



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 19 October 2018 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:30 P.M., 19 October 2018). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Sexual Offences: Prosecutions

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[\[177585\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what assessment his Department carried out to determine whether the CPS requirement for people who have been victims of sexual assault to sign a Stafford statement complies with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights; what guidelines exist as to whether people reporting sexual assault must agree to sign such a statement; and what information those people are given about what that process involves.

Robert Buckland:

A “Stafford statement” is not a CPS requirement, but is used by some police forces to seek the consent of the complainant to access material held by third parties when this is relevant to the investigation.

It is of vital importance that the personal information of complainants who report sexual offences is treated in a way that is consistent with both their right to privacy and with the interests of justice. CPS guidance is clear that requests for access to information held by third parties or on digital devices must be a reasonable line of inquiry, justified by the circumstances of the individual case. It should not be undertaken routinely in every case.

As part of the National Disclosure Improvement Plan, the CPS are working closely with the police to ensure that complainants are given the opportunity to make an informed decision about allowing police access to their personal information. This will ensure that complainants are aware of both how their digital devices or records will be examined and the use that may be made of any data obtained through that examination, including informing the complainant if it is to be disclosed to the defendant.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Asda: Sainsbury's

Mr John Hayes:

[\[178236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent representations he has made to the Competition and Markets Authority on the proposed merger between Sainsbury's and Asda.

Kelly Tolhurst:

My Rt hon Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) about the case on 16th May. The letter and the CMA's response are available on the CMA's website.

■ Consumer Goods: Electronic Commerce

Carolyn Harris: [\[178333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the introduction of a quality mark for online sellers of electrical goods.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Products sold in the UK must comply with the relevant applicable legislation, including safety legislation. Safety rules apply whether good is sold on the high street or online. Enforcing authorities can take action where the law is not complied with. Electrical products sold on the UK market are required to have a CE marking to demonstrate that they meet all the relevant legislation, including safety rules. Consumers have protection and right to redress if a product is faulty or unsafe. Quality marks which go beyond legal compliance are a matter for industry.

■ Solar Power

Mr Laurence Robertson: [\[179084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the proportion of electricity generated by solar panels.

Claire Perry:

We are committed to ensuring the UK has secure energy supplies that are reliable, affordable and clean. Our country generates electricity from increasingly low carbon sources and the electricity powering the UK's homes and businesses in 2017 was the greenest ever, with 50% coming from clean sources - up from 19% in 2010.

We are currently considering the responses received to the recent consultation on Feed-In-Tariffs export payments alongside the generation tariff for new applications after 31st March 2019. A Government response will be published in due course.

■ Trading Standards: Performance Appraisal

Carolyn Harris: [\[178338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to measure the (a) quality and (b) quantity of work undertaken by Trading Standards Officers.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Resources for local trading standards services are determined by local authorities. Each local authority trading standards service publishes its own enforcement policy having regard to the principles set out in the Regulators' Code. It is the responsibility of individual local authorities to manage the quality and quantity of work undertaken by Trading Standards Officers.

■ Trading Standards: Recruitment**Carolyn Harris:** [\[178336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the number of Trading Standards Officers in England and Wales.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Trading Standards Officers are employed by local authorities which are independent from central government. These authorities are responsible for determining their spending priorities and for the recruitment of Trading Standards Officers; they are accountable to their local electorate.

The Department provides funding to National Trading Standards (NTS) to enable local authorities in England and Wales to take coordinated action on consumer harm issues that cross local authority boundaries.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces: Proscribed Organisations****Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[177622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel from each branch of the armed forces have been charged with offences relating to proscribed organisations in each of the last five years.

Mark Lancaster:

The Ministry of Defence are aware that two members of the Army have been charged through the civilian courts with offences relating to proscribed organisations in the last five years. There have been no such charges made in the Service Justice System during that time.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement**Mrs Madeleine Moon:** [\[177636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Multi-Role Vehicle (Protected) his Department plans to procure; and if he will make a statement.

Stuart Andrew:

The number of vehicles we intend to buy under the Multi-Role Vehicle Protected programme will be confirmed when the main investment decision is taken.

■ Devonport Dockyard: Trident Submarines**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[177599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to locate the (a) deep maintenance and (b) refuelling of the Dreadnought submarines at Devonport.

Stuart Andrew:

The deep maintenance of Royal Navy submarines continues to take place at Devonport. There are no plans for the Dreadnought submarines to be refuelled.

■ **Germany: Deployment****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[177625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel are currently assigned to Field Army units based in Germany.

Mark Lancaster:

There are currently around 2,800 personnel assigned to Field Army units in Germany.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Staff****Seema Malhotra:**[\[177727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what change there has been in staffing levels in his Department since June 2016.

Mark Lancaster:

Details of changes to Armed Forces staffing levels since June 2016 can be found via the links below:

Armed Forces Personnel

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-monthly-service-personnel-statistics-2016>

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-monthly-service-personnel-statistics-2017*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2018>

*The publication of Armed Forces staffing levels changed from monthly to quarterly following the release of the 1 October 2017 edition.

