



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 22 September 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:43 P.M., 22 September 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS 6
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY 6
Air Pollution: Scotland 6
Coronavirus: Vaccination 6
Energy Supply: Costs 7
Energy Supply: Prices 7
Housing: Energy 8
Hydrogen: Carbon Capture and Storage 8
Limited Liability 8
Mineworkers' Pension Scheme 9
New Businesses: Scotland 9
Valneva: Coronavirus 10
CABINET OFFICE 11
Civil Servants: Conditions of Employment 11
Medals 11
DEFENCE 11
Military Alliances: Australia and USA 11
National Flagship 12
Taliban: Terrorism 12
Type 45 Destroyers: Repairs and Maintenance 13
Yemen: Military Intervention 13
DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT 14
Internet: Freedom of Expression 14
Vaccination: Disinformation 14
EDUCATION 15
Apprentices: Taxation 15
Assessments: Fees and Charges 15
Department for Education: Flags 16
Education: Digital Technology 16
Free School Meals 18
National School Breakfast Programme 18
Prisoners: Children 19
Schools: Coronavirus 20
Special Educational Needs: Finance 20
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS 21
Eggs: Labelling 21
Food 23
Food: UK Trade with EU 23
Hedges and Ditches 24
Marine Protected Areas 25

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fishing Vessels	25	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	36
■ Plants: Imports	26	■ Care Homes and Hospitals: Coronavirus	36
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	26	■ Contraceptives	37
■ Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad	26	■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing and Screening	37
■ Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid	27	■ Coronavirus: Death	37
■ Afghanistan: Judges	27	■ Coronavirus: Quarantine	40
■ Afghanistan: Pakistan	27	■ Coronavirus: Schools	41
■ Afghanistan: Repatriation	28	■ Coronavirus: Screening	41
■ Afghanistan: Taliban	29	■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	41
■ Bahrain: Capital Punishment	29	■ Emergency Services: Sirens	44
■ China: Human Rights	30	■ Food	45
■ Commonwealth: Cultural Relations	31	■ Food: Labelling	45
■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Peacekeeping Operations	31	■ Health Services	45
■ Developing Countries: Sustainable Development	32	■ Influenza: Vaccination	46
■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Email	32	■ Integrated Care Boards: Recruitment	46
■ Gulf States: Human Rights	32	■ Joint Replacements: Ellesmere Port and Neston	46
■ Myanmar: Arms Trade	33	■ Lung Cancer: Screening	47
■ Myanmar: Food Aid	34	■ Members: Correspondence	47
■ Myanmar: Politics and Government	34	■ Migrants: Afghanistan	47
■ Overseas Aid	35	■ MMR Vaccine	48
■ South Asia: Refugees	35	■ NHS Trusts: Finance	48
■ Sri Lanka: Police Scotland	35	■ NHS: Coronavirus	48
■ Uyghur Tribunal	36	■ NHS: Cost Effectiveness	48
■ Western Sahara: Self- determination of States	36	■ NHS: Labour Turnover	49
		■ NHS: Racial Discrimination	49
		■ NHS: Vacancies	50
		■ Oral Tobacco	50
		■ Public Health: Disability	50
		■ Royal Shrewsbury Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments	51

■ Sugar: Consumption	51	■ Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme Review	61
■ Travel Restrictions: South Africa	51	■ Criminal Proceedings: West Yorkshire	61
■ Travel: Coronavirus	51	■ Family Courts: Nottinghamshire	62
■ Travel: Quarantine	52	■ Legal Aid Scheme: Contracts	63
■ WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control	52	■ Members: Correspondence	64
HOME OFFICE	53	■ Ministry of Justice: Listed Buildings	64
■ Anjem Choudary	53	■ Ministry of Justice: Welsh Government	65
■ Asylum: Afghanistan	53	■ Office of the Public Guardian: Registration	65
■ Asylum: Children in Care	54	■ Refugees: Afghanistan	66
■ Asylum: LGBT People	54	■ Reoffenders	67
■ Emergency Calls: Hoaxes and False Alarms	54	LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	67
■ Hate Crime: LGBT People	55	■ Council Tax: Billing	67
■ Radicalism	56	■ Elections: Wales	68
■ Refugees: York	56	■ Fires: Nuisance	68
■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel	57	■ Housing: Older People	68
■ Visas: Afghanistan	57	■ Local Government: Meetings	69
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	58	■ Local Government: Reform	69
■ Local Government	58	■ Members: Correspondence	69
■ Members: Correspondence	59	■ Parish Councils: Staff	69
■ Property: Taxation	59	■ Permitted Development Rights	70
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	59	■ Planning: Reform	70
■ Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Pitcairn Islands	59	■ Regional Planning and Development	70
■ Trade Remedies Authority: Reviews	59	■ Sheltered Housing	71
JUSTICE	60	■ Social Services: Finance	72
■ Asylum: Afghanistan	60	■ Supported Housing: Older People	73
■ Chelmsford Prison: Standards	60		

TRANSPORT	73	■ ESEA Heritage Month	85
■ Bridges: Northern Ireland and Scotland	73	■ Gender Recognition	85
■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Correspondence	74	WORK AND PENSIONS	86
■ Driving Licences: Hong Kong	75	■ Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services	86
■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points	75	■ Kickstart Scheme	88
■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences	76	■ Kickstart Scheme: Scotland	91
■ Regional Airports	76	■ Pensions: Investment	92
■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus	77	■ Social Security Benefits: Broadband	92
■ Travel: Coronavirus	77	■ Social Security Benefits: Mental Health	93
TREASURY	77	■ State Retirement Pensions	93
■ Boats: Red Diesel	77	■ Universal Credit	94
■ Cooperatives and Mutual Societies	78	■ Universal Credit: Hendon	97
■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	79	■ Universal Credit: Life Expectancy	97
■ Electric Vehicles: Taxation	80	■ Welfare State	98
■ Evergrande Group: Finance	80	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	100
■ National Insurance	81	BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	100
■ Regional Airports	81	■ The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry	100
WOMEN AND EQUALITIES	81	CABINET OFFICE	100
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	81	■ Recording and Reporting Suicides	100
■ Biometrics: Equality	83	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	101
■ Conversion Therapy: Victim Support Schemes	83	■ Gambling Regulation	101
■ Disability: Coronavirus	84	■ National Artificial Intelligence Strategy	103
■ Employment Tribunals Service: Maternity Rights and Pregnancy	85	TREASURY	104
		■ Contingencies Fund Advance	104

Notes:

Questions marked thus [R] indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

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

ANSWERS**BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY****■ Air Pollution: Scotland**

Kenny MacAskill: [\[49286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what sources his Department uses when reporting gaseous emissions allocated to Scotland prior to those statistics being integration within the statistics for the UK as a whole.

Greg Hands:

The National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory estimates annual air quality and greenhouse gas pollutant emissions for the UK.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[49110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has placed advance purchase orders for (a) next-generation universal coronavirus or (b) nasal-spray covid-19 vaccines.

George Freeman:

The UK government has secured early access to 332 million vaccines doses through supply agreements with five separate vaccine developers. This includes agreements with:

- Pfizer/BioNTech for 135 million doses
- University of Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
- Moderna for 17 million doses
- Novavax for 60 million doses
- Janssen for 20 million doses.

We have not purchased any next-generation universal coronavirus or nasal-spray covid-19 vaccines; however, the Vaccine Taskforce keeps our portfolio and emerging vaccines under review.

Mr Steve Baker: [\[R\] \[49116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many covid-19 vaccines his Department has ordered for delivery in each year of the next five years.

George Freeman:

The UK government has secured early access to 332 million vaccines doses through supply agreements with five separate vaccine developers. This includes agreements with:

- Pfizer/BioNTech for 135 million doses
- University of Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
- Moderna for 17 million doses
- Novavax for 60 million doses
- Janssen for 20 million doses

Of these, Pfizer/BioNTech, University of Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines have received MHRA regulatory approval and are currently in deployment in the UK. The Janssen vaccine has also received regulatory approval and deliveries are expected later this year. The Novavax vaccine is yet to receive regulatory approval, so timings for delivery are dependent on this.

Due to commercial sensitivities, we are not able to provide detailed timelines for delivery.

We are in regular contact with the vaccine manufacturers and are confident in our vaccine supplies going into the autumn/ winter, having already secured the doses we need for everyone in the UK who requires a booster.

■ Energy Supply: Costs

Richard Thomson:

[\[49296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make representations to Ofgem on ensuring that its supplier licensing proposals do not cause significant mutualisation costs for consumers.

Greg Hands:

Ofgem has been clear that their supplier licence reforms aim to ensure suppliers have the capacity and capability to effectively serve their customers.

■ Energy Supply: Prices

Gill Furniss:

[\[51016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to reduce the UK's industrial energy prices.

Greg Hands:

The Government is committed to minimising energy costs for businesses to ensure our economy remains strong and competitive. We deliver relief schemes to reduce the cumulative impact of some energy and climate change policies on UK's industrial energy prices for eligible energy intensive industries, such as steel, chemicals, and glass manufacturing.

■ Housing: Energy**Henry Smith:** [\[49093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will tackle gaps in consumer protections for people making energy efficiency improvements to homes and installing low-carbon heating in the forthcoming Net Zero Strategy.

Greg Hands:

The Government remains committed to ensuring that improvements meet high standards and provide appropriate consumer protection.

The forthcoming Net Zero Strategy and Heat and Buildings Strategy will look to further address consumer protection.

■ Hydrogen: Carbon Capture and Storage**Paula Barker:** [\[50781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to support the carbon capture and storage project, HyNet, to (a) safeguard manufacturing jobs in the North West and (b) position the UK as a global leader in clean growth.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 21 September 2021]: The 2019 Manifesto and Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution position the UK as a global leader which will create and safeguard thousands of jobs.

We have already supported Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) deployment in the North West, with an award of over £30m of development funding to HyNet, earlier this year, through the Industrial Decarbonisation Challenge.

In our Ten Point Plan, the Government set out that we would deploy four CCUS clusters by 2030, at the latest. In May this year, BEIS launched Phase-1 of the CCUS Cluster Sequencing Process. An announcement on the results of Phase-1 in October of this year; as the process is ongoing, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the outcome at this stage.

■ Limited Liability**Craig Mackinlay:** [\[51015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason (a) the name of a limited partnership cannot be re-used, after dissolution and removal from Companies House register and (b) that restriction does not apply to limited liability partnerships and limited companies.

Paul Scully:

The legislation on Limited Partnerships does not prevent a Limited Partnership's name from being re-used after dissolution as the rules that prevent duplicate company or LLP names do not apply to LPs.

The Government is committing to reforming the legislation on limited partnerships; this will include proposals that will bring the rules on the names of limited partnerships in line with those for limited liability partnerships and limited companies.

■ **Mineworkers' Pension Scheme**

Ben Lake: [\[50748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment has he made of the efficacy of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme for its members.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 21 September 2021]: The Mineworkers' Pension Scheme was considered by the BEIS Select Committee earlier this year. In the Government's response, we highlighted that the Government continues to believe that the arrangements agreed in 1994 work well and are fair and beneficial to both Scheme members and taxpayers. That response is available to view [here](#). The Rt. Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, the then Minister responsible, met the Scheme Trustees in June to discuss the Committee's report and the future of the Scheme. We await their thoughts.

Ben Lake: [\[50749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions officials in his Department have had with (a) officials in the Department for Work and Pensions and (b) the Welsh Government on the distribution of the Investment Reserve arising from the Miners' Pension Scheme.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 21 September 2021]: No such discussions have taken place.

■ **New Businesses: Scotland**

John Lamont: [\[49231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the financial total of Start Up Loans issued in the Scottish Borders is as at 14 September 2021.

Paul Scully:

Start Up Loans, offered by the Government's British Business Bank, provide government-backed loans and support for businesses who struggle to access other forms of finance. Since the scheme launched in 2012 to the end of July 2021, the total value of Start Up Loans issued in the Scottish Borders was £796,381, with 95 loans issued.

■ Valneva: Coronavirus**Neale Hanvey:** [\[51029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has received a request from the Scottish Government to discuss the impact on Scotland of the UK Government's notice of termination of the COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Agreement with Valneva.

Neale Hanvey: [\[51033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has received a request from the Scottish Government to discuss the impact of the UK Government's notice of termination of the covid-19 vaccine supply agreement with Valneva.

Neale Hanvey: [\[51034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department have had with the Scottish Government since the UK Government's notice of termination of the covid-19 vaccine supply agreement with Valneva was issued, on that matter.

George Freeman:

Ministers regularly discuss COVID-19 vaccine matters with the Scottish Government and other devolved administrations.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has discussed the termination of our supply agreement with Valneva with his counterpart in the Scottish Government and the UK Government will maintain dialogue with the Scottish Government on this matter.

Neale Hanvey: [\[51035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact of the UK Government's notice of termination of the covid-19 vaccine supply agreement with Valneva on (a) vaccine provision and (b) science, research and innovation in the UK.

George Freeman:

The UK has contracted for a portfolio of vaccines from a number of developers, and we have sufficient contracted supply for the expected booster campaign as well as to complete the first round of vaccinations.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Civil Servants: Conditions of Employment

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[49216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to encourage civil servants based in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) England to return to their offices full time.

Michael Ellis:

Departments, as separate employers, have the flexibility to make their own corporate decisions on working arrangements. Throughout the pandemic, many Cabinet Office staff have continued to work in the office in order to deliver key functions, in line with government guidance. We are now steadily and safely increasing numbers in the office, in line with the latest government guidance and as building risk assessments are reviewed and updated.

We continue to communicate regularly with our staff about our plans.

■ Medals

Peter Gibson:

[\[49285\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of awarding retrospective awards for exceptional feats of gallantry.

Michael Ellis:

National gallantry awards are considered by the independent George Cross Committee and recognise the bravery of those who have put themselves in danger to save, or attempt to save someone's life. The committee makes recommendations based on the degree of risk and how aware the nominee was of the danger.

The Committee only considers nominations for actions that took place within the previous five years. This reflects a need to ensure awards are timely, can draw on the judgement and knowledge of those involved at the time and can benefit from assessment against other contemporaneous actions. The only exception to this is where it is necessary to wait for the outcome of judicial proceedings, for example an inquest. Even in those circumstances, it is generally expected that the actions meriting an award would have taken place within, or only very little beyond five years.

DEFENCE

■ Military Alliances: Australia and USA

Owen Thompson:

[\[51004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what role the countering of weaponised and industrialised disinformation from cybertroops based in (a) the UK and (b) overseas will play in AUKUS.

Owen Thompson:[\[51005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his AUKUS counterparts on weaponised and industrialised disinformation from cybertroops.

Mr Ben Wallace:

As part of the AUKUS agreement I will work with my counterparts, and the Five Eyes, to increase Australia-UK-US security collaboration. This will involve a range of areas, such as submarines and other undersea capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and cyber capabilities, including defence against such disinformation campaigns.

■ **National Flagship****Emily Thornberry:**[\[50954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his Answer of 14 September 2021 to Question 40765, on National Flagship, who was responsible for producing the artist's impression of the future national flagship, released to the media on 30 May 2021.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The artist's impression was privately commissioned by a Non-Executive Director of the Royal Navy, who has been assisting the National Flagship project Board. The illustration has no official standing and does not represent any pre-conception or guide to a preferred design for the National Flagship.

■ **Taliban: Terrorism****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[49057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the resurgence of the Taliban on the threat of terrorism in the UK.

James Heappey:

The principal threat to the UK's national security stemming from the withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan and the new Taliban administration will centre on the extent to which Afghanistan is once again used by terrorist groups to prepare attacks against the West in general and the UK in particular. The future relationship between the Taliban and Al Qaeda remains unclear, but in the short term it is unlikely that they would act contrary to the Taliban's interest. We do not judge that the Taliban themselves have any intent to carry out attacks outside of Afghanistan.

The Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) will highly likely continue to target the Taliban in Afghanistan to exacerbate social and ethnic tensions whilst seeking areas for settlement and sanctuary for their fighters. The UK continues to work to counter ISKP through means other than military presence in Afghanistan, working with partners in the region to diminish the threat they pose.

■ Type 45 Destroyers: Repairs and Maintenance

Sarah Atherton:

[\[51039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the progress of the Type 45 destroyers upgrade programme.

Sarah Atherton:

[\[51040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the planned timescales are for the completion of the Type 45 destroyer Power Improvement Package (PIP) upgrade.

Jeremy Quin:

HMS DAUNTLESS, the first of class ship to receive the Type 45 Power Improvement Project (PIP) conversion, is at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead where equipment is being set to work following installation. The next phase of the programme will see HMS DAUNTLESS undertake a rigorous trials programme in harbour and subsequently at sea.

HMS DARING has been moved to the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead and will be the second Type 45 Destroyer to undergo her PIP conversion.

It is planned that all six Type 45 ships will have received the PIP conversion by the mid-2020s. The programme is dependent on the availability of ships to undertake the upgrade, balanced against the Royal Navy's standing and future operational commitments.

■ Yemen: Military Intervention

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[50625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf, entitled The cost of repression, published on 6 July 2021, what assessment the Government has made of the implications for its policies of the findings of that report that the Royal Saudi Air Force and the Joint Incident Assessment Team, beneficiaries of the Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF), have been accused of perpetrating illegal drone strikes against civilians in Yemen and conducting inadequate investigations into potential war crimes in Yemen; and if the Government will suspend GSF programmes pending an independent inquiry into their human rights implications.

James Heappey:

All training and assistance to both the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) and the Joint Incident Assessment Team (JIAT) - as well as any programmes funded by the Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF) - are subject to an Overseas Security Justice and Assistance Assessment (OSJA). These OSJAs consider human rights concerns about the institution/unit that will receive the assistance, are refreshed on a yearly basis, and are endorsed by Ministers.

