accommodation where appropriate to do so.

Ruth Jones:[\[48352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on Operation Warm Welcome.

Leo Docherty:

The government is committed to ensuring that those Afghan nationals who were relocated under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and during the recent evacuation are well supported as they start their new lives in the UK. This cross-government effort, Op WARM WELCOME, is being led by the Minister for Afghan Resettlements, Victoria Atkins MP, and I liaise regularly with both her and other Ministerial colleagues on this subject, including on what support Defence can provide to those individuals who served alongside our Armed Forces.

Ms Lyn Brown:[\[50650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to urgently assess the cases of people who are funded by the Government to work with UK universities on Official Development Assistance funded projects on matters which put them at particular

risk of Taliban violence, including gender and women's rights, and whose applications to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme have not yet been responded to.

James Heappey:

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) was launched in April 2021 to support the relocation of Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) to the UK. The scheme is not time-limited and will endure, remaining open to any LES who were employed by HMG and worked for the UK Government in Afghanistan.

For those who are not eligible for ARAP, including individuals employed by third parties, we are directing them to the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). The Home Office are working quickly to establish the details of the ACRS, which will provide protection for those identified as most at risk. The Government has committed to take around 5,000 refugees in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years, making this one of the most comprehensive resettlement schemes the UK has ever established.

■ **Ammunition: Manufacturing Industries**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[48152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the ammunition for the BAE Systems Bofors 40mm Mk4 Naval Gun will be manufactured.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[48153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the ammunition for the BAE System Bofors 57mm Mk3 Naval Gun will be manufactured.

Jeremy Quin:

Supply chain decisions about the procurement of ammunition for the BAE Systems BOFORS 40mm Mk4 and 57mm Mk3 Naval Guns will initially be a matter for Babcock as prime contractor for the Type 31 frigate. There is a requirement in the design and build contract for Babcock to procure a small quantity of ammunition to support the qualification programme and the contractor's sea acceptance trials. Additional ammunition procurement will be subject to future MOD procurement activity, which is yet to commence.

■ **HMS Bulwark: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[48154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the time necessary to bring HMS Bulwark to full readiness.

Jeremy Quin:

HMS BULWARK is currently undergoing an upkeep period during which time she will complete maintenance activities and receive key upgrades. I am unable to disclose further details of the expected dates for completion, as to do so would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of our Armed Forces.

On completion of this work, adequate time has been allocated to complete the trials necessary to re-commission equipment and systems along with the routines to safely proceed to sea through to full readiness for operations.

While HMS BULWARK is undergoing maintenance and upgrade activity, HMS ALBION will be kept available for operational tasking.

■ Trident

Simon Fell:

[903533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment the Government has made of the industrial strategy required to continue to deliver the UK's nuclear deterrent.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the Hon. Member to the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, published on 23 March and available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-and-security-industrial-strategy>, which outlines this Government's strategic approach to the UK's defence and security industrial sectors, including that delivering and maintaining our nuclear deterrent.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Broadband: Somerton and Frome

David Warburton:

[50735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to accelerate the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband across Somerton and Frome.

Julia Lopez:

We are backing Project Gigabit with £5 billion so hard to reach communities are not left out. The constituency of Somerton and Frome falls within Phase 3 (Lot 6) of Project Gigabit. Somerton and Frome's designation as a 'Future Phase' reflects the extensive gigabit delivery now contracted to take place across Devon and Somerset, including the extensive additional delivery now confirmed by Openreach following their announcement of their target to reach 25 million premises by 2026.

The last of Project Gigabit's Phase 2 procurements start in late 2022 and we expect Phase 3 procurements to follow directly, with all areas under contract as soon as possible. Due to the dynamic nature of the UK telecoms market we will regularly review and respond to opportunities for future procurement wherever possible.

The Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) programme is delivering new gigabit-capable connections in Somerton and Frome via contracts with Wessex Internet and Truespeed which were awarded in December 2020.

Somerton and Frome is covered by Wessex Internet's full fibre network for North and South Barrow, Bab Cary, Woolston, Queen Camel and Marston Magna. This particular

project is nearing completion, with Wessex Internet being ready to connect customers in these areas from October 2021.

If it becomes clear that any premises will miss out from the UK's broadband upgrade, Project Gigabit will make sure that they are included in its plans.

To accelerate delivery, premises in rural areas may also be in line for funding through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme, with up to £210m allocated to the scheme over the next four years to support hard to reach communities. The voucher scheme offers up to £1,500 for homes and £3,500 for businesses to help to cover the costs of installing gigabit broadband to people's doorsteps when used as part of a group scheme. Home and business owners can check the eligibility of their address and then look up suppliers in their area by going to <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>.

Somerton and Frome has made good use of the scheme so far, seeing 698 voucher connections worth £1.1m, with a further 699 vouchers to be connected, totalling over £2.3m.

■ Channel Four: Privatisation

Dawn Butler:

[\[48162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish an impact assessment ahead of the consultation on the privatisation of Channel 4; and what the evidential basis is that the privatisation will lead to more content investment and more jobs.

Julia Lopez:

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 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. A thriving, sustainable Channel 4 could offer the best prospects for long-term job creation and support to the wider creative economy.

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 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.

Jamie Stone:

[\[50746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will make an assessment of the impact of privatising Channel 4 on the availability of distinctive British content.

Julia Lopez:

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 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. 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.

Channel 4's remit, and its wider social and cultural contributions to life in the UK, are 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 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.

■ Public Service Broadcasting: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[50752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has to promote Welsh cultural and language programming as part of her Department's planned changes to broadcasting requirements for public service broadcasters.

Julia Lopez:

The government is committed to the future of Welsh language broadcasting and recognises the significant cultural impact of programming in Welsh for Welsh

speakers across the UK. That commitment will inform any changes made to broadcasting requirements for public service broadcasters.

The government is also currently determining the licence fee settlement with S4C which will provide it with sufficient funding to support its unique cultural and social position for Welsh Language speakers.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[50045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the trends in the number of apprenticeship starts in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England.

Michelle Donelan:

Apprenticeships are more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need as we build back better from the COVID-19 outbreak.

As part of the government's Plan for Jobs, the department has created a strong incentive for employers across England to take on new apprentices. We have introduced a higher incentive payment of £3,000 for each new apprentice they recruit as a new employee between 1 April and 30 September 2021. We are also making a range of improvements to help more employers benefit from apprenticeships, including developing flexi-job apprenticeships, a £7 million flexi-job apprenticeships fund and making it easier for levy payers to transfer their levy funds to other businesses.

The number of apprenticeship starts for the Coventry North East constituency, Coventry, the West Midlands and England since May 2010, can be found in the table below.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	STARTS SINCE MAY 2010
Coventry North East	12,570
Coventry	32,830
West Midlands	572,920
England	4,841,900

A more detailed breakdown by academic year can be found in the 'Supporting tables - Apprenticeship starts since May 2010 and 2015 by region, local authority and pcon' file that accompanies the apprenticeships and traineeships statistics August

publication, found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21#dataDownloads-1>.

■ Apprenticeships

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[48134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to promote apprenticeships in the digital, culture, media and sport sectors to help support the Government's agenda of levelling up across the UK.

Michelle Donelan:

We are committed to supporting more employers in all sectors, including digital, culture, media, and sport, to use apprenticeships to develop the skilled workforces they need, and to supporting more people, from all backgrounds, to benefit from the high-quality training that apprenticeships offer.

In August, we launched a new £7 million flexi-job apprenticeship fund to support the greater use of apprenticeships in sectors, such as the creative industries, where flexible working practices are commonplace, including short periods of project-based employment. Flexi-job apprenticeships will enable apprentices to move between different host employers in a given sector or region as they complete the training requirements for their apprenticeship.

In addition, we are making it easier for large employers to transfer levy funds to support new starts in small businesses or in a certain sector or region. On 13 September, we launched a new online service to allow levy paying employers to advertise funding pledges, enabling a much wider range of businesses to browse and apply for available funds. It is brilliant to see that employers have already begun to take advantage of this opportunity, including Amazon who have made a pledge on the new service of £50,000 to support apprenticeships in the creative industries.

We are also working closely with Screenskills who are piloting a flexi-job apprenticeship training model funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with the support of Netflix and Warner Bros. The pilot is funding 20 apprentices in Production Assistant and Production Accountant roles and aims to widen participation in the film sector.

To further help employers offer new apprenticeships, employers can claim £3,000 for each apprentice they take on as a new employee until 30 September, under the government's Plan for Jobs.

■ Children in Care

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[50671]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what legislation is in place to ensure that family members who look after children in care are appropriately remunerated; and what steps he is taking to prevent the use of time limited arrangement orders as a substitute for foster care arrangements.

Will Quince:

Local authorities are responsible for placing looked-after children in the most appropriate placement according to their needs. If the local authority wants to place looked after child with a family member or friend, the carer must be assessed and approved as a foster carer, although in an emergency time limited approval can be given on a temporary basis. Local authorities have duties to ensure they provide all carers of looked after children with appropriate support. Ofsted inspect local authorities with regard to their performance on placing and supporting looked after children.

■ Foster Care: Allowances**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:****[50672]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether legislation is in place to prevent local authorities from not paying the minimum foster care allowance to foster carers.

Will Quince:

There is no legislation in place setting a minimum foster allowance to be paid for foster carers. However, the Fostering National Minimum Standards are issued by the Secretary of State under the Care Standards Act 2000 and state at standard 28 'Each foster carer receives at least the national minimum allowance for the child, plus any necessary agreed expenses for the care, education, and reasonable leisure interests of the child, including insurance, holidays, birthdays, school trips, religious festivals etc, which cover the full cost of caring for each child placed with her/him.'

Fostering agencies are regulated by Ofsted under the Care Standards Act and under section 23 of the Care Standards Act 2000, the National Minimum Standards are applicable to them. Local authorities are inspected by Ofsted and under section 49 of the Care Standards Act, the National Minimum Standards apply to them also.

The department publishes a minimum allowance annually, which sets out the weekly amount a foster carer can expect to receive to cover such costs:

<https://www.gov.uk/support-for-foster-parents/help-with-the-cost-of-fostering>.

■ Higher Education**Dr Matthew Offord:****[48210]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will introduce a statutory baseline for the number of hours higher education providers must provide face-to-face tuition in an academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

We do not intend to introduce a statutory baseline of contact hours.

English higher education (HE) providers are autonomous institutions, which means that they have the freedom to determine the way their courses are taught, supervised, and assessed. It is a matter for individual providers to ensure that all students have the support they need to succeed and benefit from their HE experience.

However, all registered providers must continue to meet the Office for Students (OfS) registration conditions in relation to the quality of HE. These registration conditions make clear the need to ensure that courses are high-quality, and that students are properly supported to achieve good outcomes.

The government has now lifted the restrictions on in-person teaching and providers are therefore able to shape their courses without restrictions on face-to-face learning. HE providers should therefore not be planning to restrict teaching based on COVID-19 restrictions. We expect all universities to continue to deliver excellent learning, in line with guidance from the OfS, and that they should provide students with a full experience.

■ **Holiday Play Schemes: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[47008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of pupils engaged with (a) academic teaching and (b) enrichment activities as part of the 2021 summer school activity programme in York.

Mr Robin Walker:

In total, over 2,800 secondary schools in England signed up to participate in the summer schools' programme. This is 74% of all eligible mainstream secondary schools and it means that over 500,000 pupils will have been invited to take part. The aims were to help recover education lost as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and to give pupils the confidence they needed to start the new academic year.

Through the £200 million made available by the government, schools have been able to fund provision based on the needs of their pupils. Summer schools needed to offer a blend of both academic and enrichment activities, although the precise proportions of each and the detail of the programme were for schools to decide.

As part of the government's commitment to developing a long term education recovery plan, understanding the effectiveness and success of the 2021 summer schools programme is a key priority for the department. We have designed and released a research study to help us to better understand the perceived impact of summer schools on both children's wellbeing, transition to secondary school, and academic recovery. An independent research agency will carry out the analysis and reporting of this important research for the department. Substantive figures will be available in October and a full evaluation will be published on gov.uk.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[50644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the letter of 11 June 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire on financial support for student nurses, reference ZA56747.

Mr Robin Walker:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the hon. Member for West Lancashire.

■ Schools: Buildings

Rachael Maskell: [\[48293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he has taken to identify buildings on the schools estate which could be repurposed to house refugees from Afghanistan.

Will Quince:

A generous resettlement package has been developed to support Afghan citizens to acclimatise and settle in the UK, including support to secure settled accommodation.

The government, alongside local authorities, is considering all appropriate options to identify suitable accommodation for Afghan families as soon as possible.

■ Sex and Relationship Education

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[50637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress has been made on the implementation of statutory relationships and sex education (RSE) in schools; how many schools have completed training; what quality assurance of providers has been undertaken; and how much funding has been allocated to schools for the delivery of that subject.

Mr Robin Walker:

Since September 2020, it has been compulsory for schools to teach relationships education to primary school-aged pupils, relationships and sex education to secondary school-aged pupils and health education to all pupils in state-maintained schools. The department has been clear that, whilst it was appropriate last academic year for schools to prioritise relationship, sex and health education (RSHE) teaching to meet the needs of pupils, schools must deliver a full RSHE curriculum from September 2021.

The department does not collect information on how many schools in total have completed RSHE training. The department's package of support to help develop teacher capability and competence to teach high quality RSHE included a training and peer support programme delivered by 20 lead teaching schools covering all eight regions in England. These teaching schools were appointed following a rigorous selection process based on an assessment of the quality of their training provision and experience and expertise. The programme was delivered in the last academic year and reached 3,800 schools. Provisional data for the fourth wave, which ended in July, shows that a further 1,000 schools have been supported. This is a cascade model of training whereby those trained are expected to share the training with other teachers in their school and wider school networks. Teaching schools' training materials were based on the department's training modules, which were developed with subject experts. Teaching schools have made their training materials and other resources freely available on their websites. We also published training modules which are freely available for all schools to download.

The department invested over £3 million in support for RSHE between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years, and is investing up to £250,000 in 2021-22 for an additional wave of training. As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools have flexibility over how they deliver RSHE, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

To support this flexibility, schools are also free to determine how they use their core funding allocated to them, including investing in RSHE training for teachers.

■ Special Educational Needs: Hearing Impairment

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[48391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the National Deaf Children's Society on (a) supporting Education, Health and Care plans and (b) ensuring teaching staff are supported to provide quality education to children who are deaf.

Will Quince:

We seek to involve a broad range of stakeholders in the development, delivery and communication of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) policy.

This includes the SEND Review, which is looking at ways to make sure the SEND system is consistent, high quality, and integrated across education, health and care. The review has gathered views from a very wide range of partners, including parents and carers, children and young people, people and organisations working with and providing support to them, and system leaders. We are continuing to work with a range of partners to develop proposals for consultation as soon as possible.

More broadly, the department provides support to local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to education, health and care plans (EHCPs). This includes delivering a training programme to local authorities, health, and social care staff on their statutory duties for EHCPs and reviews.

The department is also supporting teaching staff to provide effective support to children and young people with SEND, including those with sensory impairments. This includes the framework of core initial teacher training (ITT) content, published by the department in July 2016, which includes specific content on how ITT providers should equip teacher trainees to support pupils with SEND.

The performance of all teachers in maintained schools must be assessed every year against the Teachers' Standards which sets out that teachers must have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, and that they must be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them.

Alongside this, through our contract with the National Association for Special Educational Needs, the department has funded the Whole School SEND consortium to equip the workforce to deliver high quality teaching for all children and young people with SEND, including specialist resources in relation to sensory impairments.

The funding in the 2021-22 financial year will bring the total funding for this contract to over £8 million since 2018.

Finally, to teach a class of hearing or vision impaired pupils, qualified teachers must hold, or be working towards completing, the mandatory qualification for children with hearing or vision impairments that has been approved by the Secretary of State for Education. This is set out in the School Teachers' Qualifications Regulations 2003, Section 6: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/1662/pdfs/ukxi_20031662_en.pdf.

■ Students: Finance

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[48379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of changing student finance residency requirements to include UK nationals who have been resident in the UK for more than three years but have gaps in their Leave To Remain status.

Abena Oppong-Asare: [\[48380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the discretion of the Students Loans Company to offer loans to UK nationals who do not meet residency requirements as a result of circumstances outside their control.