Civilian Personnel

Details of MOD civilian staffing levels are published within the Biannual Civilian Personnel Report (BCPR). A link to the BCPR can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-biannual-civilian-personnel-statisticsindex>

Prior to the biannual change on 1 April 2018, civilian personnel statistics were published quarterly in the Quarterly Civilian Personnel Report; a link to these historic reports can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mod-civilian-personnel-quarterly-statistics-index>

■ Nuclear Powered Vessels and Nuclear Submarines: Procurement**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[177597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the (a) total cost and (b) completion date for the (i) Dreadnought submarine, (ii) Astute submarine, (iii) Nuclear Warhead Capability Sustainment and (iv) Core Production Capability programmes.

Stuart Andrew:

As part of this Government's transparency commitment, the current approved cost estimates for the defence nuclear programmes were included in the Ministry of Defence Major Projects Portfolio, published on 4 July 2018. Programme projected completion dates are also included, where security constraints allow.

A link is provided below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-government-major-projects-portfolio-data-2018>

■ Pressurised Water Reactors: Testing**Fabian Hamilton:** [\[177598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Royal Navy Nuclear Reactor Test Facility Review commissioned by his Department's Chief Scientific Advisor, dated October 2014, which of the recommendations of that review have been implemented; and on what date each of those recommendations were implemented.

Stuart Andrew:

The Royal Navy Nuclear Reactor Test Facility Review's recommendations were considered and where appropriate incorporated into a routine business approach. These are now being delivered through the work of Defence Nuclear Organisation and Submarine Delivery Agency.

The Ministry of Defence does not hold the information in the format requested and that data could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ 5G****Mr Ranil Jayawardena:** [\[178518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the level of coverage provided by 5G-ready infrastructure.

Margot James:

We are committed to providing the world-class digital infrastructure the UK needs to compete and grow in the modern economy. The Government wants the UK to be a world leader in 5G and to ensure that the majority of the population have access to a 5G signal by 2027.

As 5G is still in its developmental stage it has yet to be rolled out. However, definitive standards are due to be agreed in 2019 and incremental deployment is expected over the following decade.

In the Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review, the Government set out that it expects 5G to be rolled out in phases around the country, and for Mobile Network Operators to deploy 5G equipment first on existing sites.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Brexit**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[177711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to publish his Department's preparations for no deal.

Margot James:

We firmly believe it is in the interests of both the EU and the UK to strike a deal. That remains the goal on both sides and we are confident that this will be achieved. However it is the job of a responsible Government to prepare for all scenarios, so we have already carried out very significant 'no deal' preparations for the unlikely event that we reach March 2019 without agreeing a deal

We have already published over 100 technical notices so that businesses and citizens have time to prepare in the event of a 'no deal' scenario. These are available on gov.uk in a centralised location that is easy for people to access and use.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Northern Ireland**

Layla Moran:

[\[177802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

Margot James:

a) No such trips have taken place. Details of Ministers' overseas travel are published quarterly and are available on GOV.UK.

b) Details of business expenses incurred by senior officials include domestic and international travel. This information is also published quarterly and is available on GOV.UK.

The information requested for all officials in my Department is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Staff**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[177728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what change there has been in staffing levels in his Department since June 2016.

Margot James:

The DCMS headcount for June 2016 and the following two years was:

DATE	HEADCOUNT
30 June 2016	530
30 June 2017	669
30 June 2018	979

These figures relate to Civil Servants on DCMS' payroll. This includes permanent staff, those on fixed-term contracts, those on paid loan/secondment in/out of DCMS and those on paid maternity leave.

This information is published by DCMS on an annual basis. The information for 2016/17 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcms-workforce-management-data-financial-year-2016-to-2017>

■ Nuisance Calls

Steve McCabe:**[178225]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Home Office on measures to tackle vishing.

Margot James:

The Government takes all types of fraud extremely seriously, including vishing. The Home Office holds responsibility for the Joint Fraud Taskforce and Action Fraud is the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cybercrime where fraud should be reported. Action Fraud has produced guidance on its website to help individuals and organisations prevent fraud.

EDUCATION

■ Department for Education: Brexit

Seema Malhotra:**[177712]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to publish his Department's preparations for no deal.

Anne Milton:

It is in the interests of both the EU and the UK to strike a deal and this remains the goal on both sides. We are confident that this will be achieved.

It is the job of a responsible government to prepare for all scenarios. We have already carried out very significant 'no deal' preparations for the unlikely event that we reach March 2019 without agreeing a deal.

We have already published over 100 technical notices so that businesses and citizens have time to prepare in the event of a 'no deal' scenario. These are available on GOV.UK in a centralised location that is easy for people to access and use.

■ **Department for Education: Northern Ireland**

Layla Moran: [\[177803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

Anne Milton:

No ministers or officials from the Department for Education have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months.

■ **Department for Education: Staff**

Seema Malhotra: [\[177729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what change there has been in staffing levels in his Department since June 2016.

Anne Milton:

The table below shows the change in the department's staffing levels since June 2016.