GSF funded assistance to the Royal Saudi Land Forces is intended to support Saudi Arabia's efforts to protect their national security while improving their compliance with international humanitarian law.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Internet: Freedom of Expression****Andrew Rosindell:****[49060]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to protect free speech in online spaces.

Chris Philp:

The upcoming Online Safety Bill will protect freedom of expression online. The largest and riskiest companies, Category 1 services, will no longer be able to remove arbitrarily harmful content. They will need to be clear about what content is acceptable on their services and enforce these rules consistently. Users will have access to effective mechanisms to appeal content that is removed without good reason.

Category 1 services will need to assess their impact on freedom of expression and demonstrate the steps they have taken to mitigate this. They will also have additional duties to protect democratic and journalistic content online.

The government is also taking steps to boost competition in digital markets through the new pro-competition regime for digital markets. This has the potential to support greater choice and plurality in digital services.

■ Vaccination: Disinformation**Andrea Jenkyns:****[49214]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent steps his Department has taken to prevent the spread of vaccine misinformation online.

Chris Philp:

The government takes the issue of disinformation very seriously. The Cross-Whitehall Counter Disinformation Unit located in DCMS was stood up on 5 March 2020, bringing together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities to tackle disinformation and misinformation, including relating to COVID-19.

The government is committed to ensuring that the information people access about COVID-19 and the vaccine is accurate, so that everyone is able to make informed decisions about their health. We are working with social media platforms to ensure promotion of authoritative sources of information, and to help them identify and remove incorrect claims about COVID-19 and the vaccine in line with their terms and conditions. We have also developed the [SHARE checklist](#), which aims to increase audience resilience by educating and empowering those who see, inadvertently share and are affected by false and misleading information. The SHARE checklist provides five easy steps to help identify false content, encouraging users to stop and think before they share content online.

The Online Safety Bill will give companies clear legal responsibilities to understand the risk of harm to users and put in place systems and processes to improve user

safety. The new laws will have robust and proportionate measures to deal with misinformation and disinformation that could cause significant physical or psychological harm to an individual, such as anti-vaccination content and falsehoods about COVID-19.

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[49109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will conduct a review of the Apprenticeship Levy focused on what further potential flexibility for businesses can be introduced into the scheme.

Michelle Donelan:

In response to employer feedback, we are continuing to improve apprenticeships, making them more flexible for employers and making it easier for employers to make greater use of their levy funds.

The department is 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 2021, 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.

In addition, the department is making apprenticeships more flexible so that they better meet the needs of employers in all sectors. We are encouraging greater use of innovative apprenticeship training models, such as the front-loading of off-the-job training so apprentices can be productive from day one in the workplace. We are also developing accelerated apprenticeships so that apprentices with substantial prior learning from other skills programmes, such as traineeships and T Levels, can complete an apprenticeship more quickly.

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

The department currently has no plans to review the apprenticeship levy and what funds can be spent on.

■ Assessments: Fees and Charges

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[49100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a fund for parents and guardians of home-schooled

children to receive remuneration for the costs of (a) GCSE and (b) A level examination fees.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department recognises the choice of parents and guardians to home educate their children. For most children, particularly the most vulnerable, we are clear that school is the best place for their education. Our guidance on elective home education highlights that parents/carers who home educate will need to assume full financial responsibility for their child's education. This includes paying for the cost of entering their child for examinations. Some local authorities may provide financial or other assistance to home-educating families for public examinations, but this is discretionary.

In 2021, in light of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, GCSE grades were determined by teachers (Teacher Assessed Grades). To support centres with the additional requirements of assessing private candidates in 2021, the department provided an exceptional grant to centres of £200 per private candidate entry. This funding aimed to avoid these additional costs being passed on to private candidates, so that they could access qualifications at a similar cost to a normal exam year.

■ **Department for Education: Flags**

Justin Madders: [\[50057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which companies have supplied Union Jack flags to his Department since 2019.

Justin Madders: [\[50058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of Union Jack flags purchased by his Department in each of the last two years were manufactured in the UK.

Michelle Donelan:

Two Union Jack flags have been purchased by the department this year, through our facilities management provider OCS Group UK. The two flags were purchased from the company House of Flags, whose factory is located in Kimbolton, Huntingdon.

■ **Education: Digital Technology**

Chi Onwurah: [\[49132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to (a) promote digital education in secondary schools and (b) embed digital skills across all subject areas within formal education.

Mr Robin Walker:

The department is committed to increasing the digital expertise of young people.

The computing curriculum provides important foundational knowledge such as algorithms, programming, e-safety, digital literacy and computational thinking that will enable them to pursue further study or a wide range of digital careers in cyber

security, artificial intelligence (AI), data science, robotics and software engineering. The majority of this is taught from year 8 and 9 onwards and forms part of the GCSE subject content.

The department has invested £84 million to improve the quality of computing teaching, creating a National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE). The NCCE has created 500 hours of free, high quality teacher resources, which include cyber security, digital literacy, and data science at key stage 3. The resources include a unit of learning on AI which is taught to year 8 pupils. In addition, the Isaac Computer Science online platform has been set up to support teachers and pupils through AS and A level. As of the end of August 2021, more than 34,600 teachers have engaged with the NCCE programme.

The department also supports the government's popular extra-curricular CyberFirst programme, aimed at 11–17 year olds, which stimulates interest in cybersecurity through hackathons, girls' competitions and residential courses. We also continue to work closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on promoting digital careers in school.

We also recognise the importance of ensuring schools and teachers can make the best use of digital technology. The department has helped more than 6500 schools get set up on a digital platform, ensuring they have access to both training materials and Classroom Practitioner certification schemes available via Microsoft and Google as well as peer to peer support from the EdTech Demonstrators programme.

We are investing £500 million in the implementation of the new T Levels. There are three T Levels under the digital route. The first qualification is available now and the remaining two qualifications will be delivered from September 2021 onwards. All three contain core elements of computer science. Additionally, all T Level programmes will require students to develop core English, maths and digital competencies as part of the qualification thus giving employers the confidence graduates have the level of digital proficiency necessary for employment.

In September 2020, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education launched the new higher technical qualification approvals process, which will focus exclusively in its first year on supporting the delivery of newly approved, high-quality digital qualifications (to be introduced from September 2022).

We are also taking forward an ambitious programme of further education reform through the further education white paper. These reforms will raise the quality and capacity of training in further education and will be designed with employers to make sure that courses meet their skills needs. It is clear that digital skills will be a major area of focus.

■ Free School Meals

Chi Onwurah:

[49130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that schools receiving pupil premium are not adversely affected by the administrative change of calculations based on Free School Meals eligibility in October rather than January.

Mr Robin Walker:

Schools receive additional funding through the pupil premium to help them support their disadvantaged pupils. For mainstream and special schools, the department has based pupil premium funding for the 2021/22 financial year on the October 2020 census data, instead of using the January census. Alongside the annual pupil premium publication, we have also published the financial impact of moving to using the October census: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-effective-use-and-accountability>.

Overall, total pupil premium funding is increasing to more than £2.5 billion in the 2021/22 financial year, up by £60 million from 2020/21. This reflects an increase in funding in approximately two thirds of schools, as more children have become eligible for free school meals.

Head teachers have the flexibility to prioritise support for specific groups of pupils according to their needs. To ensure schools have the best tools to make a difference for all their pupils, the department founded the Education Endowment Foundation in 2011 to research and promote the most effective ways of accelerating pupil progress. This includes guidance for head teachers recommending how best to use the £2.5 billion pupil premium. All schools should have regard to this high-quality advice when deciding how to tackle the attainment gap.

■ National School Breakfast Programme

Kim Johnson:

[50779]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department plans to confirm (a) how many schools will be supported by the new National School Breakfast Programme and (b) which schools in Liverpool Riverside constituency will be supported by that programme.

Will Quince:

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

The enrolment process for schools joining the programme is currently ongoing, and we have seen a strong interest so far from eligible schools since we invited the

expressions of interest. Schools are currently still able to apply to join the programme. As we are still registering schools for the programme, it is too early to publish a list of participating schools. However, we will of course consider the best opportunities to share information on the programme as it progresses.

■ Prisoners: Children

Dr Matthew Offord:

[49998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department provides for the children of parents and guardians who enter the prison system.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[50659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department provides to pupils who have a parent or guardian serving a custodial sentence.

Will Quince:

Statutory guidance on 'Working together to safeguard children' is clear that anyone who has concerns about a child's welfare should make a referral to local authority children's social care. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>.

The local authority and its social workers have specific roles and responsibilities to lead statutory assessments. Every assessment should reflect children's needs within their family and community context, including taking account of a parent being in prison. These children's circumstances vary considerably and therefore local agencies are best placed to determine what support is needed – whether early help, statutory social care services, or support for other needs such as mental health.

We recognise the impact that a parent going to prison can have on a child's learning, behaviour, mental health and wellbeing. Support should be based on the needs of individual children, not solely the characteristic of having a parent in prison and, as such, our approach is focussed on equipping schools to respond to these needs.

Statutory guidance for schools, 'Keeping children safe in education', is clear that staff should consider the additional needs of children with a family member in prison or who are affected by parental offending. The guidance highlights the risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health, and can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>. It signposts staff to the National information centre on children of offenders website, which provides specialist advice and resources to support professionals working with offenders' children and their families, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children. This can be accessed here: <https://www.nicco.org.uk/>.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[49230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons schools continue to be required to complete the daily Educational Setting Status form; and for what purpose these data collected are used..

Mr Robin Walker:

Information gathered through the educational setting status form is used by the department to monitor attendance in schools, and across government to model the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. This allows the department to provide support in developing policies to help schools manage, and ensure our ability to target educational recovery support.

The department is grateful to schools for providing this information. Following the removal of the advice to teach pupils in bubbles, the department has announced that from the beginning of October 2021 schools will only be asked to complete the educational setting status form once a week. This will be kept under review and, should the national situation require, daily reporting may be reinstated.

■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

Justin Madders:

[\[45160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 26 July 2021 to Question 35600 on Special Educational Needs, what funding and support is being provided to local authorities unable to meet their statutory duties in respect of Education, Health, Care plans.

Will Quince:

The department funds a range of support to help local authorities meet their statutory duties including the opportunity to work with expert special education needs and disability (SEND) advisers, and/or the provision of specialist support from our delivery partners or facilitate peer to peer support. Depending on the underlying issues that a local authority faces, we may also draw in support from NHS England advisers. Additionally, we also fund and provide sector led, peer to peer, or regional support to address issues common in specific areas or regions.

This year councils have access to £51.2 billion to deliver their core services, including children's services. The government has also provided an additional £6 billion of funding directly to councils to support them with the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 spending pressures, including children's services.

Furthermore, high needs funding will increase by £780 million, or 9.6%, in financial year 2022-23, following an increase of more than £1.5 billion over the previous two years. This will bring the total high needs budget to £8.9 billion, an increase of over a third since financial year 2019-20.

We will continue to work with other government departments, including the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to ensure the upcoming spending review reflects the needs of children's services.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Eggs: Labelling

Emily Thornberry: [\[50955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether sheep meat produced on farms that carry out the mulesing of lambs falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether meat produced from livestock transported over land for up to 48 hours without rest falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether beef produced on farms that carry out the dehorning of cattle without pain relief falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether beef produced on farms that carry out the surgical removal of ovaries from cows without pain relief falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether sheep meat produced on farms that carry out the castration of lambs up to the age of six months without pain relief falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether pork produced on farms that carry out the castration of pigs up to the age of 21 days without pain relief falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether pork produced on farms that keep pregnant pigs confined in sow stalls falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether egg-based products from farms where laying hens are confined in barren battery cages falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether egg-based products from farms where laying hens are subject to the trimming of their beaks with a hot blade falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[50964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether egg-based products produced from farms where laying hens are caged in stocking density as low as 550sq cm per hen falls under the definition of imports of lower welfare as set out in the Government's call for evidence on Labelling for animal welfare, published on 13 September 2021.

Victoria Prentis:

UK legislation sets out high standards for animal welfare. This includes the 2006 Animal Welfare Act, the 2007 Welfare of Farmed Animal Regulations, the 2007 Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) Regulations, and the 2015 Welfare at the Time of Killing regulations, as well as the retained EU Regulation 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport. Animal welfare is a fully devolved matter and comparable legislation exists in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

The Government launched a call for evidence on 13 September to assess the impacts of different types of labelling reforms for animal welfare. For the purpose of this call for evidence, 'imports of lower welfare' is defined as 'the subset of imports that do not meet baseline UK welfare regulations', including, but not limited to, the regulations mentioned above.

Any future label requirements would need to be underpinned by a set of agreed welfare standards, referring to how these meet, exceed, or fall below baseline UK welfare regulations and international standards. The development of such welfare standards would be informed by the responses to this call for evidence and further stakeholder engagement.

The responses to this call for evidence will be used to inform any future policy proposals on animal welfare labelling. This will feed into the Government's wider work on food labelling to ensure that consumers can have confidence in the food they buy and to facilitate the trade of quality British food at home and abroad.

■ Food

Andrew Lewer:

[\[49254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the National Food Strategy, published in July 2021, what plans he has to consult UK-based food and drinks manufacturers on the recommendation that that he should bring forward a Good Food Bill before Parliament in the fourth session of the 2019–2024.

Victoria Prentis:

The forthcoming Government Food Strategy White Paper is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. The Government will consider the contents of Henry Dimbleby's independent review when developing the Food Strategy White Paper including the recommendation for legislative measures.

We are committed to listening to opinions from stakeholders across the entirety of the food system and will encourage dialogue with a wide range of external and internal stakeholders to identify any policy gaps or potential options to transform the food system.

The Food Strategy White Paper will build upon work already underway in the Agriculture Act, Fisheries Act, and Environment Bill as well as docking into wider Government priorities, including Net Zero, 25 Year Environment Plan, and Build Back Greener. We will consider the need for mandatory or voluntary policy interventions as part of the White Paper and evaluate the need for additional primary and secondary legislation throughout its development.

■ Food: UK Trade with EU

Peter Aldous:

[\[49117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to introduce pre-notification requirements for foods of animal origin and certain foods of non-animal origin from 1 October 2021 and (b) physical checks for foods of animal origin and certain foods of non-animal origin at border control posts from 1 January 2022.

Victoria Prentis:

The requirement to pre-notify imports of Products of Animal Origin (POAO) for human consumption will be introduced on 1 January 2022. From 1 July 2022, these imports of POAO must also be accompanied by a certified Export Health Certificate and enter via a point of entry with a designated Border Control Post (BCP), where they will be subject to documentary, ID, and physical checks.

The requirement for pre-notification, phytosanitary certificates and risk-based import checks (documentary, identity and physical) have been in place for many years for all regulated plants and plant products from non-EU countries.

In January 2021, these requirements were extended to also include 'high priority' plants and plant products from the EU, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. 'High priority' plants and plant products are those which present the greatest potential biosecurity risk to GB and includes all plants for planting, potatoes and some seed.

The requirements will be further extended during 2022, to include all other regulated plants and plant products from the EU, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, such as fresh fruit, vegetables and cut flowers, starting with pre-notification on 1 January and followed by phytosanitary certificates and risk-based import checks on 1 July 2022.

■ Hedges and Ditches

Peter Gibson:

[\[49284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to protect hedgerows across the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

Hedgerows are one of the most important ecological building blocks in our farmed landscape. They maintain the distinctive character of our countryside and provide crucial habitats and food for wildlife. Legal protection for hedgerows in England and Wales is provided by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997.

These regulations prohibit the removal of most countryside hedgerows (or parts of them) without first seeking approval from the local planning authority. It decides whether a hedgerow is 'important' because of its wildlife, landscape, historical or archaeological value and should not be removed.

A local authority also has the power to impose enforceable planning conditions on a developer to protect hedges or trees assessed as being worthy of retention, which might otherwise be harmed by construction or the new land-use. Land managers in receipt of Basic Payment Scheme payments are also required to protect hedgerows on their land.

Agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship fund the management of hedgerows to deliver recognised benefits for wildlife, landscape and the historic environment. Hedgerow management is one of the most popular options within Countryside Stewardship.

Following our exit from the European Union the development of our new environmental land management schemes will continue to recognise the role and fund the management of hedgerows. The hedgerow standard, part of the new Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme, will pay farmers to plant more hedgerows, leave them uncut or raise the cutting height.

■ Marine Protected Areas

Marsha De Cordova: [\[49270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effects of fully and highly-protected Marine Protected Areas on the (a) ecological health of inshore waters and (b) livelihoods of local fishing communities.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, on 19 July 2021, PQ UIN [33198](#).

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fishing Vessels

Marsha De Cordova: [\[49267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether plans to introduce management measures in 40 English offshore Marine Protected Areas over the next three years will include site wide bans on both bottom trawlers and supertrawlers.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, on 19 July 2021, PQ UIN [33199](#).

Marsha De Cordova: [\[49268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Government will use its new powers under the Fisheries Act 2020 to restrict the fishing licences of supertrawlers and bottom trawlers and prevent them from operating in offshore UK Marine Protected Areas.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, on 19 July 2021, PQ UIN [33200](#).

Marsha De Cordova: [\[49269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the compatibility of the activity of supertrawlers and bottom trawlers in UK Marine Protected Areas with its target to protect 30 per cent of the UK's oceans by 2030.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, on 19 July 2021, PQ UIN [33197](#).