Michelle Donelan:

Generally, to be eligible for student support a student must be resident in England and have 'settled' status or a recognised connection with the UK on the first day of the first academic year of the course and must have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands (Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) for the 3 years prior to that date.

To be ordinarily resident in the UK a person must be here lawfully in the UK throughout the required period. It would not be practical or desirable for Student Finance England to have to make individual decisions about why a particular individual may not be here lawfully. We will continue to be guided by Home Office grants of leave to remain in assessing eligibility for student finance.

■ Students: Loans

Chi Onwurah: [\[49129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress the Government has made on introducing a Takaful-based university fee funding structure.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has been considering an Alternative Student Finance product carefully alongside wider reforms to the higher education system and will provide an update alongside the conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding. The interim conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding was

published on 21 January 2021, and we will conclude the Review in full at a future date.

■ Universities: Fees and Charges

Catherine West:

[50120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether British nationals living in the EEA and Switzerland will be required to pay international fees at universities in the UK or UK university home fees.

Michelle Donelan:

UK nationals and their family members living in the EEA or Switzerland on 31 December 2020 will generally be eligible for home fee status, tuition fee and maintenance support from Student Finance England for courses starting on or after 1 August 2021 and before 1 January 2028 if they meet the following conditions:

- they were living in the EEA or Switzerland on 31 December 2020 (or have moved back to the UK immediately after living in the EEA or Switzerland); and
- they have lived in the EEA, Switzerland, the UK or Gibraltar for at least the last three years; and
- they have lived continuously in the EEA, Switzerland, the UK or Gibraltar between 31 December 2020 and the start of the course.

This was announced in a Written Ministerial Statement on 4 April 2019:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2019-04-04/HCWS1483/>.

■ Universities: Housing

Rachael Maskell:

[48294]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has taken steps to release housing from universities to house refugees from Afghanistan.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is working swiftly with local authorities to identify suitable permanent accommodation for Afghan families as soon as possible.

Higher education providers are autonomous bodies, independent from government. The government plays no direct role in the provision of student accommodation.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Chris Bryant:

[903536]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of supermarket chains on factors affecting the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the Covid-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built on access to a range of sources, including robust supply chains domestically, and from other countries, including supplementing our excellent domestic production of fresh vegetables and fruit with imports of produce that cannot be grown here for all or part of the year. In the latest statistical release of Agriculture in the UK (July 2021), vegetables and fruit were the largest value imported commodity group in 2020.

Defra has well established ways of working with the industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise. This includes extensive, regular and ongoing engagement with food retailers in preparedness for, and response to, issues with the potential to cause disruption to food supply chains, including those for fresh produce.

■ Agriculture: Carbon Emissions**Martyn Day:**[\[48302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential contribution to UK net zero targets from the introduction of financial assistance to enable and support farmers willing to change from livestock farming to plant-based protein production methods.

Victoria Prentis:

We are developing a range of measures through the Agriculture Act, our future farming policy, our forthcoming Food Strategy White Paper and the 25 Year Environment Plan, all with the aim of enabling farmers to optimise sustainable food production and reduce emissions from agriculture. These are important steps towards achieving our 25 Year Environment Plan ambitions and our carbon net zero goals.

We recognise the contribution to greenhouse gas emissions made by the livestock and dairy sectors. However, while food choices can have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions, well managed livestock also provide environmental benefits such as supporting biodiversity, protecting the character of the countryside and generating important income for rural communities.

■ Ammonium Nitrate: Prices**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[50646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of trends in the price of ammonium nitrate over the last 12 months; and if he will publish his assessment in the form of a percentage change.

Victoria Prentis:

Ammonium nitrate prices are at 12-month highs, having increased by around a half since last August. From August 2020 through to July 2021, the most recent month for which we have data, the price of imported ammonium nitrate has risen progressively from £202 per tonne to £311. This represents an increase of 53%. Over the same

time period, the price of UK-produced ammonium nitrate has also risen, from £218 per tonne to £326, an increase of 50%.

The average price since January 2017 is £247 per tonne for UK-produced ammonium nitrate, and £235 for imported ammonium nitrate. Focussing on UK-produced ammonium nitrate, prices initially rose after January 2017, peaking at £293 per tonne in November 2018. Prices then fell, bottoming out at £200 per tonne in June 2020, before commencing their current increase. Prices are now at the upper end of their 5-year range and are returning to levels last seen in the early years of the previous decade.

The data on ammonium nitrate price movement is already in the public domain and there are no plans to publish any deeper assessment of the trends.

■ Deposit Return Schemes

Ian Mearns:

[50657]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reasons his Department has delayed the introduction of a deposit return scheme for plastic and glass bottles to 2024; and if his Department will bring forward that introduction date in response to the climate emergency and the impact of plastics on wildlife and marine life.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to introducing a deposit return scheme (DRS) for drinks containers. We recently undertook a second consultation on introducing the DRS, in which we set out timelines for the scheme to go live.

We want an ambitious but realistic timetable to ensure we implement a DRS that will be as effective as possible. We reviewed the timelines required to implement a DRS and anticipate the scheme will be launched in 2024, subject to the outcome of the second consultation and parliamentary passage of the Environment Bill.

■ Dogs: Smuggling

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[R] [48260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Dogs Trust's report, Puppy Smuggling: the scandal continues, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Dogs Trust's recommendation that checks at the border should include a visual check to ensure that the pet animal is the same as the animal listed on the pet passport, and is the age stated.

Victoria Prentis:

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

Authorised pet checkers are trained by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) prior to being granted approval and receive annual audits of their checking and

processing to ensure they uphold our requirements. They also receive refresher training and are encouraged to liaise with their APHA contacts to identify non-compliance trends and additional training requirements.

Pet checkers will refuse travel or share intelligence with the APHA who can intercept at the port/border if non-compliance is suspected.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [\[48261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Dogs Trust's report, Puppy Smuggling: the scandal continues, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Dogs Trust recommendation that the focus on enforcement of the pet travel legislation must be shifted from carriers to a qualified animal professional from a government agency and this should include a requirement for there to be sufficient out-of-hours and weekend cover at ports.

Victoria Prentis:

Carriers work closely with operational colleagues at the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and Border Force and are committed to preventing illegal imports of pet animals. Authorised pet checkers are trained by the APHA prior to being granted approval and receive annual audits of their checking and processing to ensure they uphold our requirements. The APHA regularly reviews its border enforcement work against known travel trends of those that seek to illegally import puppies to the UK, to keep pace with this rapidly evolving criminal activity. Part of this work includes intelligence-led targeting of suspected smugglers, alongside partner agencies, including Border Force. Border Force operates a 24-hour service seven days per week and alerts the APHA to suspected non-compliant dogs and puppies. Targeted intelligence-led work often takes place outside of normal working hours as needed. The Government is satisfied with the workings of these current arrangements.

■ Glass: Recycling

Robert Halfon: [\[48184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of a remelt target for glass collected under the proposed deposit return scheme.

Robert Halfon: [\[48185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of having a re-melt target for glass collected by the proposed scheme of Extended Producer Responsibility.

Robert Halfon: [\[48186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the future opportunities for kerbside recycling of glass packaging containers that are not included in the proposed Deposit Return Scheme.

Robert Halfon:

[\[48187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the amount of glass that would exit closed loop recycling in the event that a proposed Deposit Return Scheme does not include a re-melt target.

Rebecca Pow:

Our recent consultation on introducing a deposit return scheme (DRS) did not propose a re-melt target for DRS, but the Deposit Management Organisation (DMO), which would be established for the purpose of running a DRS, would have an obligation to pass on any materials collected through the scheme to reprocessors for recycling.

We are continuing to finalise the policy of the DRS and these details will be provided in a Government response which will be published in due course. This will also be accompanied by an Impact Assessment on the final scope and policy agreed for the scheme.

Re-melt targets were first introduced under the current packaging producer responsibility regime in 2013 and have contributed to more beneficial glass recycling. An annual re-melt target of 72% has been set for 2021 and 2022. With regards to glass packaging in scope of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, it therefore is Government's intention to retain a re-melt target. In its recent consultation, government stated this intention and invited respondents to offer their views on a future re-melt target rate. The Government is considering the responses to the consultation and will publish a government response in due course.

We also want to make recycling easier at kerbside and ensure that there is a comprehensive, consistent service across England. The Environment Bill stipulates that all local authorities in England must make arrangements for a core set of materials to be collected for recycling from households. This core set includes: paper and card; plastic; glass; metal; food waste and garden waste. We recently published our second consultation on recycling consistency which sought views on including on the materials in scope of collection, transitional arrangements, and statutory guidance. We are currently analysing responses to the consultation and intend to publish our Government response in due course.

Ruth Jones:

[\[48354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the level of the recommended bulk density for glass recyclate collected for recycling back into bottles in respect of the principles of the circular economy.

Ruth Jones:

[\[48355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of potential effect of the glass-drink packaging recyclate going to aggregate through (a) Deposit Return Schemes and (b) local authority household collections.

Ruth Jones: [\[48356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of (a) the crushing of glass and (b) soft drop glass return through reverse vending machines on the quality of glass recyclate for re-melt.

Ruth Jones: [\[48357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what comparative assessment he has made of the level of leakage of glass recyclate through (a) a deposit return scheme where glass is handled multiple times throughout collection and (b) local authority household collections.

Ruth Jones: [\[48358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the ability of reverse vending machines to break glass drink bottles into a natural broken state.

Rebecca Pow:

Our impact assessment, published alongside the second consultation on introducing a deposit return scheme, showed that the currently available reverse vending machines will be readily capable of compacting glass into suitably sized pieces for recycling. Our engagement with industry has been important in informing this assessment. The compaction can involve breaking glass bottles into 4, 5, or 6 separate parts and is to be clearly distinguished from crushing glass. The advantage of such compaction is that it substantially reduces the volume and thereby the storage and transport costs compared to whole, "soft drop", bottles whilst still fulfilling the principles of the circular economy. It also avoids the difficulties involved with crushing glass on collection which results in material loss.

The impact assessment which accompanies the second consultation assumed that the glass collected would be of high quality and therefore able to be sent on for recycling. We are continuing to finalise the policy of the DRS and further details will be provided in a Government response which will be published in due course. This will also be accompanied by an impact assessment on the final scope and policy agreed for the scheme.

■ **Plastics: Waste**

Sarah Jones: [\[48336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ban the (a) export of plastic waste and (b) most polluting single use plastics as part of its plans to tackle the causes of plastic pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

(a) The Government has committed to banning the export of plastic waste to countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). We will consult before the end of 2022 on options to deliver the ban.

(b) The Resources and Waste Strategy for England sets out the Government's plans to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste throughout the life of the 25 Year Environment Plan. For the most problematic plastics we are going faster - which is why we have committed to work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2025. We have made significant progress, introducing one of the world's toughest bans on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products and significantly reducing the use of single-use carrier bags use with our 5p charge. In May we increased the charge to 10p and extended it to all retailers.

In general, we prefer to help people and companies make the right choice, rather than banning items outright. It is ultimately for businesses to decide what materials they use to supply products to customers. There may, however, be times when a ban is appropriate as part of a wider strategic approach. In October 2020, we introduced a restriction on the supply of plastic drinking straws, cotton buds and drink stirrers, and we are currently in the process of preparing a public consultation on banning the supply of single-use plastic plates, cutlery and expanded polystyrene drinks containers. We will continue to review the latest evidence on problematic products and/ or materials to take a systematic approach to reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastic products.

We have included a number of measures in the Environment Bill to enable us to tackle plastics and plastic waste. These include measures to impose charges on single-use plastic items; introduce a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers; and make producers cover the costs of collecting and managing plastic packaging waste. As well as this, the Bill gives us powers to provide consistent recycling services for household and businesses; ensure all packaging is labelled either 'recyclable' or 'not recyclable'; set requirements regarding design and material usage for products; and will allow us to better control the export of plastic waste.

■ Tree Planting

Dr Matthew Offord:

[48203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many trees his Department has planted since December 2019.

Rebecca Pow:

Forestry is a devolved matter and so this answer relates only to government supported tree planting in England.

The latest statistics for new planting supported by central government in England can be found in the [Forestry Commission Key Performance Indicators: Report for 2020-21](#) on the gov.uk website. These most recent published provisional statistics are shown below:

YEAR (ENDING 31 MARCH)	GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED NEW PLANTING OF TREES IN ENGLAND	
	(HECTARES)	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF TREES
2019-20	1,956	3,281,000 ^{1,2}
2020-21	1,892	3,860,000 ^{1,2,3}
2021-22 quarter 1 partial interim report	469	926,000

Source: Forestry Commission.

1. Includes trees in areas counting as woodland, and some tree cover outside woodland.

2. The density of tree planting, in terms of numbers of trees planted per hectare of land, varies between planting schemes

3. Tree numbers are approximate and to the nearest 1,000 trees. Figures may not sum due to rounding

These statistics include new planting supported by Government via the Rural Development Programme for England (Countryside Stewardship and the former English Woodland Creation Grant), the Woodland Carbon Fund, the High Speed 2 Woodland Fund, Forestry England, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the National Forest Company, in the Northern Forest, and by the Community Forests.

Planting rates in 2020/21 were impacted by Covid-19. The England Tree Action Plan published in May 2021 stated our aim to at least treble tree planting rates in England by end of this Parliament.

■ Waste Disposal

Steve Reed:

[50667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what data his Department holds on the number of bulky household waste collections carried out by local authorities in England.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra does not collect information on the number of bulky household waste collections in England.

However, Defra does collect data on the tonnages of bulky household residual waste and bulky items of household recycling collected from the kerbside.

This information is published as part of Local Authority waste management statistics, available here: [WasteDataFlow - Local Authority waste management on data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk/dataset/waste-data-flow-local-authority-waste-management)

■ Zoos

Mrs Pauline Latham:

[\[48214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that his Department's standards of modern zoo practice include (a) conservation activities on supporting endangered species through the collection of genetic material for research and (b) the provision of formal education sessions..

Victoria Prentis:

Section 1A of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 currently sets the conservation, research and education requirements that licensed zoos in Great Britain must meet. The Government is proposing, via the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill currently before Parliament, to allow these standards instead to be set in the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice ('the Zoo Standards'). This will mean that they may be updated more easily in future. The Zoo Standards are in the process of being updated by Defra, in consultation with the UK's Zoos Expert Committee, and will include new conservation, research and education standards in preparation for the new legislation. Defra is aiming to publish a draft of the new Zoo Standards, for a targeted consultation of relevant zoo stakeholders, later this year.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Diplomatic Service

Alan Brown:

[\[48278\]](#)

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 13 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: Politics and Government

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[48373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the level of threat from the newly formed Taliban government in Afghanistan to (a) UK nationals and (b) Afghans who worked with British forces who remain in Afghanistan.

Amanda Milling:

The UK continues to monitor closely the terrorist threat from Afghanistan, including from Al Qaeda and ISKP, and has proscribed both of these organisations and their associated groups. We will work with our international partners to stop Afghanistan from again becoming a haven and inspiration for terrorism and thereby reduce the

terrorist risk to the UK and the international community. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) programme, for those who worked with the UK in Afghanistan, remains open. We are working to identify anyone who is still in Afghanistan and eligible for ARAP.

■ Australasia and Canada: Foreign Relations

Fleur Anderson: [\[48371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to strengthen relations and cultural exchange between the UK and (a) New Zealand, (b) Canada and (c) Australia.

Vicky Ford:

The UK has strong relations with New Zealand, Canada and Australia through our modern partnerships built on shared values and history. These partnerships are reinforced by close friendship, prosperity, people-to-people links, commonwealth membership and cultural exchange. The Foreign Secretary is in regular contact with their counterparts in New Zealand, Canada and Australia, and has spoken to each of them in the last month. One example of the close cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections we share with these countries is the UK/Australia Season. Minister Adams spoke at the season launch event on 1 September at the British Museum, where he welcomed a joint British Council / Australian Government project that highlights our shared history and culture while reflecting on modern Britain and Australia.

■ British Students Abroad: EU Countries

Kim Leadbeater: [\[48392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions she has had with her European counterparts on the future provision of additional visa opportunities to British students wishing to study in the EU.

Wendy Morton:

EU Member States are responsible for the implementation of their immigration systems, including the provision of visas and routes of entry for third country nationals, including students. The Government will continue to work with bilateral partners, including EU Member State authorities, to ensure that the rules and requirements for British citizens wishing to study in the EU are clearly communicated.