DATE	HEADCOUNT	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT
June 2016	3531	3395.6
August 2018	6194	5956.7

■ **Home Education: Greater Manchester**

James Frith: [R] [\[177795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are home-schooled in (a) Bury North constituency, (b) Bury and (c) Greater Manchester.

Anne Milton:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ **Literacy**

Chris Evans: [\[177674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to raise standards of adult literacy.

Chris Evans:

[\[177675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to improve adult literacy and numeracy.

Anne Milton:

We provide full funding for adult learners in England to secure English and mathematics qualifications from entry level to level 2.

To raise standards of adult literacy and numeracy, we are reforming English and mathematics Functional Skills qualifications, which are accessed primarily by adults. This will ensure that these qualifications are more rigorous and better recognised by employers.

Through the Flexible Learning Fund, we are investing over £11 million to design and test ways of delivering learning to adults with low or intermediate skills more flexibly.

We are also establishing 21 Centres for Excellence across the country, with at least one in every region of England, to improve the quality of mathematics teaching and basic mathematics knowledge and skills in post-16 institutions. The programme will spread best practice across the country through mathematics networks, which will benefit adult learners.

■ Primary Education: Dental Health

Luke Pollard:

[\[178536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department provides to teach oral hygiene in primary schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Early Years Foundation Stage framework sets out what children should demonstrate by the end of reception, in terms of personal hygiene through the Health and Self-Care early learning goal. In addition, Early Years Educator qualifications cover the promotion of the health, safety and welfare of children.

The Department does not provide any dedicated funding to teach oral hygiene. The primary science curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to be taught about oral hygiene. In Year 2, pupils are taught about the importance of hygiene in general, and in Year 4 they are taught about teeth and their functions. This can include finding out about what damages teeth and how to look after them. The primary science curriculum is compulsory in all local authority maintained schools and academies can use it as a benchmark to teach science.

In addition, the Government is proposing to introduce compulsory Health Education and is currently consulting on draft regulations and associated guidance about this. Under the topic of health and prevention, the draft guidance sets out that pupils should know about dental health and the benefits of good oral hygiene, including visits to the dentist. The consultation is also seeking views on the support schools might need for the teaching of Health Education. The consultation closes on 7 November 2018.

■ Primary Education: Nurseries

Tracy Brabin: [\[179289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of primary schools which have opened since September 2017 (a) include a nursery and (b) do not include a nursery.

Tracy Brabin: [\[179290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of new primary schools that have been approved since September 2017 (a) include plans a nursery and (b) do not include plans for a nursery.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 18 October 2018]: Since September 2017, 60% of the mainstream and special free schools that have opened currently have, or have plans for, nursery provision. Since September 2017, 65% of mainstream and special primary schools approved, currently have plans for nursery provision.

In addition to this, four voluntary-aided (VA) primary schools have opened, one of these includes nursery provision. Some, or all of the VA schools, may be as result of local reconfiguration of schools in an area. As local authorities are responsible for approving VA schools, we do not hold information on the number of VA schools approved in this period.

These figures relate to schools that have exclusively primary-aged pupils.

■ Pupil Exclusions

Mr Jim Cunningham: [\[179103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of school exclusions.

Nick Gibb:

The Department supports head teachers using exclusion where this is warranted.

In March, the Government launched an externally-led review of exclusions practice, led by Edward Timpson CBE. The review will explore how head teachers use exclusion, and why pupils with particular characteristics are more likely to be excluded from school. It will also consider the differences in exclusion rates across primary and secondary schools in England.

The review will report at the beginning of next year. The full terms of reference for the review can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusions-review-terms-of-reference>.

■ Schools: Finance**Maria Eagle:** [\[179126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average per pupil funding provided by his Department is for schools in (a) Garston and Halewood and (b) East Hampshire constituency.

Nick Gibb:

Overall, schools in Garston and Halewood constituency attracted £4,840 per pupil for 2018-19, an increase of 1.3% on their 2017-18 baselines. For 2019-20, this will increase to £4,877 per pupil, an increase of 2.0% on 2017-18 baselines.

Schools in East Hampshire constituency attracted £4,257 per pupil for 2018-19, an increase of 2.5% on their 2017-18 baselines. For 2019-20, this will increase to £4,333 per pupil, an increase of 4.3% on 2017-18 baselines.

■ Universities: Ethnic Groups**Paul Blomfield:** [\[178283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for the Government's ambition to increase the number of BAME students going to university by 20 per cent by 2020 of implementing the recommendations in the University and College Union report entitled Investigating higher education institutions and their views on the Race Equality Charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

I welcome the report from the University and College Union. Widening access to Higher Education is a priority for this government. We want everyone with the capability to succeed in Higher Education to have the opportunity to benefit from a university education, regardless of background, ethnicity, or where they grew up.

In 2017, 18 year olds from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to enter full-time undergraduate higher education than ever before.