Marsha De Cordova: [\[49271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential effect on mobile fish stocks of banning supertrawlers from the offshore Marine Protected Areas network, in the context

of the Government's plan to introduce management measures in 40 English offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPA) over the next three years.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion on 23 July 2021, PQ UIN [33201](#).

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[49272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits relating to blue carbon of banning bottom trawling in Marine Protected Areas.

Rebecca Pow:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion, on 23 July 2021, PQ UIN [33202](#).

■ **Plants: Imports**

Justin Madders:

[\[45849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which companies are involved with delivering Border Control Points for plant inspections.

Victoria Prentis:

High-priority plants and plant products imported from the EU, and all regulated plant and plant products from the rest of the world, are currently inspected at destination by plant health inspectors from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). Inspections of all regulated plants and plant products will be conducted at designated border control posts (BCPs) from 1st July 2022 by APHA inspectors. BCPs are being established by commercial ports and by Government at the Short Straits. We do not hold details on which companies are employed by the commercial ports.

DfT is responsible for the construction of the Sevington Border Control Post which will accommodate inspections of plants, plant products, products of animal origin (POAO) arriving through Eurotunnel, and large animals and livestock and Defra is leasing a second facility in the Dover area for POAO.

Defra is engaging contractors and other companies to support the delivery and operation of the inland Border Control Posts and contracts will be awarded once the process is concluded.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: British Nationals Abroad**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[51022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 September 2021 to Question 44429, of those who have

registered their presence in Afghanistan with his Department, how many have indicated that they live in Slough constituency.

Amanda Milling:

As stated in the answer to Question 44429, we have asked all British nationals still in Afghanistan to register their presence. This process does not require individuals to indicate their UK base although some people have chosen to do so. As of 21 September, no individuals on the database have said they live in Slough.

■ **Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[49207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with NGOs working in Afghanistan on the current humanitarian needs in that country.

Amanda Milling:

To ensure aid reaches the people that need it most, the FCDO are in daily contact with partners in Afghanistan and will continue to engage with them directly as the situation develops. The week before last in London we hosted a round table with NGOs to better understand how we can support their life-saving work. On 20 August, the FCDO convened a meeting with 30 NGOs working in the areas of development, humanitarian support, human rights and media freedom, to listen to the issues they are currently facing in country. Further meetings took place on 26 August and 15 September to discuss continued humanitarian access and the longer-term development needs.

■ **Afghanistan: Judges**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[49053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help female judges in Afghanistan avoid potential persecution by the Taliban.

Amanda Milling:

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

■ **Afghanistan: Pakistan**

Stephen Farry:

[\[49310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he is made to his Pakistani counterpart on ensuring that Afghan refugees who entered Pakistan from Afghanistan without the proper paperwork are able to legally leave Pakistan.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary has met with Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi and discussed working together to support the people of Afghanistan and to ensure safe passage out of the country.

■ Afghanistan: Repatriation**Neale Hanvey:**[\[49291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many civil servants have been engaged in dealing with enquiries from hon. Members since the fall of the previous Afghan government with regard to (a) UK citizens seeking to return to the UK and (b) Afghan nationals seeking safe passage to the UK.

Amanda Milling:

Responding to MPs' cases and correspondence remains a top priority for the Government and the FCDO has been working tirelessly to undertake the task. Staff from across the global FCDO network have been pulled into the crisis surge team along with colleagues from MOD and HMRC. We have had multiple shifts of over 100 people working throughout the day and night, 7 days a week to deliver and will continue to prioritise incoming correspondence.

Neale Hanvey:[\[49293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) UK citizens have returned to the UK and (b) Afghan nationals seeking safe passage to the UK have been resettled in the UK since the fall of the previous Afghan government.

Amanda Milling:

Since 15 August, the UK has evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. That includes: over 8,000 British Nationals, close to 5,000 Afghans who loyally served the UK, along with their dependents, and around 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including Chevening scholars, academics, researchers, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others. This is in addition to the almost 2,000 people we brought to the UK between April and August under the ARAP scheme. Rapid Deployment Teams have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to reinforce our Embassy staff to process arrivals from Afghanistan. Teams have also deployed to Qatar and UAE to assist our operations there and we are providing consular support to British nationals who were evacuated by other allies, including via US airbases in Europe.

Neale Hanvey:[\[49294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding the Government has allocated to support for (a) UK citizens seeking to return to the UK from Afghanistan and (b) Afghan nationals seeking safe passage to the UK following the fall of the previous Afghan government.

Amanda Milling:

On 3 September FCDO announced £30 million of additional humanitarian funding to assist the regional response to the surge in refugees. £10 million was immediately made available to humanitarian partners, such as the UNHCR, in order to enable essential supplies such as shelters, sanitation and hygiene facilities to be erected at the Afghanistan border. The remaining £20 million will be allocated to countries that experience a significant increase in refugees to support reception and registration facilities and provide essential services and supplies. In addition, the FCDO chartered 30 flights for the Afghan evacuation, at a total cost of circa £7 million.

Claudia Webbe:[\[49298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the families of British nationals who have been evacuated from Afghanistan to (a) Italy and (b) other third countries have access to essentials and basic necessities.

Amanda Milling:

Consulate staff in all British Embassies and Consulates are available to assist families of British Nationals. In addition, Rapid Deployment Teams (RDT) have been sent to Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Dubai to reinforce our Embassy staff to assist arrivals from Afghanistan.

■ Afghanistan: Taliban**Alan Brown:**[\[49190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 10 September 2021 to Question 41005, whether he convened internal departmental meetings to discuss the Taliban upsurge in Afghanistan on 16 August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

The former Foreign Secretary has overseen the FCDO's response to the situation in Afghanistan throughout, including directing the FCDO's crisis response.

■ Bahrain: Capital Punishment**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[50622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the decision published by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, published on 16 June 2021, which states that the detention of Bahraini death row inmates, Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa, is arbitrary and in contravention of international law, what assessment the Government has made of the implications for its policies of the decision by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; and if the Government will make representations on that decision to the Government of Bahrain at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[50623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the case of Bahraini political prisoner, Hassan Mushaima, and representations from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the EU Parliament for his immediate release, if the Government will make representations to the Government of Bahrain on the immediate release of Hassan Mushaima from prison.

James Cleverly:

We continue to monitor and raise the cases of Hassan Mushaima, Husain Moosa, Mohammed Ramadhan and others, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the Oversight bodies. We understand that the Bahraini Government is in contact with the UN regarding its human rights reform effort.

■ China: Human Rights

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[49051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of reports of the Hong Kong Police arresting senior members of the groups that organised vigils in memory of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Amanda Milling:

On 8 and 9 September, Hong Kong's national security police arrested seven general committee members of the Hong Kong Alliance. On 9 September, police searched the Alliance's headquarters, and the June 4th Museum, seizing documents, computers and promotional materials. This action against the Hong Kong Alliance is a further demonstration that the National Security Law is not being used for its original purpose, as stated by Beijing, to target just "a tiny number of criminals who seriously endanger national security". Rather it is being used to deter freedom of expression and now to dismantle civil society in Hong Kong.

The UK will not look the other way on Hong Kong, and we will not duck our historic responsibilities to its people. As a co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, we will continue to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[49052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of reports of the Hong Kong authorities raiding a museum on the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Amanda Milling:

On 8 and 9 September, Hong Kong's national security police arrested seven general committee members of the Hong Kong Alliance. On 9 September, police searched the Alliance's headquarters, and the June 4th Museum, seizing documents, computers and promotional materials. This action against the Hong Kong Alliance is a further demonstration that the National Security Law is not being used for its

original purpose, as stated by Beijing, to target just "a tiny number of criminals who seriously endanger national security". Rather it is being used to deter freedom of expression and now to dismantle civil society in Hong Kong.

The UK will not look the other way on Hong Kong, and we will not duck our historic responsibilities to its people. As a co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, we will continue to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations.

■ **Commonwealth: Cultural Relations**

Stuart Anderson:

[\[49276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to strengthen cultural exchange programmes across the Commonwealth.

Amanda Milling:

Cultural exchange, including the delivery of in person and digital programmes across the arts, education and English in over 50 Commonwealth countries is facilitated through our diplomatic missions and the British Council, as the UK's international organisation for cultural relations. In 2020/21, funding of £25.4 million to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, further supported educational and cultural exchange in the Commonwealth. In 2022, Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games provide valuable opportunities to strengthen cultural relations across our Commonwealth family. Ahead of the Games, the Commonwealth Connections Project will twin 60 schools across the West Midlands with schools in other Commonwealth countries, encouraging these young people to explore shared Commonwealth values; whilst an exciting Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme will boost collaborations between artists in the West Midlands and Commonwealth countries.

■ **Democratic Republic of Congo: Peacekeeping Operations**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[49089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the UK's contribution to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in fulfilling their stated objective to take all necessary measures to ensure rapid, dynamic and integrated effective protection of civilians under threat of physical violence in the provinces where the Mission is currently deployed; and if he will make a statement.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is deeply concerned about violence and instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), especially in the east. We are committed to promoting stability and supporting peacebuilding in DRC, both bilaterally and through the multilateral system. In 2020/21 we provided approximately £52 million and three military staff officers to

support the UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO. Protecting communities in the DRC from violence is an immediate priority, which is why the UK, alongside other UN Security Council members, has ensured that it remains central to the mandate of MONUSCO. We also mandated MONUSCO to reinforce its troops in Beni, North Kivu during the Mission's last mandate renewal.

We are working with MONUSCO and international partners to support more effective operations against armed groups, in particular through reforms to the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB). Enhanced Quick Reaction Forces, an adequately manned HQ and enhanced in-theatre intelligence capabilities should allow the FIB to be more robust in tackling the continued threat of armed groups in North Kivu and Ituri. We expect tangible progress and results by the end of 2021. We continue to urge the DRC Government and the UN to work together to better protect civilians.

■ **Developing Countries: Sustainable Development**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[51018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which minister in her Department is responsible for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Amanda Milling:

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, is responsible for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Email**

Brendan O'Hara:

[\[49163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many applications have been submitted to the his Department's special cases email address since its launch in August 2021.

Amanda Milling:

As of 8 September, the Special Cases mailbox had received over 15,000 emails. This is not the same as "cases", since by definition "special cases" are determined by exemption not by application. These emails are being assessed and categorised for action as part of the Government's overall processing of Afghan nationals' cases.

■ **Gulf States: Human Rights**

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[50331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf, entitled The cost of repression, published on 6 July 2021, what assessment the Government has made of the implications for its policies of the recommendations in that report; and if the Government will publish a response to that report.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[50624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf, entitled *The cost of repression*, published on 6 July 2021, what assessment the Government has made of the implications for its policies of the findings in that report that the beneficiaries of the Government's Integrated Activity Fund and Gulf Strategy Fund have facilitated and perpetrated human rights violations and potential war crimes and that the Government has made misleading and deceptive statements about those funds.

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.

■ Myanmar: Arms Trade

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[50973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her international counterparts on an arms embargo on Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of an arms embargo on Myanmar. We are clear that countries should not sell arms to the Myanmar military. The UK helped secure and strengthen a comprehensive EU arms embargo on Myanmar following the 2017 Rohingya crisis. Since we left the EU, we have transitioned this into domestic law. We are working closely with partners to coordinate pressure on those who sell arms to the military, and have used our leadership role at the G7 and UN to this end. On 5 May, the UK secured a G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting Communiqué that committed G7 members to continue to prevent the supply of arms and technical assistance to the military. The G7 Leaders' Communiqué of 13 June

reaffirmed G7 unity on pursuing additional measures should they prove necessary. On 18 June, the UK worked with partners to deliver a UN General Assembly Resolution which urged member states to prevent the flow of arms to Myanmar.

■ Myanmar: Food Aid

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[50974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the need for food assistance in Myanmar for internally displaced people in (a) Kachin and (b) Northern Shan.

Amanda Milling:

The UK remains one of the leading donors supporting the humanitarian response in Myanmar. Since the coup, we have provided £15.3 million in humanitarian funding for the Red Cross, UN, and local and International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Where necessary, we have also reprioritised humanitarian funding towards urgent needs, including food and Covid assistance, in Kachin, Shan, Chin and the Southeast. Over the last year the UK has been building up the humanitarian response capacity of communities themselves through partners. This has enabled the UK to get support to very hard to reach communities. Through a network of local responders and communities, 25,000 newly displaced people have been reached with cash and emergency food support in Northern Shan. In Kachin, our partners have reached over 7,500 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with food and cash assistance. UK support has been critical in covering major food gaps in several IDP camps between March and August 2021, when other partners could not reach or support these people. The UK remains strongly committed to helping those most in need in Myanmar.

■ Myanmar: Politics and Government

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[50972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the political situation in Myanmar.

Amanda Milling:

The UK Government condemns the military coup in Myanmar, the violence against the people of Myanmar and the detention of members of the civilian government and civil society, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint. The state of emergency, and all restrictions on rights and freedoms, should be lifted immediately and power should be returned to a democratically elected government. I [Minister Milling] am particularly concerned at reports this week of significant, indiscriminate violence by the military in Chin State, and elsewhere in the country. The UK is committed to supporting a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

■ Overseas Aid

Lee Anderson: [\[49278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish (a) quarterly, (b) biannual or (c) annual reports on all multilateral bodies in which the UK participates documenting issues affecting their effectiveness as they occur.

Amanda Milling:

The FCDO has close and productive relationships with a range of multilateral bodies and we make regular assessments of their effectiveness and efficiency through all of our delegations and missions. Reviews of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) programmes delivered through multilateral partners are undertaken annually and published on Dev Tracker (<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk>).

■ South Asia: Refugees

Rachael Maskell: [\[49208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with NGOs working in (a) Pakistan and (b) other third countries about the humanitarian requirements of supporting large volumes of refugees in their country.

Amanda Milling:

The FCDO is in daily contact with development partners about Afghanistan and will continue to engage with them directly as the situation develops. On 20 August, FCDO officials convened a meeting with 30 NGOs working in the areas of development, humanitarian support, human rights and media freedom, to listen to the issues they are currently facing in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. Further meetings took place on 26 August and 15 September to discuss humanitarian access and longer-term development needs. The previous Foreign Secretary visited Pakistan on 2-3 September, and discussed the economic and humanitarian situation with Prime Minister Imran Khan and other senior Pakistani officials. The British High Commissioner in Islamabad has also convened donors, UN agencies and development partners to discuss these challenges.

■ Sri Lanka: Police Scotland

Kenny MacAskill: [\[51028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what date the British High Commission in Colombo formally notified Sri Lanka's Inspector General of Police that Police Scotland had decided to pause its programme of work with Sri Lanka.

Amanda Milling:

The British High Commission in Colombo formally notified Sri Lanka's Inspector General of Police that Police Scotland had decided to pause its programme of work with Sri Lanka on 2 July 2021. The training has focused on developing community policing, supporting women in the Sri Lankan police service, and improving the

response to sexual and gender-based violence. Our police training is currently undergoing a review. Police Scotland officers have not travelled to Sri Lanka since the start of the coronavirus pandemic for public health reasons.

■ Uyghur Tribunal

Ms Lyn Brown: [\[49081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of findings made by the Uyghur Tribunal.

Amanda Milling:

We are following the work of the Uyghur Tribunal closely and will study any resulting report carefully.

■ Western Sahara: Self-determination of States

Ben Lake: [\[50747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 91447 on Western Sahara: Politics and Government, whether her predecessor raised the inclusion of independence as an option in the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara during discussions with the Moroccan Foreign Minister.

James Cleverly:

The UK supports UN-led efforts to reach a lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. We regularly discuss the situation in Western Sahara with the parties and encourage them to re-engage with the UN-led political process.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Care Homes and Hospitals: Coronavirus

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[48129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether vulnerable residents in (a) care homes and (b) hospital facilities will be less at risk of serious illness in the event that they are infected with covid-19 by staff who have been fully vaccinated against that disease; to what extent being fully vaccinated against covid-19 prevents a person from transmitting that virus to vulnerable people; and if he will make a statement.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 September 2021]: Several studies have provided evidence that vaccines are effective at preventing infection and symptomatic disease. Uninfected individuals cannot transmit the virus, therefore the vaccines are also likely to be effective at preventing transmission from staff to vulnerable patients. Data from Scotland has also shown that household contacts of vaccinated healthcare workers

are at reduced risk, which is in line with the studies on infection. There may be additional benefit due to prevention of infection, if some individuals who become infected despite vaccination are also at a reduced risk of transmitting because of reduced duration or level of viral shedding.

■ Contraceptives

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[49973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that access to long-acting reversible contraception is equitable across (a) geographies and (b) demographics.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[49974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase access to contraceptive services among (a) people living with disabilities, (b) black people and people of colour and (c) ethnic minorities through targeted interventions.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Department is currently developing a new Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy, which will be published later this year. We are considering issues related to equitable access to long-acting reversible contraception across both geographies and demographics and the potential use of targeted interventions as we develop the Strategy.

■ Coronavirus: Contact Tracing and Screening

Rachael Maskell: [\[49195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of returning covid-19 testing and contact tracing to local public health teams to lead.

Maggie Throup:

We have no plans to make such an assessment.

NHS Test and Trace and local authorities already work within a joint framework focused on preventing, identifying and managing local outbreaks and engaging with local communities to support effective testing, contact tracing and self-isolation.

Within this framework, local public health teams have more control through community-led testing, expanded local tracing partnerships and the sharing of data, insight and analysis used to identify clusters of new infections and potential local outbreaks.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Sarah Atherton: [\[48386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of splitting the reported data on covid-19

deaths within 28 days of a positive test by people who are (a) fully vaccinated, (b) single vaccinated and (c) not vaccinated.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 16 September 2021]: Public Health England assessed that it would be in the public interest to publish data on COVID-19 deaths within 28 days of a positive test by vaccination status. This data is published in the weekly vaccine surveillance report, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report>

Sir Charles Walker:

[49064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many deaths recorded within 28 days of positive covid-19 test occurred on each day from (a) 1 August 2020 to 13 September 2020 and (b) on the corresponding days in 2021.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The information requested is shown in the following table.