The Government has been working with UK stakeholders, such as Universities UK International (UUKi), who produced guidance for their members on the various visa regimes in operation across the EU. We will continue to work with the higher education sector to ensure that organisations and individuals are prepared to meet the new requirements.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Layla Moran:**[\[50756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's oral contribution of 14 September 2021, Official Report, column 819, which of the 9.2 million covid-19 vaccines donated by the UK have been donated as part of the COVAX programme.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has pledged to donate 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to countries in need by June 2022, with 80 million doses being delivered through COVAX, and 20 million to bilateral partners. As of 20 September, we have donated 10.3 million doses, of which 6.2 million doses have been provided through COVAX.

■ Gulf of Oman: Tankers**Jim Shannon:**[\[48233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his counterparts in the Gulf region on the seizure of oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to assuring the safety of shipping in the Middle East region, including through the Gulf of Oman. The UK is a member of the International Maritime Security Construct, along with several Gulf partners, which addresses the threat in the region by providing reassurance to commercial shipping and deterring further threats. We are committed to engaging regularly with our partners to contribute to lasting security and stability in the region.

■ Iran: Political Prisoners**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[48198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support survivors of the 1988 Iranian massacre and their families who are seeking legal recourse in UK courts.

James Cleverly:

We are unaware of any legal action having been brought in the UK in relation to the 1988 massacre. Any decisions in relation to investigation, charging and prosecution are matters for the Police and Crown Prosecution Service.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[48199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of seeking a UN inquiry into events surrounding the 1988 massacre in Iran.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[48200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a UN-led inquiry into the 1988 massacre of political prisoners in Iran following representations by the Prime Minister of Slovenia and UN special rapporteurs seeking the establishment of that inquiry.

James Cleverly:

The UK has designated Iran as a Human Rights Priority Country, and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor human rights record. This will include using all opportunities during the upcoming United Nations General Assembly session. We urge Iran to allow the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran access to the country, so that he can conduct research and investigations into human rights concerns reported there, including the events of 1988.

The British Government opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances and takes any allegations of extrajudicial killings seriously. We have always been clear that Iran must uphold its international legal obligations, including conducting thorough and independent investigations into suspected human rights violations, both past and present. We call on President Raisi to set Iran on a different course. That includes committing to improving human rights in Iran.

■ **Israel: Defence for Children International**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[50615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of reports that Israeli forces raided the offices of the human rights NGO, Defence for Children International-Palestine, during which files relating to child detainees were seized.

James Cleverly:

The UK and officials from other like-minded missions met with Defence for Children International - Palestine on 31 August. We have followed developments in this case, including an ongoing military court petition filed by the organisation. We have called upon the Government of Israel to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations and to allow them to freely operate in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israel's long-standing commitment to democratic values is one of its great strengths as a fellow democracy, and we continue to make clear that a strong, vibrant civil society is in Israel's own interest. As a friend of Israel, we would be concerned by any developments that may undermine this commitment.

■ **Jerusalem: Schools**

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[50614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the reported (a) raid of

school in the Wadi Al Joz neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, (b) detention of the school principal and an employee and (c) seizure of computers and files by Israeli forces on 1 September 2021.

James Cleverly:

It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system in order to provide opportunities, economic development and hope for the next generation. While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way that minimises tension. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children.

■ **Lebanon: Economic Situation**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[48196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the stability of the economy in Lebanon.

James Cleverly:

Lebanon faces a severe economic crisis, a result of the failure of Lebanon's political elites to deliver much-needed and long-promised reforms. The crisis has been exacerbated by the public health crisis caused by COVID-19 and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion of August 2020.

The UK and members of the International Support Group for Lebanon are clear that Lebanon's leaders need to implement a credible reform process as the only sustainable way to address this crisis.

■ **Lebanon: Explosions**

Jim Shannon:

[\[48232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent support the Government has provided to Lebanon in response to the Beirut port explosion in 2020.

James Cleverly:

In the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion in August 2020, we were one of the biggest donors to the response, providing a £27 million package of assistance to support the most vulnerable people in Lebanon. A British team of medics specialising in trauma, emergency nursing and rehabilitation flew out to Beirut days after the explosion, and we also provided medical equipment for Lebanese hospitals and clinics. The UK gave medical, strategic air transport, engineering and communications support to the Lebanese Armed Forces as they responded to the explosion and its aftermath, and the Royal Navy ship HMS Enterprise was deployed to survey the damage to the Port.

■ Myanmar: Military Attachés**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[50674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has plans to remove the Burmese Military Attache, Captain Soe Aung, from the UK.

Amanda Milling:

The UK strongly condemns the military coup in Myanmar and the violent crackdown on innocent people. Any decision to declare a foreign diplomat "persona non grata" under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations would need careful consideration in view of the wider implications of such a decision.

■ Oman: Police Service of Northern Ireland**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[49288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2021 to Question 7945 on Oman: Public Order, which Omani security units did the PSNI deliver public order training to through the Gulf Strategy Fund from December 2020 to March 2021.

James Cleverly:

The FCDO's International Programme (IP), and within it the Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF), is a vital tool in promoting positive change and reforms across the world, including in the Gulf. Our programmes help our partners to continue their human rights reform, address key climate change and green growth opportunities and challenges, tackle illicit finance, improve marine conservation, promote economic diversification, promote diversity and inclusion including on LGBTQ+ rights, and develop their institutions.

All cooperation through the IP, including the GSF, is subject to rigorous risk assessments to ensure all work meets our human rights obligations and our values. The Government does not shy away from raising legitimate human rights concerns, and encourage other states to respect international law.

We now publish an annual summary of the GSF's work on gov.uk. We will not publish further information where doing so presents risks to our staff, programme suppliers and beneficiaries, or which may impact our relationships with our international partners, and therefore our ability to influence their reform efforts.

We will provide updates on an annual basis.

■ Overseas Aid**Chris Law:**[\[50681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when her Department plans to publish the Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020.

Amanda Milling:

Statistics on International Development: Final UK Aid Spend 2020 will be published on 29th September 2021. This was pre-announced on the gov.uk upcoming statistics publications page.

■ Saudi Arabia: Political Prisoners**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[50654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Prime Minister's comment of 10 September 2021 on the UK being the Saudi Arabia of penal policy, on efforts by the UK and its allies to argue for a more ethical approach by Saudi Arabia to its political detainees.

James Cleverly:

Our views are well known by the Saudi Arabian authorities. The UK will continue to encourage further human rights reform in the Kingdom.

■ Western Sahara: Human Rights**Grahame Morris:**[\[49094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 April to Question 181240 on Western Sahara: Morocco, what recent discussions he has had with the Moroccan Government on the (a) human rights and (b) prison conditions of Saharawi political prisoners.

James Cleverly:

Support for human rights is a priority around the world, and we regularly discuss human rights issues and prison conditions with Morocco.

■ Western Sahara: Politics and Government**Grahame Morris:**[\[49095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 1 March 2021 to Question 158016 on Western Sahara; Politics and Government, when he last held discussions on the continuing hostilities with his (a) Moroccan and (b) Saharawi counterparts; and if he will publish the response to those discussions.

James Cleverly:

The UK regularly discusses the situation in Western Sahara with the parties. We continue to urge the parties to avoid further escalation, return to the ceasefire agreement, and re-engage with the UN-led political process.

■ Xinjiang: Minority Groups**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[48160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has received evidence of an increase in repressive behaviour

towards (a) Uyghurs and (b) other Turkic Muslim minorities in the Uyghur region of China following recent events in Afghanistan.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is committed to working with our international partners to stand up for the rights of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. We also have serious concerns about the developing situation in Afghanistan and how this may affect minorities in the region. We will continue to monitor developments closely.

■ **Yemen: Deportation**

Gill Furniss:

[\[50738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions (a) she and (b) her predecessor has had with her Saudi counterpart on that nation's policy on deportations to Yemen.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of recent reporting related to migrants being expelled from Saudi Arabia. Officials have raised this issue and the potential humanitarian and economic implications with the Saudi authorities. I, Lord Ahmad and the previous Foreign Secretary raised human rights in our latest engagements with the Saudi authorities. No aspect of our relationship with Saudi Arabia prevents us from speaking frankly about human rights.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Asthma: Coronavirus**

Yvonne Fovargue:

[\[44322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on people with asthma and severe asthma.

Maria Caulfield:

As COVID-19 is a new disease, it is not yet clear what the physical, neurological, psychological and rehabilitation impacts will be for those with conditions such as asthma and severe asthma.

■ **Brain: Tumours**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[45183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the use of personalised vaccines as a treatment for brain tumours.

Maria Caulfield:

At present, no vaccine therapies are licensed for use as a treatment for brain cancer. Such treatments are used within either experimental or early stage trial settings, therefore they are not routinely available to patients.

■ Contraceptives

Dame Diana Johnson: [50639]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community pharmacies have been commissioned to provide free emergency contraception.

Maggie Throup:

This information is not held centrally.

■ Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope: [50609]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the published figures for people admitted to hospital with covid-19 include those who have been admitted for another condition but have also tested positive for covid-19, even if not showing any symptoms; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

The National Health Service publishes weekly reports by Trust on the number of hospitalised patients with COVID-19; the number of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 and the number of patients diagnosed in hospital with COVID-19. This includes those who have been admitted to hospital for another condition and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/>

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Justin Madders: [48267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timeframe is for the publication of data on the potential benefits and risks of missing covid-19 vaccines for people who have not yet been fully immunised.

Maggie Throup:

Public Health England does not collect this data.

Clive Lewis: [48308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many doses of covid-19 vaccines have been destroyed as a result of expiring before their use.

Maggie Throup:

The information requested is not currently held centrally.

Rachael Maskell: [49200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation was asked to review vaccination against covid-19 of children aged 12 and above instead of all year 7 pupils.

Maggie Throup:

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) provides advice on use of authorised vaccines in the population. There are currently no vaccines authorised for use in under 12 year olds in the United Kingdom, therefore the JCVI reviewed vaccination for children aged 12 years old and over. This will include some, but not all children in year 7 at the time of initial vaccine deployment in schools.

Mr Clive Betts:[\[50613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timetable is for implementing a resolution for people whose covid-19 vaccination was administered in Scotland but are resident in England and their vaccination status is not recorded in the England NHS App.

Maggie Throup:

Live data flows have been set up by NHS Digital between England and Scotland which update both general practitioner (GP) records and NHS COVID Pass status. Those vaccinated in Scotland, but registered with a GP in England, can access the certification services provided in England and vice versa.

■ General Practitioners: Fees and Charges**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[48202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate the Department has made of the number of patients paying for a consultation with a GP after being unable to obtain a consultation through the NHS.

Maria Caulfield:

The data requested is not collected centrally.

■ General Practitioners: South Yorkshire**Dan Jarvis:**[\[R\] \[50031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support he is providing to GP practices in South Yorkshire to help increase the number of face-to-face appointments.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: General practices have remained open throughout the pandemic, offering face to face appointments to those who need them as well as telephone and online consultations.

In July 2021 nearly 60% of general practitioner (GP) appointments were face to face.

We have made available an additional £270 million from November 2020 until September 2021 to ensure GPs and their teams are able to continue to support all patients. Between April to September 2021, £3,164,000 was allocated to South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Sustainability and Transformation Partnership to support GP practices across South Yorkshire.

■ Health and Social Care Levy

John Redwood: [\[48126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his priorities are for spending the planned additional revenue from the increase in National Insurance.

Edward Argar:

The priorities are ensuring the health and care system has the long-term resources it needs; tackling the elective backlog; reforming adult social care; and bringing the health and social care system closer together on a long term, sustainable footing.

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[48147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to publish on a six-monthly basis the additional results achieved by the NHS through expenditure raised by the 1.25 per cent Health and Social Care Levy announced on 7 September 2021.

Edward Argar:

We will publish the delivery plan for tackling the electives backlog later this year.

■ Health and Social Care Levy: Cost Effectiveness

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[48148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to publish on a six-monthly basis the value for money calculations made on the additional health and social care expenditure for which money has been raised through the 1.25 per cent Health and Social Care Levy announced on 7 September 2021.

Edward Argar:

We have no plans to do so. HM Treasury and the Department will continue to scrutinise spending to ensure good value outcomes. Health and social care spending will also continue to be subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office and through the Health and Social Care Select Committee and Public Accounts Committee.

■ Influenza: Vaccination

Rachael Maskell: [\[50707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to retain covid-19 vaccination hubs to assist in the administration of the flu vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

Some vaccination hubs may be used for co-administration of the flu and COVID-19 vaccinations this winter. Co-administration is likely to happen on a small scale in health and social care settings, but the flu vaccination will be promoted alongside the COVID-19 booster programme in the 2021/22 season to ensure maximum uptake.

■ Integrated Care Boards

John Redwood: [\[48118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his plans are for the current management bodies for health and social care as the new Integrated Care Boards are created.

Edward Argar:

The Health and Care Bill will establish statutory integrated care boards (ICBs), which will take on the commissioning functions of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) as well as some of NHS England's commissioning functions. CCGs will be abolished by the Health and Care Bill. NHS England will continue to discharge those functions that can be most effectively exercised at a national level to ensure the system works both locally and nationally. The Bill will not change the statutory health-related functions or social care responsibilities of local authorities.

■ NHS Test and Trace

John Redwood: [\[48122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the budget is for Test and Trace in 2021-22; and how that compares to Test and Trace spending levels in 2020-21.

Maggie Throup:

The budget for NHS Test and Trace for 2021-22 is £15 billion. The final accounts for 2020-21 are currently being audited and will be published in due course.

■ Nurses: Registration

Dawn Butler: [\[48163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with stakeholders on the potential merits of enshrining the title of Nurse in law as a protected title, requiring an individual to be registered as a Nurse with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, to legally use that title.

Edward Argar:

The protection of a professional title is a key aspect of public protection. Protecting a title provides assurance to the public that someone using that title is competent and safe to practise. Although 'registered nurse' is a protected title, 'nurse' is not a protected title.

The Department has begun discussions with the professional regulators, including the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer for England, and the Royal College of Nursing to explore the issue of protected titles as part of the ongoing Government review of professional regulation. We will consider the protection of title offences relating to registered nurses, midwives and nursing associates when bringing forward reform of the NMC's legal framework.

■ Oral Tobacco**Mr David Jones:** [\[50629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what scientific research-based evidence he plans to use to inform his decision on whether or not to legalise snus.

Maggie Throup:

The Department is currently undertaking a post-implementation review of the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016. We have analysed research and evidence submitted through a public consultation, including on oral tobacco, known as snus and on the harms of tobacco use more generally. The review will inform our decision on whether such products should be regulated in the future.

■ Prostate Cancer: Coronavirus**Bob Blackman:** [\[48192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NHS England's Monthly Provider Based Data and Summaries, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the data set out in those publications that shows 50,000 fewer referrals for suspected prostate cancer patients than historical trends during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Bob Blackman: [\[48193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Rapid Cancer Registration and Treatment Data published by the National Disease Registration Service, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the data in that publication that shows 13,000 fewer prostate cancer diagnoses to the end of April 2021 compared with historical trends; and what plans he has to increase the rate of those diagnoses.

Maria Caulfield:

We are encouraging all those with cancer symptoms to come forward for treatment, though media engagement such as the 'Help us to help you' campaign. There are currently eleven urology or prostate Rapid Diagnostic Centre (RDC) pathways operational or in development, some of which cover multiple hospital sites. RDCs have been developed to deliver faster and earlier cancer diagnosis, including for prostate cancer. RDCs will be the default model for all cancer pathways across all 21 Cancer Alliances in England by 2024.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Rachael Maskell:** [\[48290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to identify property from his Department's estate that could be used to resettle refugees from Afghanistan.

Edward Argar:

The Department has not identified properties from its estate to resettle refugees.

■ Vitamin D: Deficiency Diseases**Mark Tami:**[\[48149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a national strategy to reduce vitamin D deficiency, with particular regard to BAME groups.

Maggie Throup:

We have not made a formal assessment.

Our current advice is to take a daily 10 microgram supplement of vitamin D throughout the autumn and winter for musculoskeletal health. In addition, people at risk of vitamin D deficiency including black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are advised to consider taking a daily supplement throughout the year.

HOME OFFICE**■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Rachael Maskell:**[\[48296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to procure more resettlement hotels to move refugees on from quarantine hotel facilities.