However, we still have more to do. That is why we asked the Office for Students to continue to ensure ethnic minority groups are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

A new transparency condition will also require HE providers to publish application, offer, acceptance, non-continuation and attainment rates by socio-economic background, gender and ethnicity, which will provide greater transparency and help to shine a light on those providers who need to do more.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agricultural Shows: Wales**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[177667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the correspondence between his Department and Royal Welsh Show officials on the display of Union Jack flags at the Royal Welsh Show.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[178490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what representations his Department received on the display of Union Jack flags at the Royal Welsh Show.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[178491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has made representations to the Welsh Government on the display of the Union Jack flag in the Royal Welsh Show.

George Eustice:

As part of preparations for the Royal Welsh Show, the Department had discussions with the organisers and the Welsh Government on the use of the GREAT brand, which features the Union Jack within its logo, at the show. The Department does not normally publish internal correspondence.

The FOOD is GREAT campaign highlights the very best food and drink from all parts of the UK, including Wales. It provides a global shop window for our world-class producers, including renowned Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Northern Ireland

Layla Moran: [\[177804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

David Rutley:

The Secretary of State visited Northern Ireland on 28 and 29 September 2017 and has had many meetings with politicians and stakeholders from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Data on visits by officials to the Irish border is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Nappies: Waste Disposal**Kate Hoey:** [\[177573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department's library holds a copy of The Real Nappies for London Scheme - waste prevention and wider social benefits - 2012-2017 paper, by Charles Warner, Paul Philips and Kimberley M Hill, presented to the 33rd International Conference on Solid Waste Technology and Management, Annapolis, Washington D.C. in 2018.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Yes.

Kate Hoey: [\[177574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department holds a copy of Contribution of Real Nappies for London to local authority waste prevention - 2012-2016 published by the Institution of Civil Engineers; and whether officials of his Department were represented at the presentation of an award to the authors of that paper by the Institution of Civil Engineers on 8 October 2018.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Yes and no.

■ Plastics: Waste Disposal**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[177773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of biodegradable cutlery in reducing the use of single-use plastic; and what steps his Department is taking to promote and increase the use of such cutlery.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government has committed in its 25 Year Environment Plan to eliminating all avoidable plastic waste, further details of which will be set in our upcoming Resources and Waste Strategy

The Government is aware of the interest in biodegradable and compostable materials. While such materials may be seen as a solution to reduce the impact of waste, they can also be more environmentally damaging than non-biodegradable materials if disposed of incorrectly. The Government published a report in 2015 which concluded that existing biodegradable standards are only applicable to very specific conditions, such as industrial composters.

The Government is concerned that, in the absence of standards, claims about the biodegradability of plastic-based products cannot be verified leading to potential confusion in the marketplace, possible increased levels of consumption and potential environmental harm at the point of disposal. As part of our forthcoming UK Bioeconomy Strategy we will work with industry to seek evidence on the demand, benefits and implications of a standard for bio-based and biodegradable plastics.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Natural Resources****Patrick Grady:**[\[177755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether it is the policy of the Government that there should be no human footprint in the Chagos Islands, other than Diego Garcia.

Sir Alan Duncan:

There is no Government policy precluding a human footprint in the Chagos Islands.

Sovereignty patrols of the Outer Islands are regularly conducted by British Forces. The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) patrol vessel conducts regular patrolling of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The British Indian Ocean Territory Administration (BIOTA) also grants permits to scientists who wish to conduct research in the Territory (subject to meeting relevant requirements).

A small number of permits for yachts are also issued, with strict conditions, by BIOTA to enable vessels to rest at specific anchorages in order to provide safe passage through the Indian Ocean.

The support package for the Chagossians, announced in November 2016, will also enable Chagossians to maintain a connection with the territory through an increased programme of visits to BIOT. Each visit includes a visit to the outer islands for those who were born on them.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Nature Conservation**Patrick Grady:**[\[177757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what emergency procedures are in place to protect the flora and fauna of the British Indian Ocean Territory in the event of an accident involving military aircraft or naval vessels.

Sir Alan Duncan:

There are established procedures in place to deal with accidents involving vessels and aircraft that could impact upon the exceptional environment and wildlife of the British Indian Ocean Territory. These include emergency response plans for hazardous waste and/or oil or petrol spills. These plans are practised regularly including large scale simulated scenarios.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Nuclear Powered Vessels**Patrick Grady:**[\[177756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many nuclear (a) armed and (b) powered surface or submarine vessels have entered the waters of the British Indian Ocean Territory since the Marine Protected Area was established.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold data on the operational movements of naval vessels.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Digital Technology and Social Media**Emily Thornberry:**[\[177655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many officials in his Department have a primary responsibility of managing digital channels or producing social media content; and what the (a) grades and (b) job descriptions are of those officials.

Sir Alan Duncan:

21st Century digital diplomacy is recognised as an essential tool and we intent to be world leading. We have a dedicated digital communications team in London, responsible for managing the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's digital channels and providing support to all our Posts around the world, to ensure communications staff and Heads of Mission, know how to use digital tools as part of their broader communications work. The London team consist of an SMS Digital Transformation Leader who is partly responsible for digital communications content and policy, a D6 Head of digital engagement responsible for overall digital content, a C5 social media manager and C4 social media officer responsible for producing content and channel management; and three C band digital campaigns officers, responsible for producing digital content. Posts have a communications team, who also have responsibility for managing local digital channels or producing content, but these staff are recruited locally, and it is delegated to the Head of Mission to allocate the amount of time spent on various communications tasks.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Mass Media**Emily Thornberry:**[\[177654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many officials in his Department have a primary responsibility of dealing with the news media; and what the (a) grades and (b) job descriptions are of those officials.