DATE OF DEATH	2020	2021
1 August	9	73
2 August	8	65
3 August	14	66
4 August	10	70
5 August	3	85
6 August	9	79
7 August	7	85
8 August	11	65
9 August	8	68
10 August	11	68
11 August	10	79
12 August	6	91
13 August	7	86
14 August	6	79
15 August	11	70
16 August	4	69

DATE OF DEATH	2020	2021
17 August	12	93
18 August	7	78
19 August	2	91
20 August	8	101
21 August	7	87
22 August	6	102
23 August	13	94
24 August	5	102
25 August	11	86
26 August	11	102
27 August	8	104
28 August	8	99
29 August	5	103
30 August	6	88
31 August	7	92
1 September	2	92
2 September	8	100
3 September	6	118
4 September	6	107
5 September	12	106
6 September	8	113
7 September	13	107
8 September	9	96
9 September	9	107*
10 September	12	74*
11 September	10	55*

DATE OF DEATH	2020	2021
12 September	18	56*
13 September	14	13*

Source: UK Coronavirus Dashboard - Number of deaths of people who had had a positive test result for COVID-19 and died within 28 days of the first positive test. Data extracted 14 September 2021.

https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths?areaType=nation%26areaName=England#card-deaths_within_28_days_of_positive_test_by_date_of_death

Note:

*As the above data is based on date of death, data for the most recent days are subject to reporting delay as death reports can take several days to be submitted to Public Health England following the death of a person.

■ Coronavirus: Quarantine

Paul Blomfield:

[50003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether international students arriving on UK university campuses, who have had one or more of covid-19 vaccination dose from a MHRA-approved vaccine outside of the UK's vaccination programme, will be exempt from the requirement to self-isolate in the event that a close contact is a confirmed covid-19 case, in line with the position for their UK peers.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: International students vaccinated abroad, including a vaccine approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, are required to self-isolate if identified as a close contact. All those testing positive must self-isolate, regardless of vaccination status or where they were vaccinated.

Zarah Sultana:

[50158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide mental health support for workers having to self-isolate after receiving a positive covid-19 PCR test.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Councils should work with individuals to identify whether they can support themselves, seek assistance from family and friends or require additional help. Councils should be ready to signpost assistance relating to mental health, including support groups, charity and voluntary sector services, telephone help lines and online support. Since March 2021, the Government has made £85.5 million available to councils to deliver practical and emotional support and this funding will continue until March 2022. Contact tracers will

continue to direct individuals to COVID-19 guidance on mental health, their general practitioner or NHS 111 for the appropriate support.

■ **Coronavirus: Schools**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[49201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the prevalence of covid-19 infections being brought into schools as a result of pupils not isolating when other family members have tested positive for covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

No specific assessment has been made. The Joint Biosecurity Centre is working with regional partnership teams to closely monitor the impact of COVID-19 infections as a result of schools returning.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Sarah Olney:

[\[50125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of adding only those providers that have been vetted and found to meet the minimum standards for the type of commercial covid-19 testing service they offer to the list of private providers of covid-19 testing on the Government website.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Private providers are added to the GOV.UK list once their self-declaration has been assessed by United Kingdom Accreditation Service as meeting the Government's minimum standards. This includes applying for and progressing through the three-staged accreditation process providing sample collection and/or sample testing services.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[45197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons his Department is not collecting data at local authority level on infection rates (a) among black and minority ethnic residents and (b) according to socioeconomic data on vaccine take-up.

Maggie Throup:

Public Health England (PHE) does collect data at local authority level on the ethnicity and socioeconomic status for COVID-19 cases and people who have received COVID-19 vaccination. Directors of Public Health and their teams have access to the COVID-19 Situational Awareness Portal which includes fully identifiable demographic information. The Portal also includes vaccination data by date of vaccinations, sex, age band and ethnicity.

PHE publishes case data by ethnicity at national and regional levels in the weekly flu and COVID-19 surveillance report which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-flu-and-covid-19-surveillance-reports-2021-to-2022-season>

Data on cases and vaccination at local authority level is available at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

Daisy Cooper: [47055]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy for children aged 12-15 who are eligible for the covid-19 vaccination due to clinical vulnerability to isolate at home for 3 weeks after their first vaccine.

Maggie Throup:

We have no plans to do so.

Daisy Cooper: [47056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2021 to Question 32520, when British citizens who received their covid-19 vaccinations overseas will be able to register their vaccine status for access to an NHS Covid Pass.

Maggie Throup:

A pilot scheme to enable some United Kingdom residents vaccinated overseas to demonstrate their vaccination status through the NHS COVID Pass will be launched in England from the end of September. Further development will be undertaken once the pilot is underway.

Jonathan Edwards: [49091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether doses of the Astrazeneca Covishield have been rebranded as Vaxzevria upon distribution to UK citizens.

Jonathan Edwards: [49092]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many doses of the Astrazeneca Covishield branded vaccines batches have been purchased by the Government and and how many have been used.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: No doses of the AstraZeneca Covishield branded vaccines have been purchased by the Government. All AstraZeneca vaccine doses approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and administered in the United Kingdom were branded as the 'COVID-19 vaccine AstraZeneca' which is now known commercially as 'Vaxzeria'. The MHRA has not approved doses branded as 'Covishield' and none have been administered or rebranded as Vaxzevria in the UK. All AstraZeneca vaccines are the same product and appear on the NHS COVID Pass as Vaxzevria.

Rachael Maskell:

[49196]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he will make available for parents and children to be able to have supported conversations about the covid-19 vaccine for 12 to 15 year olds.

Maggie Throup:

Additional information for parents and children to have supported conversations about the COVID-19 vaccine for 12-15 year olds is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-children-and-young-people>

A consent form and information leaflet provided by the School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) team will be used to seek parental consent. Parents will also be provided with a contact number for the SAIS team in case of any queries. The information leaflet is addressed to the child as the recipient of the vaccine and encourages them to discuss the decision about the vaccine with their parents. There are accessible versions of the consent form and leaflets available for those with a learning disability or who live with autism. There are braille and British Sign Language videos to order or download and translations will also be made available.

Marsha De Cordova:

[49275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help increase vaccine uptake among Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups given the figure for vaccine hesitancy among Black and Black British adults is at 21 per cent. compared with 4 per cent. for white adults.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: A local, community-led approach, with support provided from Government, NHS England and NHS Improvement and local authorities to coordinate and enable action, is in place. Directors of public health receive daily updates on vaccine uptake in their areas, broken down to small areas and key subgroups including by gender and ethnicity.

On 25 January £23.75million was invested in the Community Champions Scheme. The Scheme targets older people, disabled people, and people from ethnic minority backgrounds who are more likely to suffer long-term impacts and poor outcomes from COVID-19. Local authorities participating in the Community Champions Scheme provide monthly progress reports.

We have also provided information and advice via TV, radio and social media, translated into 13 languages. Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice has appeared in over 600 national, regional, local and specialist titles including media aimed at Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati and Pakistani communities. We have met with faith leaders and the Moral and Ethical Advisory Group on COVID-19 immunisation and sought consideration of how best to clearly communicate about the benefits of the vaccine.

Catherine West: [\[50116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when people who have received one of their two covid-19 vaccinations in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland will be able to obtain an NHS Covid pass.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Live data flows have been set up by NHS Digital between England and Wales and England and Scotland, which update both the general practitioner (GP) record and NHS COVID Pass status. Those vaccinated in England but registered with a GP in Wales or Scotland, can access the certification services provided in Wales and Scotland and vice versa.

There is currently no data sharing process in place with Northern Ireland, though we aim to put this in place as soon as possible. We are also urgently developing temporary solutions to enable certification until the data flows are established.

Anne Marie Morris: [\[50981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there are any barriers to people receiving one covid-19 vaccination in Scotland and one in England.

Maggie Throup:

COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use are commensurate across the United Kingdom and are recognised by NHS England and NHS Improvement. Data sharing agreements are in place to ensure health records of individuals vaccinated outside of their home nation can access their proof of vaccination via the relevant health authority.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[50987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to allow people who have received a covid-19 vaccination outside of the UK to register that vaccination on the NHS covid pass.

Maggie Throup:

A pilot scheme to enable some United Kingdom residents vaccinated overseas to demonstrate their vaccination status through the NHS COVID Pass will be launched in England from the end of September. Further development will be undertaken once the pilot is underway.

■ Emergency Services: Sirens

Mark Pritchard: [\[49076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he plans to have with representatives of the emergency services on (a) proposals for an agreed national standard for decibel levels for sirens on emergency vehicles and (b) the noise pollution impact of those sirens on (i) pedestrians, (ii) cyclists, (iii) other road users and (iv) residential areas.

Edward Argar:

There are currently no discussions planned.

■ **Food****Ben Bradley:**[\[49256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the report entitled National Food Strategy: part one, published in July 2021, what plans his Department has to engage with the food and drink manufacturing industry ahead of publication of the Government's Food Strategy White Paper.

Maggie Throup:

The Department plans to engage with the food and drink manufacturing industry where appropriate. We will also engage with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as it develops its white paper on the National Food Strategy.

■ **Food: Labelling****Justin Madders:**[\[45864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many companies have received fines under the Food Information Regulations 2014 for non-disclosure or provision of incorrect information on the presence of allergens in food in each year since 2014.

Maggie Throup:

The Food Standard Agency has been notified of 20 successful prosecutions related to nine businesses since 2016, which is shown in the following table:

YEAR	NUMBER OF OFFENCES	NUMBER OF BUSINESSES
2016	2	2
2017	8	1
2018	4	3
2019	6	3

Data prior to 2016 is not held centrally in the format requested as individual local authorities, as the bodies responsible for taking enforcement action in relation to food law offences, submitted this information on a voluntary basis.

■ **Health Services****Rachael Maskell:**[\[43556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposals in the Health and Care Bill on geographic equity of access to healthcare.

Edward Argar:

The proposals in the Health and Care Bill will allow NHS England to delegate some of their responsibilities for commissioning services to integrated care boards (ICBs).

This will give ICBs the flexibility to decide how to deliver their functions based on the needs of their local population. NHS England will continue to have oversight to ensure that these are being effectively discharged.

■ Influenza: Vaccination**Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [46979]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timetable is commencement of the national flu immunisation programme for 2021 to 2022.

Maggie Throup:

The national flu immunisation programme commenced on 1 September 2021.

Rachael Maskell:**[49197]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made timeliness of the delivery of the flu vaccine on (a) flu infection rates and (b) hospital admissions and (c) projected deaths from flu this winter.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Public Health England has not made a formal assessment.

■ Integrated Care Boards: Recruitment**Jonathan Ashworth:****[50033]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the overall cost of the process to recruit, appoint and designate chairs and chief executives of the anticipated 42 NHS Integrated Care Boards across England.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The recruitment process for these posts is still ongoing and projected overall costs are not yet confirmed. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement have minimised the costs of recruitment through national and regional co-ordination.

■ Joint Replacements: Ellesmere Port and Neston**Justin Madders:****[45168]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current waiting time is for joint replacement surgery in Ellesmere Port and Neston constituency.

Edward Argar:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Lung Cancer: Screening

Jim Shannon:

[\[49143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 27 July 2021 to Question 36637 on Lung Cancer: Screening, what criteria his Department plans to use to inform its decision on the introduction of population screening for lung cancer as a result of the recommendation from the National Screening Committee.

Maria Caulfield:

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is currently considering the evidence for a population lung cancer screening programme. A recommendation will then be submitted to the Department ministers for a final decision alongside a Departmental impact assessment. The UK NSC will assess the effectiveness of the test and subsequent interventions, as well as cost effectiveness and feasibility of implementation in making their recommendation. The Department will review these criteria alongside the recommendation.

■ Members: Correspondence

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[46955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to reply to correspondence from the hon. Member for Hemel Hempstead of 19 April 2021, case no MP68181, on specialist services for spinal cord injury.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 15 September 2021.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[49978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 30 June 2021 from the hon. Member for West Lancashire regarding medical exemptions for covid-19 PCR testing, reference ZA56865.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: We replied to the hon. Member on 17 September 2021.

■ Migrants: Afghanistan

Sarah Owen:

[\[43709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of waiving the fee for hotel quarantine for people arriving from Afghanistan (a) who worked for the UK's military and (b) as part of the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 9 September 2021]: There is a cross-Government effort to design a package for arrivals from Afghanistan, including the support that is needed to help these families relocate to the United Kingdom. The cost of managed quarantine is

being considered in these discussions and we are actively looking to provide support where the need is greatest.

■ MMR Vaccine

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[49040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will hold discussions with representatives of GPs to establish a national assessment of the outcome of the measles, mumps and rubella catch-up programme for 10 and 11 year olds.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: Ministers meet regularly with general practitioner stakeholders, including the Royal College of General Practitioners and the British Medical Association to discuss a range of issues.

A national catch-up campaign was launched in April 2013 with the objective of ensuring that 95% of children aged 10 to 16 years old received at least one dose of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine. Subsequent evaluation estimated that vaccine coverage in England following the campaign was close to 95%.

■ NHS Trusts: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [\[45206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS Trusts are meeting the 85 per cent activity threshold for the Elective Recovery Fund.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 13 September 2021]: The Elective Recovery Fund threshold for July 2021 was originally set at 85% but was subsequently updated to 95%. Delivery is assessed at integrated care system (ICS) level. While final payment data is not yet available for July, in June, 40 ICSs delivered activity above then threshold of 80%.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Mr Andrew Mitchell: [\[49038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on NHS frontline staffing levels of the advice that from 28 weeks all NHS staff who are pregnant should work from home and if that is not possible take sick leave or be suspended on full pay.

Edward Argar:

The Department has made no such assessment.

■ NHS: Cost Effectiveness

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[49101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what efficiencies have been identified in the NHS in the last 12 months; and what relationship will there be between those efficiencies and the new Health and Social Care Levy.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service has continued to implement programmes to improve efficiency, including surgical hubs which streamline processes to provide more operations per day; transformation of patient pathways; patient-initiated follow-ups which provide patients flexibility to arrange follow-ups as needed and avoiding unnecessary appointments; virtual appointments; and advice and guidance which enable clinicians to advise each other more quickly on test results and referral options. The Elective Recovery Accelerator programmes will also address NHS adoption of productivity improvements. These programmes will be supported by the new Health and Social Care Levy.

■ NHS: Labour Turnover**Rachael Maskell:**[\[49204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to retain NHS staff.

Edward Argar:

The NHS People Plan sets out a range of actions to improve retention including improving flexible working opportunities and building a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.

All staff have access to a comprehensive psychological and emotional support package, including health and wellbeing apps, a help and a text service and 40 dedicated mental health hubs that are either established or currently mobilising across the country. In addition, the NHS Retention Programme is developing and implementing interventions to support staff to stay. To address challenges resulting from the pandemic, we have also established the People Recovery Task Force, to provide expert advice on initiatives to support National Health Service staff.

■ NHS: Racial Discrimination**Peter Gibson:**[\[49283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support victims of racial discrimination in the NHS.

Edward Argar:

The NHS People Plan sets out actions to address racial discrimination, including the appointment of an equalities champion in every National Health Service organisation, equipping line managers to discuss equality, diversity and inclusion as part of wellbeing conversations, and launching a joint training programme for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians and Workforce Race Equality Standard Experts. NHS England and NHS Improvement will publish a race equality strategy later this year, building on the actions in the People Plan.

■ NHS: Vacancies**Rob Roberts:** [\[48375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many non-clinical vacancies exist in the NHS with salary expectations in excess of £160,000 per annum as at 13 September 2021. .

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 16 September 2021]: The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ Oral Tobacco**Adam Afriyie:** [\[49083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care of 10 June 2021, Official Report, Column 465WH, what recent progress has been made towards the review into Swedish snus; and what her planned timetable is for that review.

Maggie Throup:

The sale of oral tobacco is banned in the United Kingdom under the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016. The Department is undertaking a post implementation review of these regulations and is analysing the evidence base submitted through a public consultation and external research. This includes evidence on oral tobacco. The Department is due to publish its response later this year.

■ Public Health: Disability**Sarah Olney:** [\[47034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that public health services are physically accessible to disabled people, who may be more frequent users of such services.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 15 September 2021]: All providers of goods and services, including National Health Service organisations and others that provide public health services, are required to make reasonable adjustments where physical barriers prevent access in existing buildings under the Equality Act 2010.

NHS England and NHS Improvement produce health building notices to provide best practice guidance on the design and planning of new healthcare buildings and on the adaptation or extension of existing facilities, including to improve accessibility, which are available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/estates/health-building-notes/>

■ Royal Shrewsbury Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[43457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of delays in the modernisation of health services in Shropshire on trends in the adequacy of A&E services at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

Edward Argar:

No recent assessment has been made.

■ Sugar: Consumption

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[49039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 30 June 2021 to Question 22142 on Food: Sugar, what the outcome of discussions held with Public Health England was on the sugar reduction programme and the voluntary ambition reduction of 20 per cent.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The fourth progress report for the sugar reduction programme is expected to be published by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities in late autumn 2021.

■ Travel Restrictions: South Africa

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[45795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reassess South Africa's red list categorisation in response to South Africa's low covid-19 infection rate.

Maggie Throup:

All countries, including South Africa, are continually monitored as part of the Joint Biosecurity Centre's assessments which are reviewed every three weeks.