Tom Pursglove:

The ambition to provide protection to thousands of people fleeing Afghanistan and the complex picture on the ground means there will be significant challenges delivering the scheme, but the Government is working at speed to address these obstacles.

Afghanistan is on the Government's red list, so all arrivals must quarantine for 10 days in a managed quarantine facility and take two PCR tests which can be sequenced. These rules apply to all those who have been, and continue to be arrive through, the ARAP scheme who must quarantine and anyone with rights of residence in the UK who is not exempt.

We are working closely with local authorities across the UK to match families into accommodation offered by those local authorities, who will also provide integration support, funded by the Home Office.

The cross-Government efforts to ensure that people are brought from Afghanistan to the UK as quickly as possible has meant that it has not been possible, in all cases, to arrange local authority support. In those cases, we are putting in place hotel accommodation.

The Government is already working with over 100 councils across the UK to meet the demand for housing, with over 2,000 places already confirmed.

■ Afghanistan: Immigration

Kate Osamor: [\[47025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has recruited additional staff to assist with the potential increased workload from the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Kate Osamor: [\[47026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the administration of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy on her Department's existing application processing times.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) launched on 1 April 2021. Under the policy, any current or former locally employed staff in Afghanistan who are assessed to be under serious threat to life are offered priority relocation to the UK regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served.

Since 1 April, the MOD and Home Office have relocated around 7,000 former Afghan locally employed staff and their families to the UK, including those relocated as part of HMG's evacuation from Afghanistan.

The overwhelming majority of those eligible for the ARAP scheme have now been evacuated. The scheme is an enduring commitment and will remain open for anyone who is eligible.

Resourcing has been increased substantially to support implementation of the ARAP scheme and ensure that any impact on existing application processing times is mitigated.

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher: [\[50680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the levels of anti-social behaviour incidents in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in (i) each of the last five years and (ii) during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in those areas.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and communities. The [Beating Crime Plan](#) published on 27 July laid out the Government's commitment to working with local agencies and partners to drive down anti-social behaviour.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides a range of flexible tools and powers to local agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour. Local areas decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances. As the powers are local in nature, the Home Office only collects data at Police Force Area level and not at lower levels of geography.

ASB police recorded incidents for West Midlands were on a steady decline pre-Covid-19 with a 40% fall in 2019-20 when compared to 2016-17. The overall number of ASB incidents in England also fell (24%) pre-Covid-19 but to a lesser degree than in West Midlands. ASB police recorded incidents have increased during the pandemic. A large part of this increase is associated to police recording reports of breaches of the public health regulations as ASB, many of which would not be considered ASB in normal times.

Home Office [statutory guidance](#) which was updated this year, supports all local agencies in using the powers from the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and in taking the multi-agency approach that is needed to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour in a way that takes account of the needs of the victim and the wider community.

■ Asylum

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[50034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it remains her Department's policy to impose the cap on the number of asylum seekers the UK will accept of 5,000 in 2021 and 20,000 in total.

Kevin Foster:

The UK does not impose a cap on the number of asylum claims the UK accepts. All asylum claims lodged from within the UK will be carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations.

In reference to the number of people included in your question, the UK's new Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will provide those put at risk by recent events in Afghanistan with a route to safety. This scheme will resettle up to 20,000 people at risk, with 5,000 in the first year. This is in addition to those brought to the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP).

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[48304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of Operation Warm Welcome.

Tom Pursglove:

Operation Warm Welcome is the cross-Government programme of work for those we have relocated and resettled from Afghanistan.

It will ensure that all those relocated to the UK can access the vital healthcare, housing, education and support into employment they need to fully integrate into our society, including English language training for those who need it.

As part of Operation Warm Welcome, the Home Office are giving indefinite leave to remain to all those being relocated under ARAP and the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme. We continue to work with local authorities to source appropriate accommodation as quickly as possible for families already in the UK, with more housing being pledged every week and I urge every council across the country to contribute to this national effort.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[49159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have submitted an application to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme including applicants and their family members between 1 April and 14 September 2021; and how many and what proportion of those applications have been (a) accepted, (b) rejected and (c) received but not yet processed.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[49161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and the special cases applications, how many applications were from (a) current or past locally employed UK government staff, (b) private companies implementing UK government funded programmes, (c) NGOs and non-profit organisations implementing UK government funded programmes, (d) Afghan government partners, (e) Afghan media and civil society organisations, and (f) other categories that the Government recognised.

Brendan O'Hara: [\[49162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, how many applicants were (a) accepted, (b) called forward to Kabul International Airport, (c) evacuated by 28 August, (d) rejected, (e) appealed, and (f) have not yet been processed for (i) current or past locally employed UK government staff; (ii) private companies implementing UK government funded programmes; (iii) NGOs and non profit organisations implementing UK government funded programmes; (iv) Afghan government partners (including MPs, ministers, justice officials, etc); (v) Afghan media and civil society organisations, and (vi) other categories that the UK government recognised.

Kevin Foster:

The Afghan relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) was launched on 1 April 2021. Since this date, around 7,000 former Afghan locally employed staff and their families have been relocated to the UK, including those relocated as part of HMG's evacuation from Afghanistan.

The specific information requested is not held in a published format and to gather it would require a disproportionate cost.

The Home Office does publish quarterly updates on immigration statistics. Information relating to arrivals under ARAP will be published in these statistics in due course. The most recent published migration statistics can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistics>

Guidance relating to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy can be viewed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy>

Brendan O'Hara: **[49164]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to urgently expedite the applications of (a) staff employed by Adam Smith International and (b) others employed by the UK government's implementing partners that worked across Afghanistan and in ministries to deliver UK funded aid projects who are being targeted as UK employees by the Taliban, under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: It is not appropriate to comment on individual cases in a response to a written parliamentary question

The Home Office remains committed to processing applications approved by the Ministry of Defence as quickly as possible and we are working across Government and with international partners to bring approved applicants to the UK.

Chi Onwurah: **[50016]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to process the claims of Afghan asylum seekers and refugees who have been waiting for more than six months for a decision on their applications.

Tom Pursglove:

The UK has a proud history of providing protection to those who need it, in accordance with our international obligations. All asylum claims are considered on a case by case basis and in line with published policy.

We are currently reviewing the country situation and will be issuing updated country policy and information notes shortly for Afghanistan, which reflect revised assessments of risk of persecution. We have therefore temporarily paused asylum decision making for Afghan nationals to ensure that our decision makers are only considering claimants' protection needs in the light of relevant and up-to-date country information.

However, we are continuing to interview those seeking asylum from Afghanistan to ensure we have the most up to date information and evidence relating to their claims.

Helen Hayes: **[50730]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals living in the UK are awaiting a decision on asylum applications as at 16 September 2021; and what steps she is taking to help ensure that applicants are responded to as quickly as possible.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on how many Afghan nationals are awaiting an initial asylum decision, but only up to and including June 2021. This data can be found at Asy_01c of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2021/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

The Home Office are pursuing a programme of transformation and business improvement initiatives which will speed up decision making, reduce the time people spend in the system and reduce the numbers who are awaiting an interview or decision. This includes almost doubling decision makers number to c.1,000 by March 2022 and providing improved training and career progression opportunities to aid retention of staff.

We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements such as digital interviewing and move away from a paper-based system. We have three key areas of focus in the short to medium term to reduce the number of outstanding asylum cases by improving efficiency and productivity, reducing the number of outstanding claims and building high performing teams. We are streamlining and digitalising the case working process to enable more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making.

■ Chevening Scholarships Programme: Afghanistan**Dan Jarvis:****[49145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 40586 on Afghanistan: Chevening Scholarships Programme, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the safe passage of 2021 Afghan Chevening scholars to the UK; and whether those scholars will be prioritised under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Prior to the UK's final withdrawal on 28 August, all 35 Afghan Chevening scholars were contacted, with the majority having now arrived in the UK. We are aware there a small number of scholars who are currently in a third country overseas and we are working to find the best solution for them to come to the UK to start their course. Those overseas in a third country can make a visa application as normal.

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement scheme will prioritise 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. The scheme will also prioritise vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk.

■ Fraud

Dame Margaret Hodge:

[\[48130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will place in the House of Commons Library the presentation made to the Economic Crime Strategy Board in February 2021 relating to five investment packages to transform the response to economic crime.

Damian Hinds:

In February 2021, the Economic Crime Strategy Board were asked to approve a joint set of public-private priorities for Financial Year 2021 which built on the commitments set out in the Economic Crime Plan (2019). These included:

1. Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the whole system response to economic crime, increasing high value intelligence to law enforcement and reducing low value activity that costs business and delivers little benefit
- b. Design and deliver a comprehensive Fraud Action Plan
- c. Bolster public private operational action to tackle known vulnerabilities, including cash-based money laundering, abuse of Money Service Businesses, and abuse of Trust and Company Service Provider
- d. Continue to deliver SARs reform, including the next stages of the rollout of the new IT infrastructure and the increase in UK Financial Intelligence Unit staffing
- e. Finalise the Sustainable Resourcing Model to support economic crime reform
- f. Develop legislative proposals to tackle fraud, money laundering, seize more criminal assets, and to strengthen corporate transparency (e.g. Companies House Reform)
- g. Capitalise on the G7 Presidency to strengthen the overall international response to illicit finance and anti-corruption.

Further information about investments in Economic Crime will be publicly available once the Spending Review 2021 settlement and departmental budget allocations have been agreed with HM Treasury.

■ Hate Crime: LGBT People

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[49168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle increases of reported violent hate crimes towards LGBTQ+ people.

Kit Malthouse:

All forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable.

We have a robust legislative framework to respond to hate crimes which target race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity.

The Government published the hate crime action plan (Action Against Hate: The UK government's plan for tackling hate crime) in 2016 and refreshed this plan in October 2018 and has committed to publish a new strategy to tackle hate crime this autumn.

The Government has commissioned a Law Commission review of the adequacy of current hate crime legislation. The review will report this year and we will respond to it when it is complete.

Government action to tackle broader discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people includes:

- A commitment to holding an international conference on LGBT rights; the “Safe To Be Me” conference will be held in 2022.
- The September 2020 announcement of a further £3.2 million of UK-funded projects to help Commonwealth governments and civil society groups reform outdated laws and end the legacy of discrimination and violence.
- Bringing forward legislation to ban conversion therapy as soon as Parliamentary time allows and making new funds available to ensure that victims have better access to the support they need.

The Government will continue to work with the police, stakeholders including Galop and others to understand the concerns of LGBTQ+ communities and what more can be done to address those concerns.

■ Housing: Refugees

Kate Osamor:

[\[45221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions officials in her Department have had with their counterparts in the (a) Housing, Communities and Local Government and (b) Treasury on the level of funding that will be made available to local authorities that will be housing refugees via the Afghan citizen's resettlement scheme.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: The Afghan Citizens'

Resettlement Scheme will welcome 5,000 Afghans in year one, with up to a total of 20,000 in the next four years. We will keep the route under constant review and will operate it flexibly given the increasingly difficult conditions on the ground in Afghanistan.

All those brought to the UK under ACRS will have the right to work, access to education and healthcare and be able to apply for public funds. To ensure they will be supported properly, changes will be made to legislation so that, if necessary, people arriving under ACRS do not need to meet the habitual residence test.

They will also receive comprehensive integration support as they start their new lives in the UK. A package of support to acclimatise to the UK, learn English, and find work, will enable rapid self-sufficiency and social integration in UK communities.

We will match the tariff for the successful Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) to provide a complete package covering health, education and integration support costs for those on the ACRS. The core local authority tariff of £20,520 per person will be provided over a shorter period of three years, enabling more funding in those crucial early years to support resettled Afghans to integrate into British society and become self-sufficient more quickly. Funding will also be provided to support education, English language training and health provision (in year one only). We have also agreed a further £20m of flexible funding in the current

financial year (2021/22) to support local authorities with higher cost bases with any additional costs in the provision of services.

We welcome the commitments already made by many local authorities and would urge all local authorities to participate in welcoming these at-risk Afghan citizens into our communities.

The challenge of integrating such a large number of people at pace and supporting them to rebuild their lives in safety cannot be met by central and local government alone. We will be actively working with the private, voluntary and community sectors to harness a whole society effort to address this challenge.

As part of this, we are creating a portal where people, organisations and businesses can register offers of support. This could include volunteering, offers of employment, or to provide professional skills *pro bono*, including helping those arriving deal with trauma, or offering donations of mobile phones, mobile credit or data, laptops, access to training, clothes and toys. This will complement the [Afghanistan housing portal](#) which has been set up to collect offers of additional housing support.

We will also be extending the Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) so that friends and neighbours, charities and faith groups can come together to support a family through the ACRS. We will make it easier and quicker for community groups to become sponsors so that more people can play a direct role in the warm welcome we will extend to these new members of our communities.

Kate Osamor:

[45222]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how additional funding will be allocated to local authorities that will house refugees via the Afghan citizen's resettlement scheme; and what his timetable is for allocating that funding.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: The Afghan Citizens'

Resettlement Scheme will welcome 5,000 Afghans in year one, with up to a total of 20,000 in the next four years. We will keep the route under constant review and will operate it flexibly given the increasingly difficult conditions on the ground in Afghanistan.

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■ Human Rights: Afghanistan

Helen Hayes:

[\[50728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of treating Afghanistan as an Article 15(c) area.

Damian Hinds:

We will set out our position on Article 15(c) when we publish our updated Country Policy and Information Notes.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Hilary Benn:

[\[49954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether applicants who want to update their biometric residence card to reflect their EU Settled Status have to pay a fee for (a) the application and (b) biometrics in respect of their application.

Kevin Foster:

Applicants who want to update their biometric residence card (BRC) to reflect their EU Settled Status are not required to pay a fee for either (a) the application or (b) biometrics in respect of their application.

■ Immigration: South Belfast

Claire Hanna: [\[48381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications to the EU Settlement Scheme have been outstanding for eight weeks or more in South Belfast constituency.

Claire Hanna: [\[48383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time taken to process applications to the EU Settlement Scheme is in South Belfast constituency.

Kevin Foster:

Our aim is to process all applications to the EUSS as expeditiously as possible. The majority of applications are concluded within 5 working days but may take up to a month. Cases may take longer dependent on the circumstances of the case, for example if the applicant is facing an impending prosecution or has a criminal record.

More information about processing times for applications under the scheme is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-settlement-scheme-application-processing-times/eu-settlement-scheme-pilot-current-expected-processing-times-for-applications>

The Home Office publishes data on the EU Settlement Scheme in the '[EU Settlement Scheme statistics \(opens in a new tab\)](#)'. It is published on the basis of local authority, rather than constituency areas.

Data on the number of applications and concluded applications by UK local authority are published in Tables EUSS_LA_01 and EUSS_LA_03 of the quarterly EUSS statistics local authority tables, which can be found at:

[EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics, March 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Claire Hanna: [\[48382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for asylum have been outstanding for eight weeks or longer in South Belfast constituency.

Claire Hanna: [\[48384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average processing time is for asylum applications in South Belfast constituency in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Kevin Foster:

Whilst we hold data on the current addresses of asylum claimants, the Home Office are unable to state how many asylum claims have been outstanding for eight weeks or longer, or what the processing time is for asylum applications in South Belfast constituency as this information is not published.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration, for main applicants only. This data can be found at Asy_04 of the published Immigration Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2021/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

The Home Office are committed to ensuring asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay, individuals who need protection are granted asylum as soon as possible and can start to integrate and rebuild their lives, including those granted at appeal.

Local Government: Buildings**Rachael Maskell:**[\[48289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to support the renovation or repurposing of local authority owned buildings to assist in the resettlement of refugees.

Rachael Maskell:[\[48297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on adapting the disused public estate for the purposes of providing resettlement homes for refugees.

Tom Pursglove:

We continue to work with local authorities to source appropriate accommodation as quickly as possible for families already in the UK. So far, over 100 councils have agreed to house Afghans, and we would strongly urge every council across the country to contribute to this national effort.

We are keen to work with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Cabinet Office, other Government departments and local authorities to realise appropriate accommodation opportunities to meet the demands of this urgent national response.

Members: Correspondence**Hilary Benn:**[\[49953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her departmental official's reply of 9 April 2021 to the Right hon. Member for Leeds Central regarding his constituent Ms C and her settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme, for what reason further emails by the Right hon. Member of 12 April 2021, 7 June 2021 and 21 July 2021 have not had a response.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: I apologise for the delay in responding to the Rt Hon. Member's correspondence. A response was sent on 16 September.