Sir Alan Duncan:

As of 15 September 2018, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Media Office had 24 members of staff:

a) These range from Assistant Press Officer to Head of News.

b) The role of the team is to support the media output of the Foreign Secretary and junior Ministers' departmental work. Teams divide responsibility by geographical regions and support Ministers accordingly.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Electronic Cigarettes**

Jim Shannon: [\[178297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on levels of smoking of an increase in the take-up of vaping.

Jim Shannon: [\[178298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has received representations on the link between the levels of (a) vaping and (b) smoking.

Jim Shannon: [\[178299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reviewing the policy of local stop smoking services in order to promote vaping.

Steve Brine:

Smoking rates have fallen steeply in recent years at the same time as e-cigarette use has increased. Adult smoking prevalence in England is 14.9%, the lowest rate on record, whilst around 2.5 million people in England use e-cigarettes, the majority of whom no longer smoke. Whilst the link between uptake of vaping and decline in smoking is not straightforward, the latest research suggests that up to 57,000 people a year are quitting smoking through e-cigarette use who would not have quit through other means.

Ministers and officials receive a wide range of representations from different stakeholders regarding smoking and vaping. The Government is committed to keeping the evidence on e-cigarettes under review and Public Health England (PHE) will continue to publish an annual review of the evidence base.

Local stop smoking services are able to promote vaping as a tool to stop smoking, drawing upon advice from PHE and the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training. According to PHE, smokers who combine e-cigarettes with local stop smoking services have some of the highest quit rates of all service users.

Jim Shannon: [\[178300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to change the implementation of the EU Tobacco Products Directive in the UK in relation to vaping after the UK leaves the EU.

Jim Shannon: [\[178301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to introduce legislative proposals to make regulatory changes to (a) help support the growth of the vaping sector after the UK leaves the EU and (b) ensure high standards of product manufacturing for consumers.

Steve Brine:

The Tobacco Products Directive was transposed into United Kingdom law through the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 (TRPR).

The Department has committed to review the TRPR by May 2021. As announced in the Tobacco Control Plan, the Government will review where the UK's exit from the European Union offers us opportunities to re-appraise current regulation to ensure this continues to protect the nation's health. We will look to identify where we can sensibly deregulate without harming public health, or where EU regulations limit our ability to deal with tobacco.

Jim Shannon:**[178302]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the regulatory regime in relation to the production of nicotine (a) shots and (b) shortfills.

Jim Shannon:**[178303]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will conduct an assessment of the (a) adequacy of the regulation of non-nicotine liquid for vape products and (b) the medical effects of shortfills or nicotine shots.

Steve Brine:

As shortfills do not contain nicotine when sold they are not regulated under the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016 (TRPR), but are covered by General Product Safety Regulations. Consumers and healthcare professionals can report side effects and safety concerns with e-cigarettes and e-liquids to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency through the Yellow Card reporting system. Any non-nicotine products notified on this system are passed on to Trading Standards.

The Government will conduct a review of the TRPR at a later date.

■ NHS: Finance**Mr Laurence Robertson:****[177576]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the proportion of GDP spent on healthcare in the UK compared to the proportion spent by other EU countries.

Stephen Barclay:

The latest year for which data for all European Union countries is published on a comparable basis is 2015. Total health spending as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product for 27 EU countries is published by the EU and is available at the following link:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Current_healthcare_expenditure_2015_FP18a.png

■ Oral Tobacco

Jim Shannon: [\[178304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will request Public Health England to conduct reviews on the potential for harm reduction of snus products.

Jim Shannon: [\[178305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the ban on Snus products.

Steve Brine:

Snus is banned under the European Union's Tobacco Products Directive. The Government committed in the Tobacco Control Plan for England to review where the United Kingdom's exit from the EU offers us opportunities to re-appraise current regulation to ensure this continues to protect the nation's health. We will look to identify where we can sensibly deregulate without harming public health or where current EU regulations limit our ability to deal with tobacco. The Government's goal will remain to achieve a proportionate approach to managing risk, one which protects the young and non-smokers, whilst giving smokers access to products which will reduce harm.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Rushanara Ali: [\[178314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2018 to Question 165570 on prescription fees and charges, how many claimants have subsequently had those penalty charges reversed.

Steve Brine:

The information requested is not recorded.

Rushanara Ali: [\[178315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2018 to Question 165570 on NHS prescription fees and charges, if he will request from the Department for Work and Pensions a list of those who have been affected cross-referenced with those who have received a penalty charge.

Steve Brine:

The Department has no plans to request such a list.

HOME OFFICE**■ Appleby Horse Fair**

Tim Farron: [\[178265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will meet with the chief constable of Cumbria Constabulary to discuss the adequacy of funding for Cumbria Constabulary to effectively police the area surrounding the Appleby Horse Fair each year.