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [\[50030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that minimum standards of performance and reliability are met by private-sector providers of covid-19 polymerase chain reaction tests for British nationals returning from overseas in respect of those providers accredited by his Department.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: For day two and day eight testing, we closely monitor the performance, including delivery and testing services, of private providers to ensure a high-quality service to customers. Those providing inadequate services receive a five-day warning to demonstrate they have rectified their service and if they do not, are removed from the GOV.UK list. Private providers may be reinstated to the

list once they have undertaken corrective action and provided the Department with such evidence.

■ Travel: Quarantine

Theresa Villiers: [\[43425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review his policy of quarantine for travellers who have had covid-19 vaccinations from two different suppliers following an assessment of the evidence on the effect of mixing vaccines on levels of protection from covid-19.

Maggie Throup:

From 22 September, international travellers vaccinated with two different doses across approved countries or two different doses of the approved vaccines will be eligible for reduced quarantine and testing requirements when returning to the United Kingdom from non 'red list' countries.

Zarah Sultana: [\[45935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including medical staff, who are doubly vaccinated, to the list of jobs that are exempt from managed quarantine following international travel.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 14 September 2021]: In limited circumstances, quarantine exemption is made for arrivals to the United Kingdom. These circumstances are largely job-related and focus on occupations and services deemed essential to enable the country to continue to function effectively through the pandemic. For example, nurses coming from or travelling through red-list countries commencing immediate National Health Service employment in England may quarantine in hospital accommodation. The list of job-related exemptions is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, which includes an assessment of the needs of jobs in all sectors, such as medical staff.

■ WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Lee Anderson: [\[49279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to what extent the UK delegation at the forthcoming Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control will (a) have its policy positions determined by his Department in advance and (b) have leeway to determine its own policy positions during the Conference.

Maggie Throup:

The Department's policy position at the ninth Conference of the Parties (COP9) of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control will be determined in advance of the meeting, in accordance with the 2017 Tobacco Control Plan and our ambition to be smoke free by 2030.

Departmental officials will review the agenda items and papers along with relevant required actions for opportunities to present the United Kingdom's position, in compliance with the rules of procedure at COP9.

HOME OFFICE

■ Anjem Choudary

Jim Shannon:

[\[49144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps are being taken to monitor Anjem Choudary speaking in public since his release from prison.

Damian Hinds:

I am not able to comment on individual cases. Any monitoring of individuals speaking in public is an operational matter for police where legal, necessary and proportionate.

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Claudia Webbe:

[\[45296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals are in asylum detention centres; and what plans her Department has to remove those nationals from detention centres.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office publishes data on people in immigration detention in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)'. The number of people in detention on the last day of each quarter are published in table Det_D02 of the [Detention detailed datasets](#). The data include those detained under immigration powers in HM prisons from July 2017 and can be broken down by nationality of detainee and place of detention.

The latest data relates to the number of people in detention at the end of June 2021.

The Government is committed to a fair and humane immigration policy that welcomes those here legally, but tackles abuse and protects the public. There is a presumption in favour of liberty for all individuals and decisions to detain are taken on a case by case basis. Published Home Office detention policy is clear that detention must only ever be used sparingly and for the shortest period necessary.

Once a person is in detention, regular reviews are undertaken to ensure that their detention remains lawful, appropriate and proportionate. We do not detain people indefinitely. In order to protect the public, it is important that suitable accommodation is sourced prior to their release due to the risks associated with managing offenders in the community and the often-specific accommodation requirements.

■ Asylum: Children in Care**Tim Loughton:** [\[50936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seeking minors placed in bridge hotels have subsequently been taken into care by local authorities in 2021 to date.

Kevin Foster:

The transfer of minors from hotel accommodation into Local Authority care is fluid and evolving and data is not held in a reportable way, to provide them would be done at a disproportionate cost.

We publish statistics on how many unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors are transferred into Local Authority care at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2021>

■ Asylum: LGBT People**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[50775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of raising the balance of probabilities to justify identity as a reason when assessing credibility of a claim for asylum in respect of LGBTQ+ people resident in the UK.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[50776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of creating a second category of asylum seekers based on late evidence on LGBTQ+ people resident in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The New Plan for Immigration seeks to build a fair, but firm asylum system, ensuring we can better protect and support those in genuine need of asylum.

On 16 September, we published an Equality Impact Assessment for the policies being taken forward through the Nationality and Borders Bill. This includes an assessment on potential impacts on people who are LGBTQ+:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nationality-and-borders-bill-equality-impact-assessment>

■ Emergency Calls: Hoaxes and False Alarms**Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[49213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle hoax calls to the emergency services.

Kit Malthouse:

Making hoax and / or nuisance calls to the emergency services is a criminal offence that carries a fine or even a jail sentence. Additional measures are in place, for

example Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) proactively monitor hoax/nuisance emergency calls and have processes in place to contact customers to educate them about the impact their behaviour has and to insist that the customer stop making hoax calls. All calls to the emergency services are recorded and the number can be traced, even if withheld, and an emergency authority can contact the MNO to request they contact their customer with this educational approach. Emergency services may also request an MNO to disconnect the account of the hoax/nuisance caller. However, any decision is for the emergency authority to take.

■ Hate Crime: LGBT People

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[50162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle the reported change in the number of 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.

■ Radicalism

Sam Tarry:

[\[50784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help build trust with Muslim communities and to work with faith leaders in eradicating extremism.

Damian Hinds:

The Government remains determined to promote British values actively, working in partnership and alongside all communities to demonstrate what we have in common as the best defence against extremists who would seek to divide us.

We will not tolerate those who spread divisive and harmful narratives. We are committed to tackling those who spread views of any ideology that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and that radicalise others into terrorism.

Our work to counter radicalisation through Prevent works best when it is delivered in partnership with communities and civil society, including faith institutions. We also work with our delivery partners to facilitate a comprehensive programme of engagement events aimed at local communities around the country. This programme invites members of the public to learn more about Prevent and also discuss and offer their views on Prevent.

In addition, Sara Khan has been appointed by the Prime Minister as the government's Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience, as part of government action to tackle extremism in our communities.

She will hear from both victims of extremism and those on the frontline working to combat it – from teachers to faith leaders to local councils – to understand and ultimately counteract its effects.

■ Refugees: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[49211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of property prices in York on the ability to resettle refugees in that city.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government has worked at pace to develop and launch a new and bespoke resettlement scheme, announced on 18 August, which will relocate 5,000 vulnerable people in its first year, rising to up to 20,000 over the coming years – one of the most generous schemes in British history. The Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is in addition to the Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK

The need for suitable accommodation to support those we welcome is pressing. We need the help of every Council across the country to step up to offer accommodation

and support for these families, so that we can swiftly help them into permanent, safe homes and enable them to start rebuilding their lives and integrating into our communities.

The Afghan Housing Costs Fund will increase from £5 million to £17 million to help local authorities provide housing and give certainty that funding will be available in the future.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[49058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number and proportion of people who illegally crossed the English Channel in August 2021 that were men.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[49059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of people illegally entering the UK by crossing the English Channel in boats.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office collates figures of Channel migrant arrivals for management information purposes. Home Office records indicate approximately 80% of arrivals in August were men. It should be noted that data assurance and validation processes for August figures are still in progress, that this data has been taken from live database, and that it is therefore subject to revision.

The New Plan for Immigration Policy Statement contextualises small boats arrivals as a proportion of the wider cohort of irregular migration. In 2019, 11% of all irregular migrants arrived in the UK through crossing the Channel in small boats, compared to 32% by air and 51% by surface routes including clandestine entry in freight vehicles. In 2020, the proportion of irregular migrants who used the Channel crossing method increased to 50%, while those using air routes declined to 14% and those using surface routes fell to 32%.

■ **Visas: Afghanistan**

Hilary Benn:

[\[50944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what advice her Department is providing to people in Afghanistan on how they should apply for family reunion or spouse visas.

Kevin Foster:

Family members of British citizens and settled persons who were not called forward for evacuation as part of Op PITTING, or who have not been offered resettlement under the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme, will need to apply to come to the UK under the existing economic or family migration and reunion rules. They will be

expected to meet the eligibility requirements of their chosen route, which may include paying relevant fees and charges, and providing their biometrics.

The British Embassy in Kabul has currently suspended in country operations and all UK diplomatic and consular staff have been temporarily withdrawn.

The UK is working with international partners to secure safe routes out of Afghanistan as soon as they become available, but while the security situation remains extremely volatile, we recommend people in Afghanistan do not make applications and pay application fees at this time as they will not be considered until biometrics are provided. Those Afghans who are outside of Afghanistan and able to get to a Visa Application Centre to provide their biometrics can make an application in the usual way.

A full policy statement on this matter published on 13 September 2021 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Local Government

Mr Clive Betts: [\[49947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to local authorities of the increase in Employers National Insurance payments as result of the changes in the NHS and Social Care Plan in each of the following financial years (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[49948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the increase in employers National Insurance payments on local authority contracts as a result of the changes in the NHS and Social Care plan in financial years (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25.

Mr Clive Betts: [\[49950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Plan for Health and Social Care, published September 2021, what is the net change in funding to local authorities resulting from the proposals in that Plan; what estimate he has made of the specific increases and decreases in funding to local authorities relating to that Plan resulting in (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: This Government intends to compensate public sector employers for the increased cost of the Levy.

Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:** [\[49979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to a letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 15 July 2021, reference ZA57019 on rates of obesity.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: A response will be issued shortly.

Property: Taxation**Grahame Morris:** [\[49993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has had discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential merits of replacing Council Tax with a proportional property tax.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: The Government does not have any plans to replace council tax with a proportional property tax, but keeps all taxes under review.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership: Pitcairn Islands****Emily Thornberry:** [\[44264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 12 July to Question 28135 on Department for International Trade: Treaties, whether she has (a) sought and (b) received legal advice on the possible inclusion of the Pitcairn Islands in the UK's application for accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK is responsible for the international relations of all UK Overseas Territories, including the Pitcairn Islands, and will seek legal advice if, and where, appropriate as negotiations with trading partners progress.

Trade Remedies Authority: Reviews**Emily Thornberry:** [\[49975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the timetable will be for the review of the Trade Remedies Authority, committed to in May 2021; and what the terms of reference are for that review.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Department for International Trade is working closely with the Trade Remedies Authority to make sure the review is concluded as soon as possible, in accordance with the Written Ministerial Statement of 30th June.

JUSTICE■ **Asylum: Afghanistan****Rachael Maskell:**[\[48298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to publish details of the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has worked at pace to develop and launch the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), which will provide a safe and legal route for up to 20,000 Afghans in the region over the coming years, with 5,000 in the first year – one of the most generous schemes in British history.

On Monday 13th September the Government published a policy statement which set out further details on the policy and operation of the ACRS, and the package of integration support that will be offered to those arriving through the Scheme, published on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

■ **Chelmsford Prison: Standards****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[49079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the findings of Urgent Notification: HMP & YOI Chelmsford, published by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons on 27 August 2021 that (a) chronic failings at Chelmsford have now been evident for at least a decade and (b) despite serious concerns about the prison's work to prevent suicide or self-harm being raised in 2018, outcomes had deteriorated further, what steps (i) the Government has taken to ensure progress on those matters in the last five years and (ii) he will take to help ensure the lives of prisoners at HMP Chelmsford are protected.

Victoria Atkins:

We accept that HMP Chelmsford needs to improve and prior to the Urgent Notification, it began receiving specialist support through the Prison Performance Support Programme (PPSP) – which provides intensive support to some of our most challenging prisons.

To date, around £6 million has been invested through the PPSP allowing repairs to address decency, advanced technology to improve security, family ties and additional staffing to support improvement.

We are working hard to reduce self-harm and the number of those taking their lives in custody. Vulnerable prisoners are supported through the ACCT case management and we are currently rolling out further improvements to this framework. We have

also given 25,000 new and existing staff self-harm and suicide prevention training to help them better support prisoners with complex needs and refreshed our partnership with the Samaritans who provide the excellent Listeners scheme, which trains selected prisoners to provide emotional support to their fellow prisoners.

There is evidence of progress at HMP Chelmsford during 2018/19 and 2019/20, prior to the pandemic. The April 2019 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Independent Review of Progress report noted some positive progress including:

"...reasonable progress in addressing violence, supported by additional national and regional resources" as well as "...good progress in improving the quality of care to those at risk [of self-harm]."

It also noted that the "Governor continued to set a clear vision for the prison and had retained the support of those around her" and that "regional and national resources had been used to good effect".

The report acknowledged the benefits of additional central investment, including complete refurbishment of two landings, new flooring in cells and communal areas, new showers and new serveries. Since the inspection an x-ray body scanner was also installed at the prison – to prevent the flow of illicit items which fuel instability.

An initial detailed plan of action is being developed in response to the Urgent Notification and will include actions beyond those already agreed under the PPSP. This will outline how we are addressing the immediate concerns at the prison and will be published in due course.

■ Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme Review

Hannah Bardell:

[\[50726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when his Department plans to respond to the Criminal Injury Compensation Scheme Review 2020.

Tom Pursglove:

I am grateful to all who took the time to contribute views to our consultation aimed at making the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme simpler and more accessible.

We are carefully reviewing responses and will aim to publish the Government's response in due course.

■ Criminal Proceedings: West Yorkshire

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[49218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people are waiting to have their legal cases heard in court in (a) Morley and Outwood constituency and (b) West Yorkshire.

James Cartlidge:

The tables below show the number of cases outstanding in West Yorkshire as at March 2021 in respect of Magistrates cases, Crown Court cases and family cases.

We are unable to provide data in respect of the number of victims or defendants

waiting for their cases to be heard or data specific to Morley and Outwood constituency. To obtain this data would incur disproportionate costs.

	CIVIL	CRIMINAL-NON SJP	CRIMINAL SJP	ENFORCEMENT
Bradford Magistrates	47	4,099	10,477	129
Kirklees Magistrates	111	1,492	293	110
Leeds Magistrates 70		5,127	3,911	285

Below are the number of outstanding family cases in the West Yorkshire courts.

COURT NAME	PRIVATE	PUBLIC
Bradford	501	
Huddersfield	310	
Leeds	811	597
Wakefield	309	

LOCATION	TRIALS OUTSTANDING	SENTENCING OUTSTANDING	APPEALS OUTSTANDING	TOTAL OUTSTANDING	DEFENDANTS O/S (TRIAL CASES)
Court: BRADFORD CROWN	771	146	67	984	898
Court: LEEDS CROWN	1533	293	50	1876	1,870

■ Family Courts: Nottinghamshire

Ben Bradley:

[\[49255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the backlog in Nottinghamshire's family courts.

James Cartlidge:

The protection of children, particularly those who are most vulnerable, is a priority for this government and this has never been more important than during this period. The

family courts were quick to respond to the pandemic and I am extremely grateful for the dedication of family justice professionals at this unprecedented time.

Record levels of judicial sitting days have been listed at the family court in Nottingham throughout the pandemic and these high levels of sittings continue. The court is utilising the new powers introduced via Practice Direction 36, which enables suitable cases to be dealt with via alternative methods other than a court hearing.

In March this year, we launched the £1m Family Mediation Voucher Scheme, to encourage and support separating parents to explore mediation before coming to court. In August, ministers confirmed an additional £800,000 would go towards the scheme, helping around 2000 more families. We want to ensure that every parent is able to resolve their case in the most effective way, including through mediation where safe and appropriate.

We continue to focus on reducing the outstanding caseload by investing in more judicial sitting days and increasing the overall level of disposals. Cases with the most significant safeguarding issues remain our priority, and where suitable, cases are being heard remotely to continue maximising our use of our estate.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Contracts

Karl Turner: [R] [\[50977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many firms of solicitors held a (a) civil and (b) criminal legal aid contract as of 1 September 2021.

Karl Turner: [R] [\[50978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) providers and (b) offices in criminal legal aid there were from September 2012 to September 2021.

James Cartlidge:

There are currently 1,080 Providers who hold a Criminal Legal Aid Contract. There are currently 1,401 Providers who hold a Civil Legal Aid Contract. This data is correct as at 17th September 2021. Please note for the figures provided that firms may have more than one office.

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 September 2012 to September 2021:

	APR-12	SEP-12	APR-13	APR-14	APR-15	APR-16	APR-17	APR-18	APR-19	APR-20	APR-21	SEP-21
Firms	1,652	1621	1,595	1,513	1,425	1,386	1,310	1,266	1,194	1,154	1,090	1,080
Offices	2,318	2292	2,258	2,142	2,040	1,969	1,981	1,913	1,802	1,717	1,589	1,565

■ Members: Correspondence

Layla Moran:

[\[50757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the letter sent to all MPs on 13 September 2021 from the Minister for Safeguarding and Afghan Resettlement regarding an update on casework to the Home Office on Afghanistan, whether his Department will respond to correspondence from hon. Members on the further evacuation of Afghan individuals if the case (a) has and (b) has not already been raised by an hon. Member with her Department.

Victoria Atkins:

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 all the cases it has received, and it is 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) ([Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) rather than seek to pursue cases on their behalf.

■ Ministry of Justice: Listed Buildings

Tim Loughton:

[\[49012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 13 September 2021 to Question 45034 on Ministry of Justice: Listed Buildings, if he will publish a list of the (a) properties classified as heritage assets owned by his Department, (b) the most recent estimate of the value of those properties and (c) the annual income derived from those properties as opposed to the details of the body responsible for advising him on their maintenance.

James Cartlidge:

I refer the honourable member to the answer given to PQ 45034 dated Monday 13 September 2021.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-08/45034>

■ Ministry of Justice: Welsh Government**Ruth Jones:** [\[43657\]](#)

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

James Cartlidge:

The Secretary of State for Justice looks forward to meeting Welsh Government ministers in his new role.