■ **Migrant Workers: NHS****Damien Moore:**[\[49263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of restrictions in the Immigration Act 2016 that a tenancy cannot be offered to NHS staff without a minimum of a Band 5 qualification.

Kevin Foster:

Anyone with lawful immigration status in the UK can access the private rented housing sector, regardless of their qualifications, employment or income.

The Right to Rent Scheme came into force under the Immigration Act 2014. It was launched to ensure only those lawfully present in the UK can access the private rented sector, and to tackle unscrupulous landlords who exploit vulnerable migrants, sometimes in very poor conditions.

The Immigration Act 2016 introduced criminal offences for landlords and letting agents who knowingly let property to individuals without lawful immigration status. It does not carry any restrictions on the right to rent for individuals who are lawfully present in the UK.

■ **National Security****Conor McGinn:**[\[49176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of recent events in Afghanistan on the threat level to domestic national security; and if she will make a statement.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) is the UK's independent centre for analysis and assessment of terrorism. JTAC keeps the UK national threat level under constant review. This is a systematic, comprehensive, and rigorous process, based on the very latest intelligence and analysis of internal and external factors which drive the threat, including international events.

The UK national terrorism threat level remains at SUBSTANTIAL. This means that a terrorist attack is likely.

Conor McGinn:[\[49177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources the Government has made available to (a) UK law enforcement organisations (b) the intelligence agencies and (c) strategic partners to plan for potential changes to domestic security threats in respect of recent events in Afghanistan.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Government is committed to supporting the police and security services by providing them with the resources they need.

Funding for CT policing will be maintained at over £900 million in 2021/22, as well as additional funding for a new CT Operations Centre. The money will support the record high numbers of ongoing CT policing investigations and allow us to respond swiftly and decisively to terrorist incidents, no matter where they take place.

The 2020 Spending Review provided the UK Intelligence Community with a £173 million funding increase in 2021/22. It also included over £1.3 billion of capital investment from 2021/22 to 2024/25. We will continue to prioritise the safety and security of the United Kingdom in the upcoming Spending Review.

■ Passport Office: Correspondence**Dame Angela Eagle:**[\[50618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the backlog of correspondence at HM Passport Office on the adequacy of help for correspondents; what strategy is in place to clear that backlog; and what discretion will be in place for people who have been affected by that backlog.

Kevin Foster:

Her Majesty's Passport Office will always endeavour to ensure that correspondence is handled in a timely manner, however there are currently high levels of contact which is causing some delays. In light of this, a triage process is in place to support those with the most urgent needs. We are working to recruit additional staff to deal with enquiries, alongside using other contingency measures, such as overtime.

For those who need a British passport urgently on compassionate grounds they should continue to call the Passport Adviceline.

A British passport will not be issued until all checks have been satisfactorily completed, however passport applications continue to be typically processed well within the published guidance of up to ten weeks.

■ Police Custody: Legal Opinion**Holly Lynch:**[\[45214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether legal practitioners are providing in-person attendance to all suspects who have not tested positive for covid-19 in police custody.

Kit Malthouse:

The Joint Interim Interview Protocol was developed by the CPS, NPCC, Law Society, Criminal Law Solicitors' Association and the London Criminal Courts Solicitors' Association as a temporary requirement at the start of the pandemic to ensure the functioning of the criminal justice system was maintained.

Since stage 3 of the Government's 'roadmap' out of lockdown on 17 May, solicitors have been required to attend interviews with children and vulnerable adults in person to ensure the most vulnerable in society receive in person support. A complete exit strategy from the protocol is ongoing with the intention to return to full provision of in person advice. It is for the signatories to this protocol – the NPCC, CPS and solicitors' organisations – to determine how this should progress.

The Home Office has been chairing a weekly operational meeting with custody partners since March 2020 which ensures the operational impact of the interview protocol is assessed on a continuing basis.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Vicky Foxcroft:

[48307]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department plans to provide details of (a) the Afghan refugees in quarantine and (b) the bridging hotels to which they will be moved on to the voluntary organisations providing vital support as at 13 September 2021, including Lewisham Donation Hub, Little Village and Re:Act.

Kevin Foster:

We have announced the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), working with international partners to identify those most at risk and resettle them, ensuring help goes to those who need it.

The Government will work with stakeholders, including devolved administrations and local councils, to ensure that Afghans who will be rebuilding their lives in the UK have the support they need. I urge you to encourage your local authorities to participate

The cross-Government efforts to ensure that people are brought from Afghanistan to the UK as quickly as possible has meant that it has not been possible, in all cases, to arrange local authority support. In those cases we are putting in place hotel accommodation.

Afghanistan is on the government's red list, so all arrivals must quarantine for 10 days in a managed quarantine facility and take two PCR tests which can be sequenced. These rules apply to all those who have been and continue to arrive through the ARAP scheme must quarantine and anyone with rights of residence in the UK who is not exempt.

The challenge of integrating such a large number of people at pace and supporting them to rebuild their lives in safety cannot be met by central and local government alone. We will be actively working with the private, voluntary and community sectors to harness a whole of society effort to address this challenge.

As part of this, we are creating a portal where people, organisations and businesses can register offers of support. This could include volunteering, offers of employment or to provide professional skills *pro bono*, including helping those arriving deal with trauma, or offering donations of mobile phones, mobile credit or data, laptops, access

to training, clothes and toys. This will complement the [Afghanistan housing portal](#) which has been set up to collect offers of additional housing support.

Claudia Webbe:

[49299]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how long families of British nationals who have been evacuated to (a) Italy and (b) other third countries will have to wait for their visas to be processed to join their families in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

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.

Caroline Lucas:

[49986]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals arrived in the UK as a consequence of Operation Pitting; and what assessment has been made of the (a) number and (b) proportion of those people eligible for indefinite leave to remain under (i) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (ii) Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme.

Kevin Foster:

Between 15 and 29 August, the Department evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. That includes around 5,000 Afghans who loyally served the UK, along with their dependants; and around about 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including Chevening scholars, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others.

As the Government has announced, Afghans who have arrived under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme will be given indefinite leave to remain and others who arrived and are moving onto the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will also be given ILR; we are working through individuals on a case by case basis, as some will have entered via other categories.

Helen Hayes:

[50731]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions is she having with Ministerial colleagues in the (a) Department for Work and Pensions and (b) Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on Afghan refugees' access to benefits and housing support.

Kevin Foster:

Under Operation Warm Welcome, we are taking a cross-government approach to ensuring Afghans arriving in the UK are able to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education and integrate with their local communities.

Those brought to the UK under ACRS will be able to apply for public funds. To ensure they will be supported properly, changes will be made to legislation so that, if necessary, people arriving under ACRS do not need to meet the habitual residence test.

We continue to work with local authorities to source appropriate accommodation as quickly as possible for families already in the UK. So far, 204 local authorities have agreed to house those who have been evacuated from Afghanistan, and we would strongly urge every council across the country to contribute to this national effort.

We are working with other government departments and local authorities to realise appropriate accommodation opportunities to meet the demands of this urgent national response.

■ Sexual Harassment

Ms Lyn Brown:

[49078]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the report, What Works For Ending Public Sexual Harassment published by Plan International UK in September 2021, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations on pages 56 and 57 of that report.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is absolutely committed to tackling all forms of abuse against women and girls, including sexual harassment. No one should feel unsafe while going about their daily life.

Our new Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, published on 21 July 2021, confirmed that:

- The new national communications campaign which we will introduce about violence against women and girls will challenge sexual harassment behaviour in public places, and ensure victims know how and where to report it.
- To ensure that police and prosecutors are clear on how to respond to sexual harassment in public places, the College of Policing will provide new guidance for police officers, and the Crown Prosecution Service will update its legal guidance on public order offences to add specific information on public sexual harassment.
- To prevent this behaviour from happening in the first place, we need to deepen our understanding of who commits these crimes, why they do so, and how this behaviour may escalate, including through the new funding which we will introduce for understanding what works to tackle violence against women and girls.
- Although there are a number of criminal offences in place which do capture this behaviour, we are looking carefully at where there may be gaps in existing law and how a specific offence for public sexual harassment could address those.

In our examination of the existing law and our delivery of the non-legislative commitments set out above, we will pay close attention to the responses which we

received to the Call for Evidence for the VAWG Strategy, and to the work of specialist campaigners in this area, including Plan International UK.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[49976]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will provide assistance in securing a response from the Director General for UK Visas and Immigration, to the letter dated 16 June 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire, regarding an asylum claim, reference ZA56772.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: I apologise for the delay in responding to the hon. Member. A reply was sent on 17 September 2021.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Afghanistan

Vicky Foxcroft:

[48306]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support she has made available to (a) Lewisham Donation Hub, (b) Little Village and (c) other voluntary organisations who are supporting the distribution of medication, nappies, baby formula and other vital supplies to destitute refugee families from Afghanistan recently arrived in the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

Under Operation Warm Welcome, we are taking a cross-government approach to ensuring Afghans arriving in the UK are able to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education and integrate within their local communities.

The challenge of integrating such a large number of people at pace and supporting them to rebuild their lives in safety cannot be met by central government and local government alone. We will be actively working with the private, voluntary and community sectors to harness a whole society effort to address this challenge.

As part of this, we are creating a portal where people, organisations and businesses can register offers of support. This could include volunteering, offers of employment, or to provide professional skills *pro bono*, including helping those arriving deal with trauma, or offering donations of mobile phones, mobile credit or data, laptops, access to training, clothes and toys. This will complement the [Afghanistan housing portal](#) which has been set up to collect offers of additional housing support.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ British National (Overseas): Northern Ireland

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[49965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 185295 on British National

(Overseas): Northern Ireland, if he will hold discussions with the Home Secretary on the need for recognition of Northern Ireland identification documentation for those people with BNO status who wish to relocate to Northern Ireland.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government's priority is to ensure that the Hong Kong Welcome Programme is UK wide and supports British National (Overseas) status holders wherever they choose to settle in the UK. My Department continues to work closely with the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership and the Northern Ireland Executive, including through regular officials' meetings, to support implementation of the programme.

■ **Business: Newport West**

Ruth Jones:

[\[47045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support high street businesses in Newport West constituency.

Kemi Badenoch:

The new Levelling Up Fund will directly support communities across the UK making available up to £4.8 billion through to 2024-25 for local infrastructure and capital programmes. For the first round of funding, at least 5% of total UK allocations will be in Wales with a focus on supporting town centre and high street regeneration.

The UK Community Renewal Fund is also prioritising applications that target the 100 places most in need across the UK. Through the Community Renewal Fund we are also looking to invest in places that demonstrate a good contribution to strategic fit and delivery/effectiveness. Newport Council has invited bids to come forward into the Fund from local partners.

We have received applications from Newport Council for both the Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund.

■ **Debts: Advisory Services**

Steve Reed:

[\[50040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information his Department holds on the level of debt counselling and advice provided by local authorities in England in the most recent period for which that information is available.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Department does not hold information on the level of debt counselling and advice provided by councils in England. In this year's settlement, the Government made available an increase in Core Spending Power in England from £49 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22, a 4.6% increase in cash terms. This funding is largely unringfenced in recognition that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the needs of their local area, including the provision of debt counselling and advice.

■ Homelessness and Sleeping Rough: Local Government Finance

Conor McGinn:

[\[49178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on support provided to local authorities to fund homelessness and rough sleeping services.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to ending rough sleeping this Parliament and is spending more than £750 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this year, with the majority of funding going to local authorities.

Funding for future years will be a matter for the Spending Review that is currently underway.

■ Housing: Older People

Stephen Timms:

[\[49018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help increase consumer transparency in older people's housing in relation to associated fees and charges.

Eddie Hughes:

The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill currently in Parliament will put an end to ground rents for new residential leasehold properties as part of the most significant changes to property law in a generation. The Bill's provisions will lead to fairer, more transparent homeownership for thousands of future leaseholders.

This includes retirement properties, where purchasers of new leases will not be faced with financial demands for ground rent.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper:

[\[49977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 23 June 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire regarding a derelict property, reference ZA56817.

Eddie Hughes:

We have received the letter and a response will be sent shortly.

■ Public Footpaths and Roads: Wildlife

Steve Reed:

[\[50039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the amount spent by local authorities in England on removing dead animals from roads and paths in each of the last ten years.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Department does not hold this information.

■ Regional Planning and Development**Stephen Morgan:**[\[47040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish a decision on bids to the Levelling Up Fund; and if he will make a statement.

Kemi Badenoch:

The first round of the Levelling Up Fund received significant interest from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland bidding authorities across the three investment priorities of the Fund. Bids are currently being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes from the first round of bids for the Levelling Up Fund will be announced later in the year and bidding authorities will be informed in due course.

Stuart C McDonald:[\[49166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, by what date he plans to announce which bids to the first round of the Levelling Up Fund have been successful.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: I am delighted to say that the first round of the Levelling Up Fund received significant interest. Bids are currently being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes from the first round of bids for the Levelling Up Fund will be announced later in the year and bidding authorities will be informed in due course.

Stuart C McDonald:[\[49167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to extend the deadline for when significant spend on successful bids to the Levelling Up Fund has to be achieved.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: In the first round of the Levelling Up Fund, we will prioritise projects which are able to demonstrate investment or begin delivery on the ground in the 2021-22 financial year. We would expect all funding provided from the Fund to be spent by 31 March 2024, and, exceptionally, into 2024-25 for larger schemes. The approach set out in the Prospectus will be kept under review for future rounds and announcements about the future of the Fund will be made later this year.

Patricia Gibson:[\[49172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the successful bids for the first round of the Levelling Up Fund will be announced.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: I am delighted to say that the first round of the Levelling Up Fund received significant interest from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland bidding authorities across the three investment priorities of the Fund. Bids are currently being assessed in line with the published assessment process. Outcomes from the first round of bids for the Levelling Up Fund will be announced later in the year and bidding authorities will be informed in due course.

■ Vandalism**Steve Reed:**[\[50041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the amount of money spent by local authorities in England to tackle flyposting in each of the last ten years.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Department does not hold figures on the amount of money spent by councils in England to tackle flyposting in each of the last ten years. In this year's settlement, the Government made available an increase in Core Spending Power in England from £49 billion in 2020-21 to up to £51.3 billion in 2021-22, a 4.6% increase in cash terms. This funding is largely unringfenced in recognition that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the needs of their local area.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Grants**Steve Reed:**[\[50042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data his Department holds on the (a) number and (b) value of grants given by local authorities in England to voluntary sector organisations in each of the last ten years.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Department does not hold data on the quantity and value of grants provided by councils in England to voluntary sector organisations.

How grants are issued is determined at a local level, as local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the pressures in their local area.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Department for International Trade: Overseas Workers****Gareth Thomas:**[\[48132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many staff of her Department were based in EU countries in each of the last three years; if she will publish how many such staff were based in each country; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

Headcount as of 31st March for those staff working for the Department for International Trade in each of the 27 EU member states for each of the last three years is set out in the table below:

YEAR	HEADCOUNT
2019	253
2020	282
2021	306

The above includes both UK Based Staff working overseas and Country Based Staff employed in country.

The Department for International Trade publishes all workforce transparency returns required by the Cabinet Office. This does not currently include how many staff are based in each country as this number can vary depending on joiners, movers and leavers each month.

■ Legal Profession: Exports

Emily Thornberry:[\[48171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the effect on long-term trends in imports of UK legal services in (a) cash and (b) percentage terms of the (i) free trade agreement with (A) Australia, (B) New Zealand and (C) Japan and (ii) UK's accession to the CPTPP.

Penny Mordaunt:

Legal services are crucial to the UK economy, contributing £29.2 billion (1.6%) to the UK's gross value added (GVA) in 2020. The published assessments for these agreements assess the potential long-term impact on GVA for all business services, however they do not include a breakdown of the potential impact on legal services imports.

To support UK success in this sector, the Department for International Trade is seeking ambitious commitments in its Free Trade Agreements on cross-border trade in services, investment, mobility, and digital trade. This will reduce trade barriers, providing certainty and transparency for UK businesses, including legal services suppliers.

JUSTICE**■ Civil Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme**

Ms Karen Buck: [\[50601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many providers of criminal legal aid services there were in each year from 2012-13 to the most recent quarter for which figures are available.

Ms Karen Buck: [\[50602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offices were providing criminal legal aid services in (a) each year from 2012-13 to 2020-21 and (b) the most recent quarter for which figures are available.