Mr Nick Hurd:

Ministers meet on a regular basis with police leaders to discuss a range of topics. Last year, I spoke to all 43 police forces in England & Wales about the demands they face.

The Government is supporting the police to respond to changing demand with an over £460m increase in total investment in the police system this financial year, including an increase of around £280m in funding for Police & Crime Commissioners through council tax precept. The Cumbria PCC's direct resource funding is £102.9 million in 2018/19, an increase of £2.5 million from precept compared to 2017/18.

Decisions about the allocation of police resources and deployment of officers are for Chief Constables and democratically accountable PCCs. They are responsible for ensuring the needs of the local community are met. If any force faces an exceptional event that could threaten the financial stability of the force, the Police and Crime Commissioners can apply to the Home Office for special grant funding.

■ Asylum: Housing**Helen Hayes:**[\[177768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether provisions will be included in the new asylum accommodation contracts to ensure that service providers that fail to meet specified standards will be held to account.

Caroline Nokes:

The Home Office has a rigorous contract compliance regime in place to ensure that the required performance standards expected of all providers, as defined in the contracts, are met. More specifically:

The Provider shall perform the Services to meet or exceed the Performance Standards defined in the Statement of Requirements and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) defined within the Performance Management Regime.

Service Credits associated with Provider performance failures against the KPI targets, shall be applied by the Authority from the Contract Effective Date.

Service Credits will be applied in the event of performance failures against KPIs, at a level commensurate with the Provider's degree of failure against the relevant KPI. The agreed Service Credit Payment (SCP) for each Service Area will be deducted from the Monthly Service Payment which would otherwise be payable to the Provider for the relevant Payment Period.

■ Bail: Victims and Witnesses**Sarah Champion:**[\[178317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he plans to assess the long-term effect of the provisions on pre-charge bail in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 on (a) victim and (b) witness protection in relation to the high-harm offences of (i)

domestic abuse, (ii) hate crime, (iii) serious sexual offences, (iv) rape and (v) child abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

Following the 2017 reforms to pre-charge bail, the police are still able to impose pre-charge bail, with appropriate conditions, to protect victims and witnesses in any case where doing so is both necessary and proportionate.

While the legislation is clear that bail remains available in any case where it is necessary and proportionate, the Home Office is working with partners across the Criminal Justice System to monitor the impacts of the reforms, including to ensure that vulnerable victims and witnesses continue to receive appropriate protection, whether through the use of pre-charge bail conditions or otherwise.

In order to ensure that bail is used appropriately, the Home Office has commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to review the police's use of pre-charge bail as part of their annual PEEL effectiveness inspection programme. The use of pre-charge bail continues to feature in HMICFRS' core assessments and, in November 2018, the Inspectorate will publish a thematic review of how forces are dealing with domestic abuse cases, which will include a focus on the use of bail.

Pre-charge bail is also a regular agenda item at Chief Constables' Council, where chiefs have noted that there is significant variation in the use of pre-charge bail between forces and that they should ensure that they are content with the approach taken by their force.

■ **Home Office: Staff**

Seema Malhotra:

[177734]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what change there has been in staffing levels in his Department since June 2016.

Victoria Atkins:

Between June 2016 and June 2018 there has been an overall 9% increase in staffing levels.

JUNE 2016		JUNE 2018 ¹		% VARIANCE	
FTE	HC	FTE	HC	FTE	HC
26108	28060	28369	30620	9%	9%

¹ Figures are reported using ONS Definitions. Since April 17 we have been using a new reporting system which has impacted on civil servant paid and unpaid figures; previously loans to FCO were captured as unpaid but are now recorded in the paid category as all costs are re-charged to the Home Office. The paid category only are reported in figures collected by Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the Quarterly Public Employment Survey (QPSES).

Data Source:

1) June 2016: Data View - Office for National Statistics compliant monthly snapshot corporate Human Resources data for Home Office.

2) June 2018: Adelphi - Home Office Human Resources Record System.

Period Covered:

1) As at 30/06/2016

2) As at 30/06/2018

Organisational Coverage: Home Office

Employee Coverage: Data is based on headcount (HC) and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of paid Civil Servants who were current at the end of the period.

Note: Figures are in line with the Quarterly Public Sector Employment Survey (QPSES) collected by Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Key workforce changes in 2016-17 include:

1 Machinery of Government Change: 59.40 (FTE) Fire & Resilience staff moved to Home Office from the Department for Communities & Local Government

2 Machinery of Government Change: 80.46 (FTE) Civil Service Learning staff moved from Home Office to the Cabinet Office.

■ Immigrants: Detainees

Wera Hobhouse: [\[177778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department has made of the psychological effect on immigrants of detention without a time limit.

Wera Hobhouse: [\[177779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government plans to take to tackle overcrowding in immigration detention centres.

Caroline Nokes:

The health and welfare of detainees is of upmost importance. Although there is no statutory time limit on immigration detention under Immigration Act powers, the law does not allow indefinite detention.