His predecessor and his ministerial team were in frequent contact with Welsh Government ministers, the most recent meeting being between Minister Chalk and the Welsh Government's Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, on 1 July 2021.

■ Office of the Public Guardian: Registration**Damien Moore:** [\[49262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department will take to reduce the delays in registration with the Office of the Public Guardian.

Tom Pursglove:

OPG has seen an increase in the time taken to process an LPA since COVID-19 began impacting the workplace. LPAs are paper documents that require a physical staff presence in an office to process and register. Although staff have been in the office throughout the pandemic, the need to comply with social distancing rules reduced the capacity to deal with LPAs.

As government restrictions for England and Wales have gradually eased, OPG have seen an increase in LPA applications which has added to pre-existing backlogs. These issues combined have generated the delays to LPA registrations, which are currently taking up to 20 weeks to process with a current year-to-date average for 2021/22 of 57 working days.

OPG are working hard to reduce the delays and clear the backlog. Steps being taken include:

- Ensuring that there are as many people in the office as possible to process LPAs in a safe way
- Allocating more staff from across the organisation to deal with the registrations of LPAs
- A recruitment drive continues with new staff due to start shortly
- Overtime

I expect the registration timelines to gradually decrease. I appreciate the delays are frustrating for customers and fall below the service standards that OPG aims to deliver.

As part of a wider transformation programme, my department is currently consulting on modernising LPAs, which could provide the opportunity for less reliance on paper, and significantly improve the speed of service.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Rachael Maskell: [\[49209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what support she is giving to children resettled in the UK under the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme who originate from Afghanistan and who have family in Afghanistan who are part of a religious minority.

Rachael Maskell: [\[49210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the family of young people who are in the UK under the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme can join their children under (a) the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or (b) another route to allow a family to be united.

Victoria Atkins:

The vast majority of children resettled under the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) were done so as part of a family group. The scheme ended in 2021. The Government's refugee family reunion policy allows a partner and children under 18 of those granted protection in the UK to join the adult sponsor here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. This includes those who are part of a religious minority.

All those brought to the UK under Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (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 ARAP and 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.

Anum Qaisar-Javed: [\[50180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Safeguarding and Afghan Resettlement of 13 September 2021, Official Report, Column 700, what support his Department plans to provide to help Afghan nationals preserve their (a) language and (b) culture when they are resettled in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

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.

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.

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.

■ Reoffenders

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[49080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Proven reoffending statistics: July to September 2019, published on 29 July 2021, Section 7 and Table C1a, whether the Fines category includes fines given (a) using the Single Justice Procedure and (b) in open court.

Victoria Atkins:

The 'fines' disposal type category presented in the Proven Reoffending Statistics publications does include fines given using the Single Justice Procedure and in open court, provided the associated offence is:

- Recordable
- Committed in England and Wales
- Prosecuted by the police
- Not a breach offence

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Council Tax: Billing

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[48197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Communities, what estimate his Department has made of the average Band D Council Tax bill in England for the 2022-23 financial year.

Kemi Badenoch:

Council tax decisions are taken by local authorities. The Secretary of State maintains a referendum threshold each year so that voters can have the final say on any

excessive increases. The Secretary of State will set out his proposed referendum principles for 2022-23 in due course.

■ Elections: Wales

Ben Lake: [\[50751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the Elections Bill on the (a) conduct and (b) administration of devolved elections in Wales.

Kemi Badenoch:

The measures in the Elections Bill will considerably strengthen the delivery of UK Parliament General Elections and other reserved polls. Devolution means that there are already different arrangements for devolved and reserved elections.

We have been and will continue working closely with the Devolved Administrations, the Electoral Commission and the wider electoral sector across the UK on our plans for implementing the measures in the Bill to provide clarity for voters, administrators and those regulated by electoral law.

■ Fires: Nuisance

Steve Reed: [\[50982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what data his Department holds on the number of complaints made to local authorities in England on nuisance bonfires.

Kemi Badenoch:

This data is not currently held centrally.

■ Housing: Older People

Andrew Gwynne: [\[49067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has for increasing clarity in the planning system on housing options for older people.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government seeks to unite and level up the country, ensuring opportunity is available for all, and our plans to modernise the planning system are an important part of this.

We are continuing to reflect on the 43,000 consultation responses and engage with stakeholders across the system. The Response will be published shortly and I look forward to engaging with Members on it.

■ Local Government: Meetings

Mrs Pauline Latham: [\[48213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that all local authorities are able to return to full, in-person meetings on local authority premises after the end of covid-19 social distancing restrictions in July 2021 thereby avoiding the need to hire large venues to accommodate social distancing.

Kemi Badenoch:

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

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

■ Local Government: Reform

Steve Reed: [\[50984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to reform local government in England.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government's policy is that local government reform should be locally led. Local government reform therefore is an ongoing locally led process rather than a one size fits all centrally led approach.

■ Members: Correspondence

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[50971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Bolton South East of 23 July 2021 which came on behalf of the APPG Srebrenica regarding funding for the Remembering Srebrenica charity.

Eddie Hughes:

A response to the Hon Member's letter will be issued shortly.

■ Parish Councils: Staff

James Wild: [\[47065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Communities, what powers local authority monitoring officers have to impose sanctions on parish councillors.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Localism Act 2011 removed the power of sanction from councils.

If a member is found to have failed to comply with their authority's code of conduct, an authority can take steps it deems appropriate.

■ Permitted Development Rights

Steve Reed: [\[50986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has plans to undertake a review of the impact of changes to Permitted Development rules over the last ten years on the quality of new build homes.

Christopher Pincher:

Independent research into the quality standard of homes delivered through permitted development rights was undertaken in 2019. The research is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quality-standard-of-homes-delivered-through-change-of-use-permitted-development-rights>

We now require all homes delivered under permitted development rights to meet Nationally Described Space Standards, and that adequate natural light be provided in habitable rooms.

■ Planning: Reform

Steve Reed: [\[50983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what plans his Department has to reform the planning system.

Christopher Pincher:

This Government seeks to unite and level up the country, ensuring opportunity is available for all, and our plans to modernise the planning system are an important part of this. We are continuing to reflect on the many responses received to last year's White Paper, and will set out our response.

■ Regional Planning and Development

Steve Reed: [\[50985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will publish the Levelling Up White Paper.

Neil O'Brien:

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, levelling up and ensuring that the whole UK can benefit from the same access to opportunities remains core to the Government's vision.

As the PM set out in his speech on 15 July, the Government will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper in due course, articulating how bold new policy interventions will improve opportunity and boost livelihoods in all parts of the UK.

■ Sheltered Housing

Andrew Gwynne: [\[49065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to increase the supply of housing with care.

Mr Steve Baker: [\[49106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to increase the supply of specialist housing for the elderly.

Christopher Pincher:

Offering vulnerable people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently and feel more connected to their communities. This Government is committed to the provision of suitable homes for older people, including extra care housing, which contributes to levelling up across communities. Housing-with-care allows individuals to choose where they want to live, with whom, how they can best be supported, and what happens in their home. Both the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department of Health and Social Care provide capital funding to incentivise their supply. Our planning rules already mean councils must consider the needs of older people when planning for new homes. In 2019, we published guidance to help councils implement the National Planning Policy Framework policies.

We are investing over £12 billion in affordable housing over 5 years, the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade. This includes the new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme, where 10 per cent of delivery over the course of the programme will be used to increase the supply of much needed specialist or supported housing, including retirement housing. The Department of Health and Social Care are also continuing to subsidise new supply of specialist housing for older and disabled people through the Care and Support Specialised Housing (CASSH) Fund.

The Government's plan for health and social care, announced on Tuesday 7 September, also recognised the important role of housing, and supported housing in particular, in providing care and support to people in the community.

We continue to work closely with the older people's housing sector and across Government to look at how we can further support its growth. I look forward to engaging with representatives in the sector further and value their insight.

Andrew Gwynne: [\[49066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the debate on Covid-19: Effect on Retirement Communities of 1 July 2021, Official Report, column 147WH, if he will establish a task force on housing-with-care.

Christopher Pincher:

Both my Department and the Department of Health and Social Care are committed to further improving the diversity of housing options available to older people. We are

engaging closely with both the sector and a range of other stakeholders on this issue. This includes considering the merits of different engagement and delivery models including proposals from the sector for a cross-Government taskforce.

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[49107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will provide guidance to local authorities on planning provision for extra care housing communities,

Christopher Pincher:

This Government is committed to the provision of suitable homes for older people, including extra care housing, which contributes to levelling up across communities.

Our planning rules already mean councils must consider the needs of older people when planning for new homes. In 2019, we published guidance to help councils implement the National Planning Policy Framework policies.

We continue to work closely with the older people's housing sector and across Government to look at how we can further support its growth. I look forward to engaging with representatives in the sector further and value their insight.

■ Social Services: Finance

Justin Madders:

[\[48262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assumptions he has made for the revenue that will be raised by the social care precept for each of the next five years.

Kemi Badenoch:

The future of the adult social care precept will be determined as part of the upcoming Spending Review. Decisions on council tax levels are taken annually by local authorities, with reference to the referendum principles set by the Secretary of State.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[49104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate his Department has made of the Social Care Support Grant allocation that will need to be made to local authorities in England to pay towards social care in each of the next three financial years.

Kemi Badenoch:

Government recently announced an investment of £5.4 billion across three years to deliver funding and system reform to adult social care. This will end the risk of unpredictable care costs through charging reform and enable local authorities to move towards paying providers a fair rate for care. It also includes at least £500 million of funding to support the adult social care workforce to professionalise, develop, and access mental health and wellbeing resources.

This is in addition to the support provided through the social care precept and other government grants including the Social Care Grant. Following the conclusion of the

2021 Spending Review, we will consult on the proposed allocation of the Social Care Grant to local authorities in England, through the Local Government Finance Settlement .

■ Supported Housing: Older People

Tim Farron:

[\[49084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will (a) review and (b) clarify the definitions and distinctions used to categorise specialist housing for older residents.

Christopher Pincher:

The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'. It is for a local planning authority to consider into which use class a particular development may fall, and whether a development for specialist housing for older people falls within C2 (Residential Institutions) or C3 (Dwellinghouse) use class will depend on the individual circumstances of the development.

TRANSPORT

■ Bridges: Northern Ireland and Scotland

Gavin Newlands:

[\[49170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what expenditure the Government has incurred on preparatory work related to a fixed-link crossing between Scotland and Northern Ireland since 24 July 2019.

Trudy Harrison:

The Fixed Link Feasibility Study forms part of the Union Connectivity Review, independently chaired by Sir Peter Hendy CBE. Sir Peter's review has not yet concluded, so the final figure is not yet available.

Gavin Newlands:

[\[49171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what expenditure his Department has incurred on preparatory work related to a fixed-link crossing between Scotland and Northern Ireland since 24 July 2019.

Trudy Harrison:

The Fixed Link Feasibility Study forms part of the Union Connectivity Review, independently chaired by Sir Peter Hendy CBE. Sir Peter's review has not yet concluded, so the final figure is not yet available.

■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Correspondence

Mr David Jones: [\[50951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the extent of correspondence awaiting reply by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in terms by (a) volume and (b) estimated waiting time for a substantive response.

Mr David Jones: [\[50952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of staff at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing agency are working from home.

Mr David Jones: [\[50953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve the efficiency of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Trudy Harrison:

Of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s total workforce of more than 6,000, just under 35 per cent are working from home. The staff working from home are mainly from support areas, including Human Resources, Commercial, Finance, Policy and Communications. Most operational staff work on site in order to process the 60,000 items of mail the DVLA receives daily which must be dealt with in person.

Information on the amount of correspondence awaiting a substantive response is not available. The DVLA is working hard to process applications and answer correspondence as quickly as possible. The quickest and easiest way to make an application to the DVLA is by using its extensive suite of online services. There are no delays in successful online applications and customers should receive their documents within a few days.

However, many people still choose or have to make a paper application. Industrial action by members of the Public and Commercial Services union has led to delays in dealing with paper applications. Throughout the pandemic the DVLA has been working with a significantly reduced number of staff on site to ensure social distancing in line with Welsh Government requirements. The current increased demand for the DVLA's services has also contributed to delays with paper applications.

The DVLA continues to explore opportunities to improve the time taken to deal with paper applications and has been developing additional new online services and recruiting additional staff. The DVLA is looking to secure extra office space to accommodate more staff as surge capacity accommodation and resource to help reduce backlogs while providing future resilience and business continuity.

■ Driving Licences: Hong Kong

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[49033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average length of time taken by his Department was from an application being received to issuing driving licenses to applicants arriving from Hong Kong with British national overseas status.

Sir Graham Brady:

[\[49034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will establish a dedicated channel for people arriving from Hong Kong with British national overseas status to obtain driving licences.

Trudy Harrison:

Holders of a full Hong Kong car or motorcycle driving licence can exchange this for a GB equivalent without the need to apply for a provisional licence or take a driving test. Information on the average time taken to issue a driving licence to applicants from Hong Kong is not available.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) has been working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government about the potential number of applicants who may arrive from Hong Kong with British national overseas status over the next five years. The DVLA is confident that these applications can be absorbed within its existing processes and there are no plans to introduce a dedicated channel.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Martyn Day:

[\[50100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of charging point operators on the potential merits of introducing a universal app for payment at electric car charging points.

Trudy Harrison:

We are committed to ensuring that consumers have a seamless experience when using the public EV charging network. We have regular engagement with chargepoint operators, other industry representatives and consumer groups to inform our approach. In Spring 2021, we consulted on measures to improve the consumer experience of public charging. The consultation focused on four key areas: making it easier to pay at a public chargepoint including streamlining use of apps for consumers; mandating a single payment metric to improve price transparency; improving the public network's reliability; and opening public EV chargepoint data to enable consumers to locate chargepoints. Alongside this, my Department had a series of related engagement events with chargepoint operators, and representatives of other industry members and of consumer groups. These included discussions on the potential role of apps for payment. We are intending to publish the government response to the consultation in the autumn and to lay legislation as soon as parliamentary time allows.

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Driving Licences

Stephanie Peacock: [\[51021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the speed with which HGV driver applications are processed.

Trudy Harrison:

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.

Following a public consultation, the Department is also introducing changes that will streamline the licensing process for new HGV drivers and increase driving test availability. These are aimed to help address current driver shortages. A [written statement to Parliament](#) about these changes has been published on GOV.UK.

■ Regional Airports

Scott Benton: [\[50160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming Public Service Obligations in order to assist the growth of (a) regional and (b) Blackpool airports.

Robert Courts:

While we recognise that bringing new routes into a regional airport is likely to increase its passenger footfall, it is important to recognise that Public Service Obligations (PSOs) are a route support measure to strengthen connectivity.

We will consider whether there are further opportunities to utilise PSOs, alongside other policy measures, towards meeting our ongoing regional connectivity and levelling-up objectives. We will also continue to consider applications for PSOs on vital routes into London and lifeline services for remote communities that are in danger of being lost.

Scott Benton: [\[50161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the usage of capital and revenue funding to support the development of small regional airports.

Robert Courts:

Airports operate in a private capacity and their funding streams are subject to their own private and commercial activities. The DfT has not undertaken any assessment

in relation to the usage of capital and revenue funding to support development of airports.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Damien Moore:

[\[49266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the need for the covid-19 traffic light system for international travel in its existing format as at 14 September 2021.

Robert Courts:

On Friday 17 September, the Government announced a number of significant changes to the international travel system to take advantage of the world leading vaccination programme.

From Monday 4 October the traffic light system will be replaced by a single red list of countries and territories and simplified travel measures for arrivals from the rest of the world. The rules for travel from countries and territories not on the red list will depend on an individual's vaccination status.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[49056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of removing the requirements for covid-19 testing to fly to countries on the green list.

Robert Courts:

On Friday 17 September, the Government announced a number of significant changes to the international travel system. From 4 October, the current traffic light system will be replaced by a single red list of countries and territories and simplified travel measures for arrivals to England from the rest of the world. The rules for travel from countries and territories not on the red list will depend on an individual's vaccination status.

TREASURY

■ **Boats: Red Diesel**

Carla Lockhart:

[\[50173\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment he has undertaken on changes to pleasure craft fuel rules banning red diesel use in Northern Ireland, as a result of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Carla Lockhart:

[\[50174\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether financial assistance will be provided to marinas in Northern Ireland to adapt their fuel sale facilities, in the context of HMRC

imposing a ban on red diesel for propulsion of leisure craft from 1 October 2021 as a result of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Helen Whately:

Budget 2021 announced that private pleasure craft users in Northern Ireland will no longer be allowed to use red diesel to propel their craft and that the Government will introduce a new relief scheme on non-propulsion fuel in Northern Ireland. These changes will take effect from 1 October 2021. The average private pleasure craft user in Northern Ireland will pay the same rate of duty on their diesel use as they do now.

More information on these changes, including on the expected impacts, is set out in the tax information and impact note published on 1 July 2021, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fuel-duty-changes-for-diesel-used-in-private-pleasure-craft/fuel-duty-changes-for-diesel-used-in-private-pleasure-craft>.

■ **Cooperatives and Mutual Societies**

Rachael Maskell: [50710]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the levels of (a) resilience and (b) competition that mutuals and co-operatives bring to the economy.

Rachael Maskell: [50711]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to engage with the (a) Financial Conduct Authority and (b) Prudential Regulation Authority to protect mutuals and co-operatives.

Rachael Maskell: [50712]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of cooperatives and mutuals contribution to the economy.

Rachael Maskell: [50713]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support the growth of the cooperative and mutual sector.