Ms Karen Buck: [\[50603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil legal aid providers there were (a) in each year from 2012-2013 to 2020-21 and (b) for the last quarter for which figures are available.

Ms Karen Buck: [\[50604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offices were providing civil legal aid in (a) in year from 2012-13 to 2020-21 and (b) the last quarter for which figures are available.

Ms Karen Buck: [\[50605\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil legal aid practitioners were providing civil legal aid involving (a) claims against public authorities, (b) community care, (c) discrimination, (d) education (e) immigration and asylum, (f) family, (g) clinical negligence, (h) mental health, (i) public law and (j) welfare benefits in each year from 2012-13 to 2020-21 and for the last quarter for which figures are available.

Ms Karen Buck: [\[50606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil legal aid offices were providing civil legal aid involving (a) claims against public authorities, (b) community care, (c) discrimination, (d) education (e) immigration and asylum, (f) family, (g) clinical negligence, (h) mental health, (i) public law and (j) welfare benefits in each year from 2012-13 to 2020-21 and for the last quarter for which figures are available.

James Cartlidge:

The Legal Aid Agency frequently reviews market capacity to make sure there is adequate provision around the country and moves quickly to ensure provision where gaps may appear.

Operational system data on the volume of providers holding legal aid contracts at any given time is subject to change due to the internal management and updating of contract schedules, which may impact both real time and historic data.

Criminal legal aid providers (firms) and offices in each year, from 2012 to most recent quarter:

YEAR	APR-12	APR-13	APR-14	APR-15	APR-16	APR-17	APR-18	APR-19	APR-20	APR-21	SEP-21
Providers	1,652	1,595	1,513	1,425	1,386	1,310	1,266	1,194	1,154	1,090	1,080
Offices	2,318	2,258	2,142	2,040	1,969	1,981	1,913	1,802	1,717	1,589	1,565

Civil legal aid providers (firms) and offices in each year, from 2012 to most recent quarter:

YEAR	APR-12	APR-13	APR-14	APR-15	APR-16	APR-17	APR-18	APR-19	APR-20	APR-21	SEP-21
Providers	2,129	1,811	1,700	1,785	1,697	1,601	1,448	1,560	1,497	1,435	1,401
Offices	3,242	3,133	2,944	2,931	2,769	2,609	2,369	2,536	2,439	2,316	2,258

Civil legal aid providers (firms) and offices in each year, broken down by category of law enquired about, from 2012 to most recent quarter:

VOLUME OF PROVIDERS (FIRMS)

Category of Law	Apr-12	Apr-13	Apr-14	Apr-15	Apr-16	Apr-17	Apr-18	Apr-19	Apr-20	Apr-21	Sep-21
Claims Against the Public Authorities	63	58	54	53	65	65	64	80	74	71	70
Community Care	85	83	71	91	87	81	76	94	88	83	82
Discrimination	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	18	17
Education	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	13	10
Immigration Asylum	197	239	226	199	182	166	141	203	189	176	172
Immigration Other*	198	n/a									
Family	1,557	1,352	1,269	1,211	1,160	1,090	1,003	1,029	992	959	937
Clinical	169	166	156	142	107	106	100	100	99	95	93

VOLUME OF PROVIDERS (FIRMS)

Negligence

Mental Health	172	168	160	176	169	158	147	156	147	135	135
Public Law	87	83	79	74	92	89	84	110	99	95	95
Welfare Benefits	286	0	14	15	15	16	14	52	41	38	36

VOLUME OF OFFICES

Category of Law	Apr-12	Apr-13	Apr-14	Apr-15	Apr-16	Apr-17	Apr-18	Apr-19	Apr-20	Apr-21	Sep-21
Claims Against the Public Authorities	83	79	74	72	80	80	78	119	112	104	101
Community Care	140	131	115	163	142	136	124	146	137	129	127
Discrimination	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	22	21
Education	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	22	19
Immigration Asylum	228	405	376	323	285	262	229	303	281	263	257
Immigration Other*	229	n/a									
Family	2,328	2,254	2,134	2,001	1,890	1,732	1,616	1,713	1,654	1,575	1,537
Clinical Negligence	291	285	267	248	196	191	180	175	170	164	159
Mental Health	193	189	179	200	189	173	161	181	172	159	157
Public Law	111	107	101	95	111	108	102	155	141	130	130
Welfare Benefits	364	0	15	15	15	17	15	71	56	52	50

*ceased as individual/separate category

■ Prisoners: Rehabilitation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[48176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 40798 on Prisoners: Rehabilitation, how many indeterminate sentences for public protection prisoners have been waiting for a place on an offending behaviour programme in each of the last five years.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government's primary responsibility is to protect the public. Accredited programmes aim both to protect the public and to reduce re-offending: they are part of a range of rehabilitation and risk reduction opportunities available in prisons. In recent years, there has been a change in emphasis, away from shorter, moderate-intensity programmes, in favour of longer, higher-intensity programmes. H M Prison & Probation Service remains committed to supporting the progression of those serving indeterminate (IPP) and life sentences of imprisonment, so that the Parole Board may direct their release, or re-release, as soon as it is safe to do so.

To aid recovery planning for offending behaviour programmes following the pandemic, we have put in place new data collection systems. These enable us to provide the requested information in relation to 2021, and this is set out in the table below. We do not hold information prior to that date.

The information provided covers both offending behaviour and sexual offending programmes. Substance misuse programmes are the responsibility of NHS commissioners and we do not hold information in relation to them. The table shows the number of IPP prisoners waiting to commence an accredited general, violence, domestic violence, or sexual offending programme, based on information gathered from prisons which run accredited offending behaviour programmes, in data snapshots in January, April and August 2021. The information has been drawn from local records and, as with any large-scale reporting tool, may be subject to inaccuracies as well as subject to change.

DATE	OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR PROGRAMMES	SEXUAL OFFENDING PROGRAMMES	TOTAL
Total Jan 2021 Q3 20/21	80	36	116
Total April 2021 Q4 20/21	109	52	161
Total Aug 2021 Q1 21/22	117	41	158

The numbers presented reflect those who are fully assessed as suitable and identified as motivated and waiting for a place. Whilst these individuals are currently listed as awaiting a place, individual readiness to start a programme can change.

■ Prosecutions: Electric Scooters**Hilary Benn:****[48393]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people have been prosecuted for riding (a) an electric bicycle and (b) an electric scooter on the pavement in England in the last 12 months.

James Cartlidge:

Information on prosecutions for riding (a) an electric bicycle and (b) an electric scooter on the pavement in England cannot be identified without incurring disproportionate costs, as the offences are not defined in legislation and these offences cannot be disaggregated from broader miscellaneous summary motoring offences within the MOJ's Court Proceedings Database. This information may be held on court record but to be able to identify these cases would require access to individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost. Prosecutions for offences related to summary motoring can be found in the 'Principle 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

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Chris Bryant:****[49043]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether Afghan nationals who have had an application to the Afghans Relocation and Assistance Policy scheme declined will automatically be considered for resettlement under the Afghan citizen's resettlement scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

There are no plans to automatically consider Afghan nationals who have not been successful in applying to come to the UK under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy for resettlement through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Further information on the eligibility, prioritisation and referral of people for the ACRS is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk on 13 September, available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement.

Chris Bryant:**[49044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what fees applicants to the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will be charged.

Victoria Atkins:

There will be no fees charged to those brought to the UK through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

On 13 September further details on the Scheme were published in a policy statement, including in relation to eligibility and referral. This statement can be found at: [Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

Chris Bryant: [49046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department plans to provide substantive answers to hon. Members queries regarding Afghans seeking evacuation or resettlement.

Victoria Atkins:

I set out the position during her statement on 13th September. Given the very difficult circumstances in Afghanistan, we cannot pursue cases concerning Afghan people in country in the usual ways. The Home Office is logging the cases we have received, and we are considering how this data will be used in the future. Accordingly, please signpost individuals to gov.uk to check for the latest information about Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria and offer details - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) ([Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)) rather than seek to pursue cases on their behalf.

Dan Jarvis: [49148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Afghan nationals evacuated during Operation Pitting will be resettled in the UK under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme; and whether they will form part of the 5,000 target set for the first year of that scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

Operation PITTING was the largest UK military evacuation since the Second World War. Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan, including British nationals, Afghans who have served the UK and those who are particularly vulnerable.

Under the ACRS, the Government has committed to welcome around 5,000 people in the first year, and the first of those will be vulnerable and at-risk individuals who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme. People who were notified by the UK Government that they had been called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, but were not able to board flights, will also be offered a place under the scheme if they subsequently come to the UK.

Further details on the scheme are published on the ACRS webpage: [Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

Chi Onwurah: [50013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will set out the eligibility criteria for resettlement under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan citizens resettlement programme; when the Afghan citizens resettlement programme will open to applicants; and for what reason that programme is not yet open to applicants.

Victoria Atkins:

On Monday 13 September, I announced the details of the Government's response to the situation in Afghanistan, and the effort to support Afghans resettling to the UK, in a statement to Parliament. Further information on the eligibility criteria for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) is set out in the policy statement published on gov.uk, available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement.

This statement confirms that there will not be a formal application process for the ACRS. Instead, eligible people will be prioritised and referred to the UK. 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 the first to be resettled under the ACRS.

We are working urgently to stand up the remaining elements of the scheme, amid the complex and changing picture.

■ Television Licences: Non-payment**Justin Madders:**[\[48272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many fines have been issued to people over 75 for non-payment of TV licences since the removal of the free TV licence concession.

James Cartlidge:

Between the removal of the free TV licence concession as of August 2020 and December 2020 (latest published data available), there have been no fines issued to people over 75 for non-payment of TV licences.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Community Assets****Steve Reed:**[\[50669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many community asset transfers have been carried out by local authorities in England since 2010.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department does not hold central data on the total number of community asset transfers that have been carried out by local authorities since 2010. Local authorities are responsible for setting their own community asset transfer policies and processes, and records of local community asset transfers are held by individual local authorities.

The Department have supported the online platform 'Keep it in the Community' to improve data on community-owned assets and assets of community value and to

help make sure that more community groups are able to identify local assets of community value.

Through the £150 million Community Ownership Fund, the UK Government are supporting communities across the United Kingdom to own and manage 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. The Fund will also work alongside existing community asset transfer frameworks across the UK to support capital works and refurbishment as part of an asset transfer agreement, where the asset is at risk of being lost.

■ High Rise Flats: Air Conditioning

Seema Malhotra: [\[48240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he had had with Galliard Homes on the reliability and performance of cooling systems installed for air conditioning in flats in former office blocks converted to accommodation under permitted development rules.

Christopher Pincher:

We have not had any such discussions. Air conditioning installations must meet all the relevant requirements of the building regulations, regardless of whether the use of a building was permitted following a planning application or under a nationally set permitted development right.

■ Housing: Older People

Bob Blackman: [\[48194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Communities, what steps he is planning to take to increase transparency for consumers in older people's housing and associated fees and charges.

Bob Blackman: [\[48195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Communities, whether it is Government policy to implement the Law Commission's proposals on event fees in older people's housing.

Eddie Hughes:

The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill currently in Parliament will put an end to ground rents for new residential leasehold properties as part of the most significant changes to property law in a generation. The Bill's provisions will lead to fairer, more transparent homeownership for thousands of future leaseholders.

This includes retirement properties, where purchasers of new leases will not be faced with financial demands for ground rent.

■ Housing: Repairs and Maintenance

Steve Reed:

[50043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on the number of home renovation grants that have been distributed by local authorities in England to bring empty properties back into use in each of the last ten years.

Christopher Pincher:

Statistics on loans, grants and other assistance provided by local authorities for the improvement of private sector housing are available on gov.uk at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2019-to-2020>.

■ Temporary Accommodation

Colleen Fletcher:

[50679]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many families with children were housed in temporary accommodation for more than (a) six months, (b) one year or (c) two years in each of the last five years in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England.

Eddie Hughes:

We do not hold data on the length of time households spend in temporary accommodation in each of these areas.

Time spent in temporary accommodation means people are getting help and it ensures no family is without a roof over their head.

The Government is committed to reducing the need for temporary accommodation by preventing homelessness before it occurs. We will fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act, which places duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to try to prevent and relieve a person's homelessness.

We are investing £310 million this year through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which represents a £47 million increase on the previous year's funding, to give councils the funding they need to prevent homelessness and help more people sooner.

■ Tree Preservation Orders

Steve Reed:

[50670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many tree preservation orders have been issued by local authorities in England in each of the last ten years.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not hold the requested information.

TRANSPORT■ **Aviation: Carbon Emissions**

Justin Madders: [\[48270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to announce the winners of the Green Fuels, Green Skies competition.

Andrew Stephenson:

An announcement on shortlisted winners of the Green Fuels, Green Skies (GFGS) competition was made on 23 July and is currently available on the competition's webpage. Eight projects were shortlisted for a share of an overall sum of £15m to support the early-stage development of UK sustainable aviation fuel plants.

Final announcements on GFGS winners will be released when the grant offer process has completed with all projects. We hope to be able to make a full announcement shortly.

■ **Aviation: Employment**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[49054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help support workers in the aviation industry.

Robert Courts:

The UK Government recognises the impact COVID-19 has had on the aviation sector. In addition to the unprecedented cross-economy package of support, which included the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which the aviation sector has utilised extensively, we have put in place several measures to help the sector recover and support its workers.

Skills retention and skills fade for highly trained jobs is a key element of the sector's recovery plan. To support this, we introduced the Aviation Skills Retention Platform (ASRP) in February 2021 to support the retention of skills within the sector, by offering increased visibility of opportunities across the sector. We are also looking to better understand employment trends through vacancy data submitted to the ASRP by employers.

The Department is also working with industry on maximising use of the existing support measures such as DWP's Flexible Support Fund and Rapid Response Service to support aviation workers at risk of redundancy to stay in employment or move between sectors.

■ **Aviation: Fuels**

Jim Shannon: [\[48224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the potential effect on the UK's net greenhouse gas emissions of the aviation sector adopting sustainable aviation fuel.

Robert Courts:

Sustainable aviation fuels, alongside other methods such as carbon capture and storage, will play an important role in decarbonising aviation and helping us on the way to reaching net zero by 2050.

In line with the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Government is currently consulting on a SAF blending mandate to reduce GHG emissions from this sector. This consultation was published in July and is open to responses until 19 September. The consultation contains estimates of the GHG emission reductions that can be achieved by using SAF under a range of scenarios. For example, with low ambition and a low uptake of SAF the UK could expect to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aviation by 10 percent by 2050, but with a high ambition and higher uptake of SAF, we could reduce emissions by around 50 percent within the same time frame.

Jim Shannon:[\[48225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of (a) the level of demand for sustainable aviation fuel and (b) the amount of renewable, waste derived feedstocks required to meet that demand.

Andrew Stephenson:

As the UK moves towards reaching net zero by 2050, interest in sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) continues to grow. Industry and governments globally expect that SAF will play a key role in the decarbonisation of the aviation sector, particularly for long-haul flights which cannot currently be decarbonised by other means.

As part of the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Government announced the intention to consult on a SAF blending mandate to drive SAF uptake in the UK. This consultation was published in July and is open to responses until 19 September. The consultation sets out a variety of potential SAF uptake scenarios, which go up to 10 percent SAF by 2030 and up to 75 percent by 2050. The level of ambition will be determined by the Government following the consultation.

The level of demand will also impact the amount of feedstock required. The modelling supporting the consultation takes into consideration the interactions between fuels needed for road, non-road mobile machinery and aviation, and the availability of sustainable feedstocks and renewable fuels. A summary of responses and next steps will be published in due course, and the modelling will be updated to take into account evidence from the consultation.

■ Biofuels**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[48208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the introduction of E10 on petrol retailers.

Andrew Stephenson:

The introduction of E10 petrol is the product of extensive consultation, including with petrol retailers. The public consultation process started in July 2018 with a call for evidence on whether and how best to introduce E10 petrol, which considered the impacts of different options to introduce E10.

Based on the consultation process, the government chose the least burdensome option, one which requires no additional infrastructure at the forecourt, to minimise costs to retailers and ultimately consumers. This approach was supported by fuel retailer trade associations in responding to the consultation.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Coronavirus**Angela Crawley:**[\[48276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the PCS union on ensuring that DVLA staff have a covid-secure working environment.

Trudy Harrison:

Discussions between the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) about staff safety in relation to Covid-19 began before the initial lockdown was announced and have been ongoing throughout. The Department for Transport has also been involved in those discussions where appropriate.