Under the adults at risk in immigration detention policy – which is part of the Government’s response to Stephen Shaw’s review of the welfare of vulnerable people in immigration detention - the consideration of any vulnerability, including mental health, is based on a case-by-case assessment of the appropriateness of detention for each individual. All individuals detained also have ready access to medical professionals and health care, including mental health services. In all cases, detention is kept under regular review to ensure that it is necessary, appropriate and takes into account the welfare of those detained.

The Home Office has published guidelines on acceptable room capacity in immigration removal centres, which build on requirements set out in secondary legislation. Capacity across the detention estate is kept under regular review.

In line with the Home Secretary's statement on immigration detention on 24 July, the practice of accommodating three detainees in rooms designed for two has now ceased.

■ **Mohammed Nabi Wardak**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[177772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will reassess the case of Aghan interpreter Mohammed Nabi Wardak who translated for British armed forces on the front line in Helmand province between 2008 and 2011 and has been denied relocation to the UK.

Caroline Nokes:

The Government recognises the vital role interpreters and local staff played in operations in Afghanistan. That is why there are two dedicated schemes designed to help local staff: the Ex-gratia redundancy scheme and the Intimidation policy. Responsibility for administering these schemes sits with the Ministry of Defence.

Where an individual chooses to leave Afghanistan outside of these schemes, our position is that they should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

■ **Passports: Gender**

Sir Henry Bellingham:

[\[177629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what responses the Government has received to the questionnaire it sent out to 165 UN member states on 9 October 2017 to investigate how many used X markers on passports.

Caroline Nokes:

The questionnaire was issued by Her Majesty's Passport Office to 165 UN Member States and we received 20 responses.

■ **Police: Pensions**

Guto Bebb:

[\[178271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will assess the potential merits of increasing the police pension entitlement for widows from post-retirement marriages.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The current police pension scheme provides survivor benefits regardless of the timing of a member's marriage. In keeping with other public service pension schemes, this was not the case before 1978, when different rules applied.

Successive governments have made a general presumption against making retrospective changes to public service pension schemes. Therefore there is no entitlement relating to service before 1978 and there are no plans to change this.

■ Refugees: Liverpool

Maria Eagle: [\[177610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2018 to Question 167142 on UN High Commissioner for Refugees: Expenditure, how much funding his Department has allocated to the Liverpool Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in each year since its launch.

Caroline Nokes:

Local authorities claim a tariff from the Government for the refugees they resettle under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. The first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs are funded by central government using the Official Development Assistance budget which amounts to £8,520 per person.

For years 2-5 local authorities receive £12,000 per person overall ; tapering from £5,000 in year 2, to £3,700 in year 3, to £2,300 in year 4 and £1,000 in year 5. There is also an exceptional cases fund to assist the most vulnerable refugees. This funding is available to help local authorities with exceptional costs such as social care and housing adaptations.

■ Visas: Families

Faisal Rashid: [\[178385\]](#)

'To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many family visit visa applications from non-EEA countries have been declined in the last 12 months.

Caroline Nokes:

The family visitor visa has been replaced by the standard visitor visa <https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa>

The information on total entry clearance visitor visas granted is released quarterly as part of the Home Office's Immigration Statistics, available at the . [GOV. UK](#) website.

The most recent published visas statistics are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2018/list-of-tables#visas>

■ Visas: Married People

Alison Thewliss: [\[178328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) pass and (b) fail rates are for the International English Language Testing System for spouse visas in the UK for each year for which information is available.

Caroline Nokes:

The information requested is not recorded in a format that can be broken down to the level of detail requested.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Building Regulations****Mr John Hayes:**[\[178233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what priority the Government has given to beauty in the built environment.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the importance to communities of design quality in the built environment for new development. A design team and an architectural adviser to Government have been established, in order to promote design quality and beauty across policy and programmes.

Design quality is an integral part of the recently revised National Planning Policy Framework, which states that development should be “visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping”. The importance of beauty is also highlighted in Government programmes, including the Garden Cities, Towns and Villages programme.

The Government is taking a proactive approach to sharing evidence of beauty in the built environment, and my department hosted the Government’s first design quality conference in April this year. New planning guidance will emphasise the importance of community engagement in plan making and design of projects, and the need to focus on qualities such as the appearance of new development, that appeal to residents and neighbours.

■ Clarion Housing Group**Rushanara Ali:**[\[178310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will ask the Social Housing Regulator to publish details of the enquiries it made into the accuracy of the information provided by Clarion Housing Group during the in-depth assessment process prior to its decision to upgrade that organisation to a G1-rating on 28 March 2018.

Kit Malthouse:

On 28 March 2018 the Regulator published its latest regulatory judgement for Clarion Housing Group following an in-depth assessment, which gave the Regulator assurance that Clarion’s leadership and governance arrangements are sufficient to support the delivery of its objectives and adequately control the organisation.

While Parliament sets the framework within which the Regulator operates, the Government cannot interfere in individual regulatory decisions and therefore I cannot

direct the Regulator to publish specific details of its investigation. However, the Regulator has published the reasons for its judgement here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/694487/Clarion Housing Group Limited RJ 20180318 2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/694487/Clarion_Housing_Group_Limited_RJ_20180318_2.pdf).