John Glen:

In my role as Economic Secretary, I have been a champion of the mutuals sector. It is clear to me that mutuals bring something different to other forms of running a business, with their clear focus on delivering the services their members and communities need.

The Government has sought to improve the business environment for co-operatives and mutuals. The Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 helped cut through the legal complexity involved in running a co-operative, improving their competitiveness. The ability of co-operatives to raise £100,000 of withdrawable share capital per member, increased from £20,000 in 2014, has also ensured that co-operatives have the necessary flexibility to raise funding and compete more effectively with companies.

Furthermore, following the interest rate cap rise from 2% to 3% in 2014, credit unions have been able to expand into higher-risk markets and provide an important alternative to high-cost lenders. The prize-linked savings scheme, which was offered through credit unions, has also helped increase individuals' financial resilience and raise awareness of credit unions. Building societies and credit unions have also played a key role in supporting consumers through the COVID-19 pandemic by keeping their branches open, which I thanked them for in a letter in April 2020.

Mutuals have benefitted from financial support provided by the Government to businesses during the pandemic, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Mutuals also benefitted from the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020, which provided significant flexibility for mutuals in holding their annual general meetings, as well as improved the insolvency regime for co-operatives. Credit unions have also benefited from the distribution of dormant asset funding by Fair4All Finance, including their £5m COVID resilience fund.

As we build back better from the pandemic, the Government is looking to support the growth of the mutuals sector. The Chancellor announced at Budget 2020 that the Government intends to bring forward changes to the Credit Unions Act to allow credit unions to offer a wider range of products and services. Officials have been engaging with credit unions to ensure changes meet the needs of members and credit unions. This measure will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows.

At Budget 2021, the Government also announced the £150m Community Ownership Fund. This will allow community groups to bid for up to £250,000 matched-funding to help them buy or take over local community assets at risk of being lost and run them as community-owned businesses, supporting co-operative entrepreneurship. First round bids are currently being assessed and funding decisions will be announced in due course.

I meet with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulatory Authority (PRA) on a regular basis to discuss various matters. Officials also engage regularly with the FCA and PRA to discuss how best to support the growth and stability of the mutuals sector. However, the regulators are independent of Government and the Government cannot direct them to consider specific issues.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Stephen Crabb:

[\[49074\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people furloughed continuously from 1 March 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

There has been no estimate made of the number of people on furlough continuously from 1 March 2020.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) was announced on 20 March 2020 and the number of jobs on furlough increased substantially after that date.

HMRC has published statistics on the CJRS, the latest release being published on 9 September 2021. The statistics include figures on the number of employments supported since the scheme started in March 2020. These statistics can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-9-september-2021>.

■ Electric Vehicles: Taxation

Paula Barker:

[50171]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing plug-in hybrid vehicles from the additional vehicle tax levied on cars with a list price over £40,000 to help meet the UK's target on carbon neutrality in 2050.

Helen Whately:

Hybrid cars and vans, both non-plug in and plug in, have a role to play in reducing emissions from road transport during the transition to all new cars and vans being fully zero emission at the tailpipe. This is why hybrid vehicles receive a £10 annual discount on VED, although the greatest incentives are for zero-emission vehicles, which pay no VED.

Petrol, diesel and hybrid cars with a list price exceeding £40,000 also pay an additional supplement for five years as well as paying the standard rate, which means those who can afford the most expensive cars pay more than the standard rate imposed on other drivers. As over 80% of all new cars have a list price below £40,000, this was considered a suitable threshold for distinguishing the luxury end of the market. At Budget 2020, the Government announced that, from 1 April 2020, zero-emission cars registered prior to 1 April 2025 are exempt from this supplement.

As with all taxes, the Government keeps VED under review and any changes are considered by the Chancellor.

■ Evergrande Group: Finance

Owen Thompson:

[51003]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the impact of the current financial status of the Chinese property group Evergrande on (a) the world economy and (b) the United Kingdom economy.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that Evergrande's financial situation, given the size of its outstanding debt, raises a number of global and domestic concerns. That is why we, alongside the UK's independent financial authorities – the FCA, PRA and Bank of England are closely monitoring the situation.

Since 2008 there has been a concerted international effort to strengthen the global financial system. In the UK, banks now hold over three times more capital than they did at the time of the financial crisis. The Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee judges that the UK banking sector is resilient to a wide range of economic

scenarios, including a contraction in both China and Hong Kong's economic activity. This judgement of the UK banking sector is supported by the interim results of the 2021 solvency stress test.

■ National Insurance

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[49105\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the amount the 1.25% increase in National Insurance Contributions will raise in the first year from 2022.

Lucy Frazer:

As set out in 'Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care', the net revenue from the Health and Social Care Levy will be around £11.4 billion a year, from 2022-23. A full costing of the policy will be certified by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility at the Budget.

■ Regional Airports

Scott Benton:

[\[50159\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) reducing or (b) removing Air Passenger Duty on two-way domestic UK flights to assist the growth of (i) regional and (ii) Blackpool airports.

Helen Whately:

As part of its recent consultation on aviation tax, the Government outlined its initial view that the effective rate of Air Passenger Duty (APD) on domestic flights should be reduced in order to support Union and regional connectivity and that the number of international distance bands should be increased in order to align APD more closely with our environmental objectives.

The consultation sought evidence on the potential impacts of these proposals, including on regional air routes. As part of the consultation process the Government engaged with airports in all parts of the UK.

The Government is currently reviewing responses to the consultation and will update in due course.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Crispin Blunt:

[\[903589\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill on (a) equality and (b) safety for LGBTQ+ people.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Nationality and Borders Bill, which is part of our New Plan for Immigration, seeks to build a fair, but firm asylum and illegal migration system.

On 16 September, we published an Equality Impact Assessment for the policies being taken forward through the Bill. This includes an assessment on potential impacts on people who are LGBTQ+.

Duncan Baker:[\[903597\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to encourage covid-19 vaccination uptake among harder to reach groups.

Kemi Badenoch:

We continue to focus our efforts on those groups with the lowest rates of vaccine uptake. Recent initiatives include co-producing a toolkit aimed at improving vaccine uptake among the Black African and Black Caribbean groups, among whom rates have been the lowest. We also produced two animations explaining the entitlement to vaccination for migrants, and held pop-up clinics for those without NHS numbers. Over time, both positive vaccine sentiment and vaccine uptake have increased among all ethnic groups.

Jessica Morden:[\[903599\]](#)

What steps she is taking with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to help ensure an equitable economic recovery for women from the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury has offered an unprecedented level of support to both individuals and businesses during this pandemic. In responding to the economic challenges of COVID-19, the Government carefully considered the equality impact of both individual measures and fiscal events on those sharing protected characteristics, including gender, in line with its legal obligations and its strong commitment to promoting fairness. This year, we have invested £44 million to support family childcare costs, enabling local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers.

Sarah Green:[\[903600\]](#)

What steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to improve healthcare for women.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government will publish England's first Women's Health Strategy later this year which will set out a positive new agenda to improve the health and wellbeing of women across England. To ensure that the Strategy is evidence-based and reflects women's priorities, we ran a Call for Evidence earlier this year. This attracted over 100,000 responses from individual women, clinicians and carers and around 500 longer written submissions, which we are now analysing.

■ Biometrics: Equality

Chi Onwurah: [\[49137\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, pursuant to the Centre for Data and Ethics Investigations report of November 2020, Review into bias in Algorithmic decision-making, what steps the Government has taken to develop cross-cutting guidance on the Equality Act 2010 and data protection laws in respect of algorithmic bias detection and mitigation.

Chi Onwurah: [\[49138\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the Centre for Data and Ethics Investigations report of November 2020, Review into bias in Algorithmic Decision-making, what steps the Government has taken to clarify the Equality Act responsibilities of organisations using algorithmic decision-making; and whether the Government plans to bring forward proposed amendments to the Equality Act in respect of algorithmic bias in decision-making.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) prohibits employers and service providers from discriminating against employees, job applicants and customers because of or in relation to a protected characteristic. This includes discrimination through actions taken as a result of deploying an algorithm or a similar artificial intelligence mechanism. The key test is how the employer or service provider acts and whether this is lawful under the Act, not the tools used in the decision-making process.

It is for the courts to interpret and apply the law, including where new and evolving technology is at play. To date, it has not been necessary to consider amendments to the Equality Act 2010 in this context and the Government has no plans to bring forward such legislation. However, we will continue to monitor developments.

On 10 September 2021 the government launched a public consultation, [Data: A new direction](#). The consultation proposes reforms to enable organisations to use personal data and sensitive personal data for the purpose of managing the risk of bias in their AI systems. The consultation will close on 19 November 2021.

In addition, the Equality and Human Rights Commission is developing guidance for the public sector on algorithmic decision-making.

■ Conversion Therapy: Victim Support Schemes

Marsha De Cordova: [\[49273\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, for what support services for victims of conversion therapy have not yet been commissioned.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[49274\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she plans to take to ensure that survivors who are asked to contribute to the Government's consultation on banning conversion therapy receive support.

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[50166\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, for what reasons support services for victims of conversion therapy have not yet been commissioned; and what steps she plans to take to ensure that survivors of that therapy get the support they need to contribute to the Government's consultation on banning conversion therapy.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is working at pace to deliver on our commitment to ban conversion therapy. As previously stated, we will also ensure there is support available for victims of conversion therapy; the first time the UK Government has offered this. The support will be available to whoever considers themselves to be at risk of - or has undergone - conversion therapy, whatever the circumstances.

The importance of developing a quality service is of central importance, and we are working at pace to explore delivery options available to realise this commitment. An announcement with more details on the service and how it will be delivered will be made in due course.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[50648\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to Government's announcement on plans to ban conversion therapy of 11 May 2021, when she plans to commission support services for victims of conversion therapy.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[50649\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, with reference to the Government's announcement on plans to ban conversion therapy of 11 May 2021, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that victims of conversion therapy have access to support to contribute to the Government's consultation on banning conversion therapy.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government is working at pace to deliver on our commitment to ban conversion therapy. We will also ensure there is support available for victims of conversion therapy, the first time the UK Government has offered this. The support will be available to whoever considers themselves to be at risk of - or has undergone - conversion therapy, whatever the circumstances.

The importance of developing a quality service is of central importance and we are working at pace to explore delivery options available to realise this commitment. An announcement with more details on the service and how it will be delivered will be made in due course.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[50732\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she is having with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office on planned engagement with (a) disabled people and (b) groups representing disabled people as part of the public inquiry into the handling of the covid-19 pandemic.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 12 May, the Prime Minister confirmed that the public inquiry into COVID-19 will begin its work in spring 2022 and that bereaved families and other groups will be consulted before the terms of reference are finalised. Further details will be announced in due course.

■ Employment Tribunals Service: Maternity Rights and Pregnancy**Kevin Brennan:**[\[49962\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if she will implement the Equality and Human Rights Commission's recommendation to extend the time limit for cases involving pregnancy and maternity discrimination to be brought to an employment tribunal from three to six months.

Kemi Badenoch:

Individuals who experience pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace can access justice through an Employment Tribunal, under the Equality Act 2010. While the time limit for bringing a claim is three months, tribunals have the discretion to provide extensions where they consider it 'just and equitable' to do so.

The Government Equalities Office consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace recently considered the impact of the three month time limit where it applies to Equality Act based cases, including pregnancy and maternity discrimination. In our July 2021 response to that consultation, we committed to keep extending the limit under review.

■ ESEA Heritage Month**Sarah Owen:**[\[50149\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, if the Government will annually mark September as East and South East Asian Heritage Month.

Kemi Badenoch:

There are currently no plans for the Government as a whole to mark September as East and South East Asian Heritage Month. Individual departments may make their own arrangements, internally and externally, to recognise the occasion, and celebrate the achievements and contributions within the UK of people of East and South East Asian Heritage.

■ Gender Recognition**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[50164\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to ensure that trans people in England and Wales have the same right to a de-medicalised and shortened process of gender recognition as for trans people in Scotland.

Kemi Badenoch:

This Government is committed to supporting LGBT people, tackling discrimination and improving the lives of all citizens.

In September 2020, we announced our response to the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) consultation. We concluded that the current provisions within the GRA allow for those that wish to legally change their gender to do so and that the balance struck in this legislation is correct. There are no plans to make changes to the 2004 Act.

In our response, we also committed to making the process of applying for a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) as straightforward and dignified as possible. We have already delivered on our promise to reduce the fee of applying for a GRC to £5, making the process more affordable. We are also progressing work to move the process online, to reduce the administrative burden and streamline the overall experience for applicants.

WORK AND PENSIONS■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Telephone Services****Justin Madders:**[\[45859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average answering time was for all her Department's phone lines for each month since March 2019.

Guy Opperman:

The average call waiting time (Average Speed of Answer) for calls to DWP Service Lines (excluding Debt) in each month from March 2019 to August 2021 is shown in the table below in the format of hours:minutes:seconds.

YEAR	MONTH	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER
2018 -2019	March	00:05:22
2019 - 2020	April	00:06:20
	May	00:06:44
	June	00:06:26
	July	00:07:14
	August	00:07:11
	September	00:07:11
	October	00:06:31
	November	00:07:07
	December	00:07:01

YEAR	MONTH	AVERAGE SPEED OF ANSWER
2020 - 2021	January	00:05:19
	February	00:05:50
	March	00:14:02
	April	00:21:26
	May	00:10:58
	June	00:06:24
	July	00:08:33
	August	00:08:24
	September	00:07:50
	October	00:06:52
	November	00:06:47
	December	00:07:15
2021 – 2022	January	00:08:32
	February	00:07:36
	March	00:07:15
	April	00:13:44
	May	00:13:06
	June	00:09:40
	July	00:10:37
	August	00:11:25

Data Source: BT - Historical Management Information (GI2 – HMI) Serco, Capita, G4S

Average Speed of Answer is the average customer wait time from the point of entering a queue to connection to an agent.

The data supplied does not include Debt lines but includes outsourced lines and CMS calls from April 2020 onwards.

The data supplied is derived from unpublished management information which was collected for internal Departmental use only and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. The data should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Kickstart Scheme

David Linden:

[\[49241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Kickstart Scheme jobs have been (a) approved and (b) started in each region across the UK from 14 July 2021 to the date.

Mims Davies:

Please refer to the table below for a regional breakdown of the number of Kickstart vacancies and starts since 14 July 2021 until 8 September 2021*.

*Vacancies have been rounded to the nearest 100 and Starts to nearest 10

REGION	JOBS APPROVED SINCE 14.7.21*	JOB STARTS SINCE 14.7.21*
East Midlands	1,870	1,390
East of England	2,900	1,570
London	8,500	4,780
North East	1,600	960
North West	4,100	2,900
Scotland	2,800	2,030
South East	4,000	2,380
South West	2,600	1,480
Wales	1,900	940
West Midlands	2,800	2,010
Yorkshire and The Humber	2,900	1,770

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

David Linden: [\[49245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons had only 69,000 young people started a Kickstart scheme job out of the 188,000 job placements available under that scheme as of July 2021.

David Linden: [\[49246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons had only 69,000 young people begun jobs under the Kickstart scheme as of 31 July 2021 compared with the target of 250,000 taking job under that scheme.

Mims Davies:

Since Kickstart jobs commenced in November, we are pleased that by 8 September 2021 over 69,000 young people had started in jobs created by the scheme. There was an average of 2,800 more starting each week between 18/08/2021 and 08/09/2021. We are confident that we will continue to fill tens of thousands over the coming months. Employers across Great Britain have provided thousands of roles so that young people can choose a job that is right for them. There are also jobs opening up for young people in the wider economy as it recovers from the global pandemic, between August 2020 and August 2021 there was a 381,000 increase in pay rolled employees under 25 years old.

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

We are ensuring as many eligible young people as need it get a chance to experience the Kickstart Scheme. We are promoting vacancies on various platforms, including social media and using initiatives such as Kickstart Quickstart to match young people to jobs in some cases on the same day they are referred to the scheme. In addition, Jobcentres are inviting Kickstart employers into their centres to job match Kickstart opportunities with young people.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

David Linden: [\[49247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment has she made of the effectiveness of the Kickstart scheme with 69,000 young people having started jobs under that scheme as of 31 July 2021.

David Linden: [\[49249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to publish an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Kickstart scheme when its funding ends in June 2022.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions will be monitoring and evaluating the Kickstart scheme throughout and after its implementation, and will continue to evaluate the longer term outcomes for participants after they have completed their Kickstart job.

The evaluation will include large scale surveys to capture the views and experiences of Kickstart participants and of employers and gateway organisations. The evaluation will consider how experiences and outcomes from the scheme vary and examine how participants' and employers' characteristics, local context and approaches to delivery effect experiences. Qualitative case-studies will provide a detailed understanding of how different aspects of the scheme interact and we will draw on available data and insights.

We will publish the findings of the evaluation once complete.

David Linden: [\[49248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much and what proportion of the £2 billion funding allocated to the Kickstart scheme has been spent on that scheme as of 14 September 2021.

Mims Davies:

Information relating to Kickstart grants will be published by the Cabinet Office on the Government website in due course, as is standard practice for all Government general grants. This information is normally published about a year after the financial year end and includes grant value and recipients.

David Linden: [\[49250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many young people have started Kickstart placements in each Parliamentary constituency.

Mims Davies:

We are currently not able to publish a breakdown below the regional and national level although expect to be able to do so in due course, to do so now would be at a disproportionate cost due to the amount of data that would need to be collated and quality assured.

■ Kickstart Scheme: Scotland**David Linden:**[\[49242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of the 69,000 young people who had started jobs under the Kickstart Scheme as of July 2021 were based in Scotland.