Staff safety remains an absolute priority for the department and the DVLA and all appropriate measures have been put in place.

The PCS has made clear that our proposals are acceptable in terms of addressing their staff safety concerns.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Internet**Jim McMahon:**[\[50736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on how many days the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency application website has (a) crashed and (b) been unable to accept applications over the last 12 months.

Trudy Harrison:

The information is not available in the format requested. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's combined electronic services were available for 99.96 per cent of the time against a target of 99.5 per cent between January and September 2021.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Telephone Services**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[48161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the DVSA's target time is for answering customer calls on 0300 200 1122; and what its performance is against that target.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) target time for answering customer calls made to 0300 200 1122, which was set before the coronavirus pandemic, is 70% of calls answered within 30 seconds.

Pre-pandemic, the performance was 79.27% during the period 1 January to 31 August 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant disruption to DVSA services with the customer service centre receiving an unprecedented number of customer calls – rising, for example, to around 30,000 extra calls each month during June, July and August 2021, which has inevitably impacted on the time taken to answer each call.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic led to increased staff attrition/departures during 2020/21, with the call centre operating with an average of 10 fewer agents than usual. The DVSA is currently undergoing a recruitment campaign to increase to the number of agents, which will improve the service standard.

The exceptionally high call volumes during the pandemic, and the fall in agent numbers, resulted in a performance of 40.88% during the period 1 January to 31 August 2020, and 38.27% for the same period this year.

■ Driving Licences**Jon Trickett:**[\[48142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of people waiting for their driving licence to be renewed by the DVLA; and what that estimate was for each of the last five years.

Trudy Harrison:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online services are the quickest and easiest way to apply for a driving licence. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their driving licence within a few days. However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application for a driving licence. The DVLA receives around 60,000 items of mail every day which must be dealt with in person. Industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union, along with having fewer staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government guidelines, has led to delays for customers who make paper applications.

There are currently around 638,000 paper applications for a driving licence awaiting processing. This includes those applying for a driving licence for the first time and those renewing an existing licence. It should be noted that the large majority of applicants renewing an existing licence will be able to continue driving while their application is being processed. Information for each of the last five years is not available.

The DVLA continues to look into opportunities to reduce the backlog and has been developing additional new online services and recruiting additional staff. The DVLA is

urgently exploring the possibility of securing extra office space to house more staff to help reduce backlogs.

■ Electric Vehicles

Martyn Day: [\[48303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to inform the public of the benefits of electric powered vehicles.

Andrew Stephenson:

On 9 September 2021 the Government published an informational leaflet addressing commonly held misconceptions and concerns regarding electric vehicles (EVs). This comes in addition to the Go Ultra Low initiative, which since launching in 2014 has seen Government collaborate with industry and other stakeholders to provide basic, practical advice for those considering making the switch to zero emission driving. The Government will continue to build on this work as EVs sales increase and become more commonplace on our roads.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[49103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the number of electrical vehicle charging points that have been installed in the London Borough of Barnet as at 14 September 2021.

Andrew Stephenson:

Data on public electric vehicle charging devices and private, grant-funded charging devices in the London Borough of Barnet are presented in the table. Figures are from 1 July 2021.

	NUMBER OF CHARGING DEVICES
Total Public Devices	197
Private Domestic Charging Devices ¹	1,907
Workplace Charging Device Sockets ¹	29

1. Data on both private charging domestic and workplace devices comes from three Office for Zero Emission Vehicle (OZEV) grant schemes: the Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS) for businesses; the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) and its predecessor, the Domestic Recharge Scheme (DRS) for private domestic charging devices.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Rolling Stock

Jim Shannon:

[\[48227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to require the operators of diesel locomotives employed on HS2 construction work to use renewable diesel instead of fossil diesel to improve air quality and reduce CO2 emissions along the route of HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 has a Strategic Objective to design, build and operate HS2 to reduce carbon. The project is committed to limiting its environmental effects to those reported in the Environmental Statement.

Air quality emission requirements have been set for all construction vehicles and plant & machinery, and targets are in place to go beyond these requirements as technology improves. Deployment of low and zero carbon emitting equipment, including the use of fully electric, solar, hybrid and hydrogen technologies, continues across all HS2 sites.

HS2 Ltd is actively working with its contractors and supply chain to develop evidence in low carbon alternatives (hybrid, electric, biofuels, hydrogen, etc.) as a replacement for conventional diesel across its works (including on-road, plant and machinery as well as movements of material by rail). These innovations are aimed at building a better understanding of alternative fuels and technologies. As evidence is built, results will continue to be shared across the construction industry and other sectors.

HS2 Ltd continues to challenge its contractors and supply chain to take up cleaner technologies, fuels and materials where independent evidence on the benefits exist. The majority of the UK's Rail Freight Operating Companies are part of that supply chain and are actively engaged in testing and developing their fleet in regard to safe acceptance of such alternatives, together with ensuring biofuels used are in line with the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation, which regulates biofuels used for transport and non-road mobile machinery.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Average Earnings

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[50627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the average wage for heavy goods vehicle drivers in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 Q1 and (d) 2021 Q2.

Trudy Harrison:

The Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) suggests that the median gross hourly pay for large good vehicle drivers in 2019 was £12.02. The provisional data for 2020 suggests that the median gross hourly pay was £11.80.

Evidence including from the industry suggests there has been a significant increase in wages for HGV drivers during Summer 2021.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences

Stephanie Peacock: [50741]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many applications for HGV driving licences the DVLA had taken receipt of but had not yet completed processing of as at 15 September 2021.

Stephanie Peacock: [50742]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many staff worked for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in 2010.

Stephanie Peacock: [50743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many staff working for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency were dedicated to processing HGV driver applications in 2010.

Stephanie Peacock: [50744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many renewal applications for HGV driver licences were not processed by their renewal date as a result of delays in DLVA processing in each month since January 2021 to date. .

Stephanie Peacock: [50745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what additional resources have been made available to ensuring that HGV driver applications are being processed on time.

Trudy Harrison:

On 15 September, there were 54,191 applications for vocational driving licences awaiting processing. These are a mix of first applications for a provisional vocational licence and renewals. It is important to note that the majority of those applying to renew their vocational licence will be able to continue to drive while their application is being processed. Vocational applications include those applying for entitlement to drive both HGVs and buses and it is not possible to separate them out.

On 31 March 2010, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) employed 6,428 staff. It is not possible to specify how many staff were working on applications for HGV licences in 2010 as most DVLA operational roles require employees to carry out a range of tasks.

Information about the number of renewal applications for HGV driver licences that were not processed by their renewal date is not held.

The DVLA is currently prioritising applications for HGV driving licences and continues to explore opportunities to reduce turnaround times for paper applications. Extra staff have been recruited and the DVLA is seeking extra office space to house more staff to help reduce backlogs and provide future resilience and business continuity.

Paper driving licence applications are currently taking between six and ten weeks to process and more information is available on gov.uk [here](#). There may be additional delays in processing more complex transactions, for example, if medical investigations are needed.

Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Tests

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[48144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on safety of the reduced requirements for HGV driver tests.

Trudy Harrison:

The elements currently assessed to determine the competence of test candidates to hold a lorry licence will not change. The proposal is to allow the off-road reversing manoeuvres and, for vehicles with trailer, the un-coupling and coupling exercise, to be conducted separately by authorised third-party assessors.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency examiners will continue to conduct the on-road driving test. Any driver that does not meet the required standards will not be granted a test pass.

Mill Hill Broadway Station: Access

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[48212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on the application to install step-free access at Mill Hill Broadway station in Hendon constituency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are committed to improving rail access for all disabled passengers, as set out in the recent rail reform White Paper.

Mill Hill Broadway is already part of the Access for All programme and the project is currently in development with work due to complete by 2024 at the latest.

Motor Vehicles: Noise

Ruth Cadbury: [\[48254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Answer of 27 October 2020 to Question 105392 on Motorcycles: Noise, what further research the Government has undertaken on the effectiveness of acoustic cameras on reducing levels of noise pollution.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[48255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the (a) reliability and (b) accuracy of acoustic cameras in enforcing road traffic noise limits.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[48256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with officials from the Metropolitan Police on the enforcement of noise pollution from vehicles.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[48257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the enforcement of noise pollution limits from vehicles.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[48258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the enforcement of noise pollution limits from vehicles.

Trudy Harrison:

On 2nd August, the Department published the results of research into enforcement against excessive noise pollution from vehicles using acoustic cameras. This research has shown that the technology has the potential to identify excessively noisy vehicles, but that there are still difficulties in accurately measuring noise from individual vehicles in busier traffic conditions. Further research is being commissioned to address these challenges, which will include further roadside trials of selected technology.

The Department has not held formal discussions with police forces on the enforcement of vehicle noise, but commissioned research in 2018 to better understand existing enforcement strategies and identify ways of enabling more effective approaches using alternative technologies. This research included a survey of police forces in England and Wales, including the Metropolitan Police. A report of this research was published on 8th June 2019.

■ Motorways: Charging Points**Alberto Costa:**[\[48274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points on the motorway network.

Andrew Stephenson:

In May last year, we published an ambitious vision for rapid charging infrastructure along strategic roads in England over the next decade. By 2023 we aim to have 6 rapid chargepoints at every motorway service area in England. By 2030 we aim to have 2,500 across the SRN and 6,000 by 2035. To support this goal, the Government will invest £950 million in the Rapid Charging Fund which will future-proof electrical capacity at motorway and major A road service areas to prepare the network for 100% ZEV uptake ahead of need. We are also working closely with devolved administrations to provide support for their plans to improve chargepoint availability on the motorway networks in their areas.

Today, a driver is never more than 25 miles away from a rapid chargepoint anywhere along England's motorways and major A roads.

■ Parking: Pedestrian Areas**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[50734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the result of the Government's consultation on pavement parking by the end of October 2021.

Trudy Harrison:

We are giving careful consideration to the large volume of responses to this consultation and will publish the outcome as soon as possible.

■ **Railways: Electrification****Jim Shannon:**[\[48231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost of full electrification of the UK's railways and the removal of all diesel powered rolling stock.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In 'Decarbonising Transport: a Better, Cleaner Britain', the government has committed to delivering an ambitious, sustainable, and cost-effective programme of electrification, alongside deployment of battery and hydrogen trains, guided by the Network Rail-led Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy.

Electrification costs can vary significantly depending on factors that include complexity and geography. We will continue to ensure that new schemes deliver value for money for taxpayers.

■ **Refugees: Afghanistan****Rachael Maskell:**[\[48295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to assess whether parts of the estate of (a) his Department and (b) Network Rail could be repurposed to home refugees from Afghanistan.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The DfT estate is mainly used for operational or office purposes. Our delivery bodies regularly review their operational land and release any surplus land where possible to support government's housing and other objectives. However, surplus operational land is generally not suitable for health and safety reasons for a quick turnaround into residential accommodation.

■ **Shipping: Exhaust Emissions****Catherine West:**[\[49226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to accelerate the conversion of the world fleet of commercial ships to green propulsion.

Robert Courts:

The Government is working actively to accelerate the transition of the shipping industry to zero emissions operations.

Internationally, the UK has played a key role in the development of the International Maritime Organization's strategy for climate change, and we will be pushing for a zero emissions international shipping industry by 2050 in future negotiations.

Domestically, we have set out our next steps in the recent Transport Decarbonisation Plan and committed £23m to support research and development through the Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition.

■ Shipping: Freight

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[48204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of the cost of imports via shipping containers.

Robert Courts:

My Department is closely monitoring the sector, with Other Government Departments. Shipping costs during 2021 have risen to a global high level in international freight markets as a result of unprecedented levels of demand driven by changed consumer behaviour during the pandemic.

Historical trends in the shipping sector shows pricing responds to supply and demand. Although industry estimates that high levels of demand and pricing are likely to continue throughout 2021, it is expected that pricing levels should similarly re-adjust when the current demand drivers change.

■ Trains: Diesel Fuel

Jim Shannon:

[\[48230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with representatives of railway and station staff on the effect of idling diesel powered passenger trains on (a) health of those staff and (b) air quality; and if he will make it his policy to support the use of renewable diesel for trains.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In our Transport Decarbonisation Plan, we have set out our ambition to deliver a net zero rail network by 2050. Rail decarbonisation will significantly improve air quality on the railway in the longer-term, however the Government is determined to reduce the impact of poor air quality on railway users, workers, and neighbours now. We know that air pollution in stations is an area of particular concern. To better understand it the Department has funded air quality monitoring studies at three large enclosed stations; Birmingham New Street, London King's Cross and Edinburgh Waverley. This research has highlighted that enclosed stations can be high risk areas for poor air quality, due to idling diesel engines and poor air flow and ventilation.

Following these findings, and given the importance of the issue, the Department is now funding a new £4.5 million air quality monitoring network. This will be rolled out over the next three years, with air quality monitors installed in around 100 stations across England and Wales. Once established, the network will help the rail industry identify priority locations where air quality improvement measures are required.

Responsible organisations will be required to produce air quality improvement plans with the aim that levels of air pollutants meet the targets we will set for PM2.5, PM10 and NO2.

In addition, we are funding research using personal air quality monitoring equipment to assess railway staff exposure at a range of rail locations. This will help improve our understanding of occupational exposure to air pollutants.

We welcome the work that the Rail Delivery Group is doing in collaboration with industry to develop and rollout an idling limit in some places known to have air quality issues. The Government believes that, as an interim measure, idling should be reduced across the railway to quickly minimise rail's impact on air pollution.

TREASURY

■ Bank Services: Charities

Damien Moore: [\[49260\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure charities are not faced with additional costs from excessive bank charges.

John Glen:

The decisions about what products are offered and to whom remain commercial decisions for banks and building societies. Similarly, decisions concerning the pricing of products, including account charges, are also commercial decisions for these institutions. Regulating on this issue could put additional costs on lenders that could ultimately lead to higher costs for customers. Therefore, while the government recognises and values the vital role played by the charitable sector, I hope you can appreciate that it would be inappropriate for it to intervene in these decisions.

UK Finance has developed a Business Current Account (BCA) finder tool, designed to help businesses, including charities, to compare the full range of bank accounts available and find products that best suit their needs. This tool also has a useful 'Covid Update' feature to highlight which providers are currently open and closed to applications.

■ Cash Dispensing

Stuart Anderson: [\[50140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure access to cash withdrawals.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to legislating to protect access to cash and ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the longer term.

On 1 July, the Government published a consultation on access to cash, setting out proposals for new laws to make sure people only need to travel reasonable distances to pay in or take out cash.

These measures build on legislative changes by the government to support the widespread offering of cashback without a purchase by shops and other businesses made as part of the Financial Services Act 2021. The financial services industry is

already seeking to take advantage of these changes to the benefit of cash users; working with retailers to get this service rolled out to local communities.

The Government also supports industry initiatives to provide access to cash, such as measures in place to protect the availability of free-to-use ATMs, and continues to be fully supportive of the Post Office Banking Framework Agreement, which allows 95% of business and 99% of personal banking customers to deposit cheques, check their balance and withdraw and deposit cash at 11,500 Post Office branches.

■ Health and Social Care Levy

Rachael Maskell: [\[48299\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he made of the suitability of different forms of taxation to pay for a Health and Social Care Levy prior to his decision to base that levy on National Insurance contributions.

Rachael Maskell: [\[48300\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason he decided to fund the Health and Social Care Levy through a rise in National Insurance contributions.

Lucy Frazer:

Only a broad-based tax base like Income Tax, VAT or National Insurance contributions can raise the sums needed for such a significant investment. A Levy based on NICs has several advantages: -

- The NICs system already directs a ringfenced proportion of receipts to the NHS (the "NHS allocation"). This ringfence was established in 1948 and expanded by the Government in 2003.
- Using NICs ensures employers will contribute the same rate as employees and the self-employed.
- It is a progressive way to raise funds. Those earning more will pay more.
- It is fully reserved, meaning everybody pays the same rate wherever they live in the UK, unlike Income Tax which is partially devolved in Scotland and Wales.

■ Inflation

Rachael Maskell: [\[50096\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent fiscal steps he has taken to control inflation.