Mims Davies:

Of the 50,000 jobs that had been started as of 21 July, 4,400 have been started in Scotland as of 21 July, representing approximately 9% of the total job starts across Great Britain at the time.

By 8 September, 69,000 jobs had been started overall with 6,140 jobs starting in Scotland, representing approximately 9% of the total job starts across Great Britain.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

David Linden:[\[49243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of the 188,000 jobs made available under the Kickstart Scheme as of July 2021 were based in Scotland.

Mims Davies:

Of the 155,000 jobs that had been made available as of 21 July, 11,200 had been made available in Scotland representing approximately 7% of the total jobs made available across Great Britain at the time. By 8 September, 188,000 jobs had been made available overall with 13,800 jobs made available in Scotland, representing approximately 7% of the total job made available across Great Britain. Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

David Linden:[\[49244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of the 280,000 jobs approved for funding by the Kickstart Scheme as of 31 August 2021 were based in Scotland.

Mims Davies:

As of 31st August, there were 280,000 jobs approved for funding by the Kickstart Scheme, of which over 17,000 of these were from applications that listed the employer address as based in Scotland. This equates to 6% of the total approved jobs.

It is worth noting, we do not hold information on the location of a job at the application approval stage as this information is only confirmed once a job is available to apply for. We do however, hold information on the locations listed on original employer application form though these are not necessarily where the Kickstart job will be based and in many cases represent the head office of a particular employer and not the location the Kickstarter will be working.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system, which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

■ Pensions: Investment**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[50766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association's (PLSA) consultation paper entitled Responsible Investment Quality Mark: Consultation on Standards, published in June 2021, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of PLSA's proposal to develop a quality mark to recognise good practice of pension schemes on responsible investment.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State will consider the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association's proposals in the usual way. DWP officials look forward to discussing stakeholder responses with their PLSA counterparts in due course.

■ Social Security Benefits: Broadband**Chi Onwurah:**[\[49125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the recommendations from the Institute for Public Policy Research of September 2021, to include the cost of broadband in (a) social security payments and (b) allowances for asylum seekers.

David Rutley:

No assessment has been made.

Policy on broadband is a matter for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. A range of broadband social tariff packages are available in the market to support those on low incomes or who receive specific benefits. BT, for example,

recently announced a Home Essentials package which will provide fibre and voice services to households in receipt of Universal Credit and certain other benefits for £15 per month. Virgin, Hyperoptic and other providers are offering similar packages to assist households on low incomes. Between them, these products are available to 99% of households across the country. The Government continues to encourage all fixed-line providers to introduce a social tariff offer so as to ensure those on low incomes have affordable access to services and information.

With respect to rates of income-related benefits, these are not made up of separate amounts for specific items such as broadband. Rather, they are intended to cover outgoings across households with a wide variety of characteristics and expenditure patterns.

Allowances for asylum seekers are a matter for the Home Office. Asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute are provided with accommodation and other support to cover their essential needs, usually in the form of a weekly cash allowance. The level of the allowance is reviewed annually and takes into account communication needs, including the cost of buying and maintaining a mobile phone with internet access.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Mental Health**

Hywel Williams:

[\[50950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact that the re-introduction of conditionality requirements has had on the mental health of benefit claimants.

Mims Davies:

The Departmental guidance is continually reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects the changes to public health guidelines and easements due to Covid-19.

We believe it is important to ensure claimants have the support they need to move closer to and into employment if and when they are able. As such, for claimants who are expected to look for work, any work-related requirements are set in discussion with them and will always be tailored to their individual capability and circumstances, making them realistic and achievable.

We ensure that our more vulnerable claimants are further protected by exempting those with more serious medical conditions including mental health conditions and disabilities from any form of conditionality.

■ **State Retirement Pensions**

Justin Madders:

[\[48265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time was for the processing of a State Pension application as of 13 September 2021.

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.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[49121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 3 September to Question 41749 on State Retirement Pensions, Administrative Delays, how many staff have been redeployed from universal credit to retirement services.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is re-deploying circa 700 staff from other areas across DWP to help to stabilise the service further.

Ian Lavery: [\[50027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have been affected by the recent administrative delays in receiving their state pensions since turning 66.

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.

■ Universal Credit**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[49077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Trussell Trust's publication, Keep The Lifeline: The Trussell Trust briefing on the £20 cut to Universal Credit published by the Trussell Trust on the 8th September 2021, what steps she plans to take to ensure that people in receipt of universal credit can meet their basic needs when the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit is removed.

David Rutley:

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes through a range of measures, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending over £111 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22.

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. This approach is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty.

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.

In April this year, we increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins. We are investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has been expanded to every Local Authority across England. Participating children are benefitting from a range of support, including healthy and nutritious meals as well as fun and engaging activities covering the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

Damien Moore:[\[49259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial measures her Department has announced to support people on universal credit (a) secure employment and (b) secure more hours if already in part-time employment.

Mims Davies:

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; Restart, which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year; and

JETS, which provides light touch employment support for people who are claiming either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseekers Allowance, for up to 6 months, helping participants effectively re-engage with the labour market and focus their job search. We have also recruited an additional 13,500 Work Coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job. In total, our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

Supporting people into work and progressing in-work is at the heart of our approach to tackling poverty. We have recruited an additional 13,500 Work Coaches in our Jobcentres to help support people of all ages to find a job, retrain, or gain vital practical experience to move into better paid jobs or those that have opportunities for progression.

Last year DWP launched the In-Work Progression Commission led by Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith. The Commission published their independent report on 1 July 2021. It makes 26 recommendations to help people to progress at work and move out of low paid employment. The Government welcomed the report, we are carefully considering the recommendations and we will respond in the coming months.

In the meantime, DWP continues to build evidence of how we can support working claimants to progress in work. We are trialling a voluntary in-work support offer with claimants in South Yorkshire.

Rachael Maskell:

[50081]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she is taking steps to ensure that the removal of the £20 uplift to the standard allowance of universal credit does not result in a rise in levels of food poverty.

David Rutley:

[Holding answer 20 September 2021]: This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes and continues to do so through many measures, including by increasing the living wage and by spending over £111 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2021/22.

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. With the success of the vaccine rollout and record job vacancies, it is right that our focus is on helping people back into work. This approach is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include:

Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; Restart, which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year; and JETS, which provides light touch employment support for people who are claiming either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseekers Allowance, for up to 6 months, helping participants effectively re-engage with the labour market and focus their job search. We have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job. In total, our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

In April this year, we increased the value of Healthy Start Food Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25, helping eligible low income households buy basic foods like milk, fruit and vitamins. We are investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has been expanded to every Local Authority across England. Participating children are benefitting from a range of support, including healthy and nutritious meals as well as fun and engaging activities covering the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

■ Universal Credit: Hendon

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[48211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people will have their universal credit reduced as a result of the planned removal of the £20 uplift to the standard allowance in Hendon constituency.

David Rutley:

The available information on the number of people with Universal Credit in payment, by geography, is 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: Life Expectancy

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[48177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report, What will the end of the Universal Credit uplift mean for areas of poor health?, published by the Health Foundation on 10 September 2021, if she will make an estimate of the additional costs to (a) the NHS, (b) employers and (c) the wider economy of any impact of the planned removal of the £20 uplift to universal credit on healthy life expectancy.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[48178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report, What will the end of the Universal Credit uplift mean for areas of poor health?, published by the Health Foundation on 10 September 2021, if she will make an assessment of the impact of the planned removal of the £20 uplift to universal credit on healthy life expectancy in areas where healthy life expectancy is relatively low.

David Rutley:

No. 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 the COVID support package worth £407 billion.

There have been significant positive developments in the public health situation since the uplift was first introduced with the success of the vaccine rollout. Now the economy is reopening and as we continue to progress with our recovery our focus is on helping people back into work.

Through our Plan for Jobs, we are targeting tailored support schemes of people of all ages to help them prepare for, get into and progress in work. These include: Kickstart, delivering tens of thousands of six-month work placements for UC claimants aged 16-24 at risk of unemployment; Restart, which provides 12 months' intensive employment support to UC claimants who are unemployed for a year; and JETS, which provides light touch employment support for people who are claiming either Universal Credit or New Style Jobseekers Allowance, for up to 6 months, helping participants effectively re-engage with the labour market and focus their job search. We have also recruited an additional 13,500 work coaches to provide more intensive support to find a job. In total, our Plan for Jobs interventions will support more than two million people.

Welfare State**Colleen Fletcher:****[50676]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the welfare system in helping to alleviate levels of (a) pensioner, (b) in-work, (c) food and (d) child poverty in (i) Coventry North East constituency, (ii) Coventry, (iii) the West Midlands and (iv) England.

David Rutley:

The government tracks rates of pensioner, in-work, and child poverty for the West Midlands and England as part of its Households Below Average Income ([HBAI](#)) publication. The latest estimates are for the three year average between 2017/18 – 2019/20. Breakdowns by receipt of benefits can be found on [Stat-Xplore](#). Data for Coventry and the Coventry North East constituency is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Rates of household food security in West Midlands and England can be found in the [Family Resources Survey](#), including by benefit receipt. The latest figures are from 2019/20. As above, data for Coventry and the Coventry North East constituency is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Rates and numbers of children in absolute and relative low income, before housing costs, are available for Coventry North East and Coventry as part of the government's Children in Low Income Families (CILIF) publication. The latest figures

are from 2019/20 and can be viewed on [Stat-Xplore](#). This is not available by receipt of benefits.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ The Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry

Minister for London and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets) (Paul Scully): [\[HCWS298\]](#)

I welcome that Sir Wyn Williams, Chair of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, has today published a progress update which outlines the work already undertaken by the Inquiry and the planned next steps. The Government looks forward to receiving Sir Wyn's final report by the end of 2022.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Recording and Reporting Suicides

Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty): [\[HCWS299\]](#)

As part of the Government's work to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran, I am committed to ensuring that all veterans who may be struggling are able to access dedicated support. Achieving this depends on a good understanding of where support is needed, including a more comprehensive understanding of veterans who tragically take their own lives. I can announce today that the UK Government is working to develop a new method for recording and reporting cases of suicide within the veteran community. This will allow for the first publication of statistics of veterans who die by suicide each year in England and Wales, and we will continue to explore ways this can be replicated across the UK in the future.

The new method is being developed by the Office for Veterans' Affairs, the Office for National Statistics and the Ministry of Defence following consultation across HMG and our Devolved Administrations to determine the best approach. As set out in the [ONS Census output and analysis consultation](#), in 2023, the ONS will undertake analysis to compare the health of the veteran population, including the number of veterans with long-term health conditions or disabilities, with the general population. This analysis will also include suicide-related deaths of veterans. In the interim, we will be working with the ONS and the MoD to conduct a 10 year look back at veteran deaths by suicide. This work will inform us about how many veterans have died through suicide and other causes including drug and alcohol misuse from 2011-2021, and to estimate the number that died homeless. We anticipate publishing this look back in Autumn 2022.

In the Strategy for our Veterans, the Government committed to improve the collection and analysis of data on veterans to inform future policy. This new work will ensure we are meeting that commitment to better understand the tragic issue of suicide, understand its prevalence, and better inform future policy and interventions in support of the veteran community. This analysis will help government understand how many veterans die by

suicide and using this data in combination with other research will enable us to better develop and target mental health and suicide prevention measures.

We are collaborating with Departments across Government to develop this new robust method and to ensure that we can better provide for those who have protected our country. In addition, the MoD, OVA and NHSE have partnered with Manchester University to investigate the antecedents to suicide in both serving personnel and veterans focusing on the year prior to the death. The study will be using data supplied by MoD on military service, information collected as part of the confidential inquiry into suicides and coroners' reports. The study will include all suicides between 1995-2017 and will complete in August 2022.

Every suicide is a tragedy, and our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones to suicide. We urge all who may be struggling to reach out and access the support available. Those struggling to cope should call Samaritans for free on 116 123 (UK and ROI) or contact other sources of support, such as those listed on the [NHS's help for suicidal thoughts](#) webpage. Support is available round the clock, every single day of the year, providing a safe place for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life has done to them.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Gambling Regulation

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Chris Philp): [\[HCWS301\]](#)

On 7 June the government announced that Malcolm Sheehan QC had been appointed to lead an independent review into the regulation of the Football Index gambling product and its operator, BetIndex Ltd. The Terms of Reference set out that the review was to provide an expert account of the actions taken by the Gambling Commission and other regulatory bodies throughout the period in which BetIndex held a gambling licence, provide recommendations as needed, and to inform the government's ongoing review of the 2005 Gambling Act. The independent review has now concluded, and the [report](#) has today been published on gov.uk.

I am grateful to Mr Sheehan and his team for their extensive investigation, thorough report and clear recommendations. I am also grateful to the Gambling Commission, Financial Conduct Authority and others for their cooperation with the review and their provision of evidence to support Mr Sheehan's deliberations.

This independent expert report has been completed in such a way as to avoid prejudicing a number of ongoing processes and investigations into BetIndex Ltd. Firstly, administration proceedings are continuing, looking at the assets and liabilities of the firm and what is owed to customers. It is likely that this process will result in some amounts being reimbursed to creditors. Secondly, the Gambling Commission is completing its separate regulatory investigation into BetIndex on which it will report in due course. Thirdly, the Gambling Commission has referred the company to the Insolvency Service to

ask that they consider whether the actions of the directors prior to administration breached insolvency or fraud laws. Any comment on this matter needs to carefully avoid prejudicing any future legal proceedings.

Football Index was a novel and boundary-pushing product, and its business was materially impacted by Covid 19 and the suspension of football. While the independent review focused on the actions of regulatory bodies, it did find that BetIndex did not properly notify the Gambling Commission of the nature of the product in its licence application, nor did it inform the regulator of changes to the product after launch as it was required to. This made scrutiny harder.

Nonetheless, the report identifies areas where the Gambling Commission could have been more effective in responding to the challenges raised by the novel product from its licensing to eventual collapse, including in early scrutiny, speed of decision-making and action, and escalation of issues when barriers arose. By 2019 it was aware of concerns about the product and launched an investigation, but by that time Football Index had grown to such an extent that large amounts of customer money were already involved. The report helps us understand why certain decisions were made at the time and what we can learn from that.

While BetIndex Ltd was never regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, the report also looked at its role in working with the Commission, identifying some areas of improvement including in speed of response to requests from the Commission and consistency of messaging on regulatory responsibilities.

It is now essential that we learn the lessons from this case and ensure a similar situation does not happen again. I am pleased that the Gambling Commission is carrying out an action plan to address the issues identified. In the weeks since the draft report was shared the Commission has:

- Updated the frameworks for risk based regulation so that product novelty is properly considered alongside other factors in determining the level of scrutiny an operator is placed under.
- Committed to consulting on tighter rules for the terminology used to describe gambling products, putting beyond doubt that gambling must be clearly described as gambling and not an investment.
- Commenced a review of all remote licensees to check for issues relating to boundary pushing products.
- Agreed to provide formal advice to the government on the issue of protecting customer funds as part of the Gambling Act Review. This is in addition to their current business plan's commitment to review the existing three-tiered approach.

The Commission and FCA have also worked together to strengthen their Memorandum of Understanding in response to Mr Sheehan's recommendations, including with new escalation routes and commitments on timeliness of responses to ensure regulatory impasses can not remain unsolved. The FCA has additionally:

- Nominated an Executive Director to oversee the relationship with the Commission

- Continued to pursue the programme of change as set out in its July Business Plan.

The report has also raised some important questions for the government's ongoing Review of the Gambling Act 2005 which is already taking a comprehensive and evidence-led look at gambling in this country, including a close examination of the Gambling Commission's powers and resources. The Gambling Commission is not required to monitor the financial viability of companies on an ongoing basis. However, our Act Review will consider whether the Commission should require gambling companies to do more to demonstrate their ability to cover liabilities arising from long term bets, especially if they make up a large proportion of their business. The Gambling White Paper which we will publish in due course will answer this question and set out the government's vision for the sector.

A copy of Mr Sheehan's final report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ National Artificial Intelligence Strategy

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Ms Nadine Dorries):
[[HCWS300](#)]

I am pleased to lay before the House, the UK's first [National Artificial Intelligence Strategy](#), which represents a step change in the Government's approach to this transformative technology.

The UK is already a world leader in AI, from trailblazing pioneers like Alan Turing and Ada Lovelace to UK-based AI companies such as DeepMind and Benevolent AI - the UK leads the world in the fundamental research, industrial application and commercialisation of the technology.

The challenge now for the UK is to fully unlock the power of AI and data-driven technologies, to build on our early leadership and legacy and to look forward to the opportunities of this coming decade. This strategy outlines our vision for how the UK can maintain and build on its position as other countries also race to deliver their own economic and technological transformations. This will be achieved through three pillars:

1. Investing in the needs of the ecosystem to see more people working with AI, more access to data and compute resources to train and deliver AI systems, and access to finance and customers to grow sectors;
2. Supporting the diffusion of AI across the whole economy to ensure all regions, nations, businesses and sectors can benefit from AI; and
3. Developing a pro-innovation regulatory and governance framework that protects the public.

AI will be central to how we drive growth and enrich lives, and the vision set out in the strategy will help us achieve both of those vital goals.

The Office for Artificial Intelligence - a joint unit of DCMS and BEIS - will publish an execution and monitoring plan to track the success of the strategy and the wider impact of AI on our economy, society and Government.

A version of the National AI Strategy will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

TREASURY

■ Contingencies Fund Advance

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Lucy Frazer): [\[HCWS302\]](#)

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will incur new expenditure in connection with the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021-22

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £6,000,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £6,000,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund

Further requests to the Contingencies Fund may be made as necessary to fund Covid-19 activity delivered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.