John Glen:

Low and stable inflation is an essential pre-requisite for economic growth, as it provides certainty for households and businesses and helps them make day-to-day economic decisions. The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has the primary objective, set out in law, of maintaining price stability through its use of monetary policy. The Chancellor reaffirmed the remit for the independent MPC at the

Budget on 3 March 2021. The remit re-confirms the inflation target for the MPC as 2 per cent as measured by the 12-month increase in the Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

The separation of fiscal and monetary policy is a key feature of the UK's economic framework, and essential for the effective delivery of monetary policy, so the government does not comment on the conduct or effectiveness of monetary policy.

■ Liverpool Victoria

Rachael Maskell: [\[50708\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the proposed demutualisation of Liverpool Victoria.

Rachael Maskell: [\[50709\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications of the demutualisation of LV= for the mutual and co-operative sector.

Rachael Maskell: [\[50715\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to reform the Friendly Societies Act 1992 in order that friendly societies are not limited to invest.

Rachael Maskell: [\[50716\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is engaging with the Competition and Markets Authority to review the proposed demutualisation of LV=.

John Glen:

The assessment and approval of the proposed sale and demutualisation of Liverpool Victoria is an ongoing and independent process, overseen and scrutinised by the financial services regulators, and subject to approval by the Courts.

Assessing the impact on the market of the demutualisation of LV= is a matter for the Financial Conduct Authority. Their assessment will include, among other things, implications for the mutual and cooperatives sector and the effect on competition. The FCA can engage and refer matters to the Competition and Markets Authority as they consider appropriate.

There are no plans to review current legislation at this time. We are, however, open to views and proposals and continue to engage with interested parties to explore ways of supporting mutuals as a key part of a diverse financial sector

■ Public Sector Debt: Gifts and Endowments

Paul Maynard: [\[49982\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many payments were made to the Government's Donations and Bequests Account in respect of the National Debt in financial year 2020-21; and what the value of those payments was.

John Glen:

In the financial year 2020-21 there were 17 payments made to the Government's Donations and Bequests Account in respect of the National Debt and the total value of those payments was £565,348.96.

■ Social Security: Self-employed**Ruth Jones:**[\[48353\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the average length of time in days HMRC has taken to issue A1 Certificates in each month since January 2019.

Lucy Frazer:

Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be collated at disproportionate cost.

■ Standard of Living: Coventry**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[50678\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of his Department's policies on living standards in (a) Coventry North East constituency and (b) Coventry.

John Glen:

HM Treasury analysis published alongside Budget 2021 has shown that policy interventions in response to COVID-19 have, on average, supported the poorest working households most as a proportion of pre-pandemic income.

Analysis published at Budget 2021 also shows that in 2021-22 (even when excluding spending in response to COVID-19) tax, welfare and spending decisions made since Spending Round 2019 will, on average, benefit all households, with the poorest gaining the most as a percentage of net income.

Tax and welfare policy changes are analysed using HM Treasury's Intra-Governmental Tax and Benefit Microsimulation model (IGOTM), which is underpinned by data from the ONS's Living Costs and Food (LCF) survey. The sample size of the LCF is not large enough to provide robust analysis at a local authority or constituency level. Further details can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966207/DA_Document_Budget_2021.pdf

However, throughout the pandemic, the Government has sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods across the UK, including in the Coventry North East constituency and Coventry. This includes unprecedented measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

For the latest HMRC statistics on the use of the CJRS, see the table below (from published HMRC figures found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-9-september-2021>) :

	CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF EMPLOYMENTS FURLOUGHED SINCE MARCH 2020 (BASED ON CLAIMS MADE BY 16 AUGUST 2021)
Coventry North East constituency	21,200
Coventry	58,200

For the latest HMRC statistics on SEISS, see the table below (from published HMRC figures found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/self-employment-income-support-scheme-statistics-september-2021>):

	TOTAL NUMBER OF CLAIMS MADE FOR ALL SEISS GRANTS BY 15 AUGUST 2021	TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE CLAIMED ACROSS ALL SEISS GRANTS BY 15 AUGUST 2021	TOTAL VALUE OF CLAIMS MADE ACROSS ALL SEISS GRANTS BY 15 AUGUST 2021
Coventry North East constituency	15,500	4,500	£37,700,000
Coventry	39,200	11,400	£98,300,000

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Evictions

Rachael Maskell:

[50083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on evictions of people who are unable to afford their rent.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Throughout the pandemic, DWP has engaged regularly with MHCLG.

The Government has provided an unprecedented package of financial support to tenants and we have boosted the welfare safety net with billions of pounds.

As a result, the vast majority (91%) of private renters are up to date with their rent and of those in arrears, two thirds are in arrears of less than 2 months.

To support the most vulnerable renters, we have invested nearly £1 billion in raising Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local rents in April 2020. We have maintained LHA rates at their increased level in cash terms for 2021/22.

Housing support can be paid to landlords for claimants who cannot manage their Universal Credit payment, through Managed Payment to Landlord. This helps protect these claimants against further rent arrears.

Discretionary Housing Payments also provide critical support to claimants who need help with their housing costs. For 2021-22 the Government has made available £140m in Discretionary Housing Payments funding for local authorities in England and Wales.

■ Living Wage

Rachael Maskell:

[\[50084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing the National Living Wage for the purposes of reducing levels of in-work poverty.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Ministers in the Department for Work and Pensions engage regularly with their Ministerial counterparts in other Departments, taking a collective approach to the policies and interventions that can make a difference

This Government is committed to supporting low-paid families through a range of measures including through the National Living Wage which increased by 2.2% to £8.91 from April 2021. This means that the annual earnings of a full-time worker on the National Living Wage have increased by around £4,000 since this policy was announced in 2015. We have set a target for the National Living Wage to reach two-thirds of median earnings by 2024, provided economic conditions allow.

With record vacancies, our focus is on helping people move into and progress in work as quickly as possible, based on clear evidence about the importance of employment, particularly where it is full time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty.

■ Older Workers: Training and Vocational Guidance

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[50677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department provides to older jobseekers in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England who are looking to (i) reskill or (ii) change careers.

Mims Davies:

The Department's plan for jobs provides funding to ensure that more jobseekers of all ages get tailored support, including to reskill or pivot sectors. That includes programmes such as the Job Finding Support service, Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) and the Restart scheme, to help them find work. The JETS scheme in

particular helps jobseekers update their digital skills, job searching tools and to identify transferrable skills.

The UK government are also investing £2.5 billion in the National Skills Fund in England to aid The Lifetime Skills Guarantee. From April 2021, adults of any age over 24 who are looking to achieve their first full Level 3 will be able to access fully funded courses which will give them new skills and greater prospects in the labour market. The free online Skills Toolkit also provides online learning focused on digital, numeracy and employability skills.

For older jobseekers, a network of 50 Plus Champions provides dedicated support to Work Coaches across all 37 Jobcentre Plus districts to enable and encourage them to direct suitable Plan for Jobs and local support to claimants aged 50 and over. The Government's Business Champion for Older Workers also spearheads the Government's work to support employers to hire and re-train older workers, promoting the benefits of older workers to employers across England.

In addition, older jobseekers will also benefit from JCP support locally through the Flexible Support Fund (FSF) which allows jobcentres to put in place the right support for their community.

■ Post Office Card Account

Neil Coyle:

[\[50675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 43541 on Post Office Card Accounts, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of the Payment Exception Service for benefit claimants unable to use Post Office card accounts from November 2021 for payment of (a) pensions, (b) benefits and (c) tax credits; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

The Department recognises that not everyone is able to open and operate a standard account. The new Payment Exception Service has been designed to enable customers who cannot open or manage a standard account to access cash payments via the PayPoint network or from a Post Office.

The Post Office card account (POca) contract that the Department holds has been extended to November 2022. The Department has begun to move customers from POca accounts to the new Payment Exception Service.

Tax credits are administered by HMRC and they are making alternative payment arrangements for tax credit customers.

■ Social Security Benefits

Helen Hayes:

[\[50105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment has she made of the (a) adequacy of the rate of legacy benefits and (b) benefits of extending the £20 uplift in Universal Credit to legacy benefits.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: No assessment has been made. There is no objective way of deciding what an adequate level of benefit should be as everyone has different requirements. Income related benefit rates are not made up of separate amounts for specific items of expenditure.

The Government has always been clear that the £20 increase was a temporary measure to support households affected by the economic shock of Covid-19. It has always been the case that claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit if they believe that they will be better off.

Working age benefits, which include legacy benefits, were increased by £1bn (1.7 per cent) from April 2020 and received a further £500m (0.5 per cent) increase from April 2021 as part of the Government's annual up-rating exercise (both figures in cash terms).

Claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for Universal Credit if they believe they will be better off. The Government encourages anybody to go on GOV.UK and use one of the independent benefit calculators to check carefully their eligibility, because on applying for Universal Credit their entitlement to legacy benefits will cease and they will not be able to return to them in the future. Neither DWP nor HMRC can advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to Universal Credit or remaining on legacy benefits. They can get help through the government funded Help to Claim scheme as well as the Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland.

Since July 2020, a two-week run-on of housing benefit, income support and income-related employment and support allowance and income-based jobseeker's allowance is paid to eligible claimants to provide additional support to move to Universal Credit.

■ State Retirement Pensions**Justin Madders:**[\[48266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people who reached state pension age in 2021 are in receipt of that pension.

Guy Opperman:

This information is only available at disproportionate cost to The Department for Work and Pensions as the Department does not have a business requirement for this information to be retained.

Lee Anderson:[\[48361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department is making on ensuring that eligible pensioners receive their state pension on time.

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.

Ian Lavery:

[\[50025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce the time taken for people turning 66 to receive the first payment of their state pension.

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.

Ian Lavery:

[\[50026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to improve customer service to help elderly people contacting her Department regarding the time taken to receive their state pension payments.

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: Canada

David Linden:

[\[49236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she or Ministers in her Department have met with representatives of the Canadian Government to discuss frozen pensions.

David Linden: [\[49237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to meet with representatives of the Canadian Government to discuss frozen pensions.

David Linden: [\[49238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has recently received a request from the Canadian Government to discuss frozen pensions.

David Linden: [\[49239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to meet Deb Schulte, member of the Canadian Parliament, to discuss frozen pensions.

David Linden: [\[49240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she last received correspondence from the Canadian Government on a reciprocal social security agreement; and if she will place a copy of that correspondence in the Library.

Guy Opperman:

The Government last received correspondence from the Canadian Government in November 2020.

The Department does not routinely place its correspondence with foreign Government officials in the Library. However, the Department responded to Canadian officials explaining the Government's longstanding policy position.

Departmental Ministers have not met Canadian Ministers to discuss the issue of frozen pensions and there are no plans for such a meeting.

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Ian Mearns: [\[48189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to reform Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) for homeowners facing financial difficulties by (a) reducing the time between claiming SMI and receiving the first payment from 39 weeks to 13 weeks and (b) removing the zero earnings rule linked to universal credit that prevents people in any paid work from claiming SMI.

Guy Opperman:

In the legacy system, those in work but on low income received support via the Tax Credit system. There was no help in Tax Credits towards mortgage interest payments and that principle was carried forward into Universal Credit.

Those with earned income will all benefit from the earnings taper and may also benefit from the work allowances. This means that they are in a better position to meet their mortgage commitments than those without earnings.

There are currently no plans to amend the Support for Mortgage Interest qualifying period or the zero earnings rule.

Ian Mearns: [\[48190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reason the zero earnings rule linked to universal credit applies to Support for Mortgage Interest loans.

Guy Opperman:

In the legacy system, those in work but on low income received support via the Tax Credit system. There was no help in Tax Credits towards mortgage interest payments and that principle was carried forward into Universal Credit.

Those with earned income will all benefit from the earnings taper and may also benefit from the work allowances. This means that they are in a better position to meet their mortgage commitments than those without earnings.

There are currently no plans to amend the Support for Mortgage Interest qualifying period or the zero earnings rule.

■ Universal Credit

Rachael Maskell: [\[50080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the impact of the end of the universal credit £20 temporary uplift on people living in areas with relatively high consumer price levels of goods and services.

David Rutley:

The Department has not completed an Impact Assessment of the removal of the Universal Credit temporary uplift as it was introduced as a temporary measure.

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 Universal Credit claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; Restart, which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to Universal Credit 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: Hendon**Dr Matthew Offord:** [48207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many employed people are receiving universal credit in Hendon constituency.

David Rutley:

The latest available statistics on the number of people who are on Universal Credit and are in employment, by parliamentary constituency, are published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Universal Credit: Pilot Schemes**Helen Hayes:** [50106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to progress the Universal Credit pilots.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The pilot that had been active in Harrogate was suspended as the Department focused on delivering its part of the Government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to its suspension, the emphasis of the pilot was to assist with developing the design of the Move to Universal Credit service and its processes, to provide the best possible support for claimants who are moved to Universal Credit.

■ Workplace Pensions**Wendy Chamberlain:** [50767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an estimate of the proportion of employees automatically enrolled in a workplace pension scheme who are likely to reach a moderate lifestyle in retirement as defined by the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association's Retirement Living Standards.

Guy Opperman:

This Government is focussed on its goal of expanding the benefits of automatic enrolment in the mid-2020s, increasing the overall amounts being saved by working people, and extending the benefits of workplace pensions to younger workers. I welcome the PLSA standards as a contribution to the debate.

■ Workplace Pensions: Young People**Wendy Chamberlain:** [50765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on implementing its policy to (a) extend automatic enrolment of employees in a

workplace pension scheme to employees under the age of 22 years and (b) remove the lower earnings threshold for that automatic enrolment by the mid-2020s.

Guy Opperman:

We are committed to implementing the 2017 Automatic Enrolment Review ambitions in the mid-2020s, lowering the age for being automatically enrolled from 22 to 18 and abolishing the automatic enrolment lower earnings limit, so that contributions are payable from the first pound of earnings.

In this way we will expand coverage of the successful workplace pension reforms and increase the amounts being put into retirement savings by millions of workers, particularly younger people and lower earners.

The 2017 Review report was clear that implementation will be subject to learning from previous workplace pension contribution increases, discussions with employers and others on the right approach, and finding ways to make these changes affordable. We will do this in light of the impact of the pandemic and our overall support for economic recovery, while continuing to support long-term saving, balancing the needs of savers, employers and tax-payers.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Fortification of Flour with Folic Acid

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Vaccines and Public Health)
(Maggie Throup):**

[\[HCWS296\]](#)

I am today announcing the Government's decision to introduce mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid to help prevent neural tube defects in foetuses. The Government initiated a consultation in 2019 on the issue of folic acid fortification. Our response is published today and confirms that we will proceed with fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour, which is the most used type. This was the 'baseline' option in the consultation and accompanying impact assessment.

Neural tube defects are birth defects of the brain, spine, or spinal cord. They happen in the first few weeks of pregnancy, often before a woman even knows that she is pregnant. The two most common neural tube defects are spina bifida and anencephaly. These can be devastating conditions and the Government are fully aware of the effect these have on the individuals themselves and their families.

There is strong evidence that many neural tube defects can be prevented by increasing women's intake of folic acid, which is why existing pregnancy advice to women who are trying to conceive or who are likely to become pregnant is to take a daily supplement of 400 micrograms of folic acid until the 12th week of pregnancy.

However, we know that in the UK around half of pregnancies are unplanned. In those which are planned, it has been estimated that only half of all mothers took folic acid supplements or modified their diet to increase folate intake. This has led to calls for mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid, so women can get it from dietary sources other than foods that naturally contain it, and is why we consulted on the proposal.

I am grateful to the many people who took time to respond to the consultation which helped us accurately consider this policy.

I have agreed with the Governments of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland that we intend to implement this change on a UK-wide basis. We will now commence detailed discussions with stakeholders on the precise details of the fortification and labelling requirements, and agree the appropriate lead-in times. In order to minimise impacts on industry, this will be co-ordinated as part of a wider review of The Bread and Flour Regulations 1998 and The Bread and Flour (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1998 being undertaken by Defra – alongside the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland and Wales, Food Standards Scotland in Scotland, DHSC, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments. Following those discussions, and in coordination with the progress of the review of the wider Bread and Flour Regulations, we will consult on the draft legislation to implement this policy, and include a full impact assessment on the mandatory folic acid fortification.

PRIME MINISTER**■ Machinery of Government****Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):**[\[HCWS297\]](#)

I am making this statement to bring to the House's attention the following Machinery of Government change

Responsibility for the operation of the Vaccine Damage Payments Scheme will transfer from the Department for Work and Pensions to the Department of Health and Social Care. This change will take effect on 1 November 2021.