■ Community Infrastructure Levy

John Healey: **[178238]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of local authorities that have imposed a community infrastructure levy.

James Brokenshire:

152 local authorities in England are currently charging the Community Infrastructure Levy and more than seventy others have taken substantive steps towards doing so. In Wales, the Community Infrastructure Levy is a matter for the Welsh Government.

■ Early Intervention Grant: Nottinghamshire

Ben Bradley: **[180301]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding his Department allocated from the early intervention grant to projects in Nottinghamshire in the last 12 months for which information is available.

Rishi Sunak:

In 2013-14 MHCLG introduced the business rates retention scheme, under which local authorities retained a proportion of the business rates that they collect. A number of specific grants from other Government Departments were transferred into the business rates retention scheme at this time, including the Department for Education's Early Intervention Grant.

In order to maintain the visibility of a number of named, non ring-fenced, elements of funding within the local government finance settlement, the Government currently publishes a Core Spending Power visible lines table (link below). The Early Intervention Grant is one of the visible lines set out in this table. To reflect the fact that local government is transitioning away from a world where councils are dependent on central government grants and towards greater self-sufficiency, these visible lines are shown at a national and local level within local authority Core Spending Power.

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-spending-power-visible-lines-of-funding-2018-to-2019>

■ Housing Associations: Complaints

Rushanara Ali: **[178311]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Housing and Planning on 12 January

2017, column 576, and the Answer of 8 March 2017 to Question 66020 on Circle Housing, what the outcome of the meeting was between Departmental officials and the Social Housing Regulator and Housing Ombudsman on the interaction between those two organisations when there is a spike in individual complaints from tenants of housing associations.

Kit Malthouse:

A memorandum of understanding, which describes the working relationship between the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman, was published on 21 April 2017. The memorandum of understanding sets out the arrangements for cooperation and communication between the two bodies in relation to their respective functions. It is available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610108/HOS_HCA_memorandum_of_understanding.pdf

We recently launched a review of the regulatory regime for social housing. This review will look at how the system as a whole is working for tenants, including the arrangements between the Regulator and the Ombudsman.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Northern Ireland**

Layla Moran:

[\[178372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

Rishi Sunak:

a) The Secretary of State travelled between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland but did not make a specific visit to the Irish border. Details of Ministers' overseas travel are published quarterly and are available on GOV.UK.

b) Details of business expenses incurred by senior officials include domestic and international travel. This information is also published quarterly and is available on GOV.UK.

The information requested for all officials in my Department is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ **Second Homes: Council Tax**

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[178364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the level of Council Tax receipts of the practice of second homeowners avoiding the payment of council tax by registering a second home as a business.

Rishi Sunak:

Owners of second homes are generally liable for council tax. Only where a property is available for short-term lets for 140 days or more per financial year, is it considered a holiday-let, and therefore assessed for business rates instead. However, the Government is aware of concerns about holiday homes and is looking into this issue to see if the criteria under which holiday lets are valued for business rates are appropriate.

■ Tenant Services Authority**Rushanara Ali:****[178312]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the Interim Chair of the Social Housing Regulator decided against appointing any tenants of social landlords when the regulator expanded its board in April 2018; and if he will ensure that the regulator now undertakes a process to make such appointments.

Kit Malthouse:

The Assessment Panel considered applications against the essential criteria set out in the published candidate pack. Recommendations were made for appointments, which the then Housing Minister, on behalf of the then Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, agreed to.

Work has begun to launch a further recruitment campaign to strengthen the board of the Regulator of Social Housing. In the recent Social Housing Green Paper, we committed to recruit someone with extensive experience of consumer regulation.

Section 80B of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (as amended) sets out how new members of the board are recruited and the criteria they must meet:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/1040/schedule/made>.

Rushanara Ali:**[178313]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason it is not a conflict of interest for a board member of the Social Housing Regulator to be the director of a company that is contracted to provide repair services to housing associations that the regulator regulates.

Kit Malthouse:

As set out in Sections 92N and 92P of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (as amended), the Regulator must maintain a register of interests of its board members and have arrangements for dealing with any potential conflict of interests appropriately. This was the same when the Regulator was operating as the Regulation Committee of the Homes and Communities Agency. These arrangements are published in the board's Terms of Reference and Standing Orders, which is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748602/Board_Terms_of_Ref_and_Standing_Orders.pdf

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Department for International Trade: Brexit****Seema Malhotra:**[\[177719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether he plans to publish his Department's preparations for no deal.

George Hollingbery:

We firmly believe it is in the interests of both the EU and the UK to strike a deal. That remains the goal on both sides and we are confident that this will be achieved. But it is the job of a responsible Government to prepare for all scenarios, so we have already carried out very significant 'no deal' preparations for the unlikely event that we reach March 2019 without agreeing a deal.

The Government has already published over 100 technical notices so that businesses and citizens have time to prepare in the event of a 'no deal' scenario. These are available on gov.uk in a centralised location that is easy for people to access and use.

■ Department for International Trade: Northern Ireland**Layla Moran:**[\[177806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

George Hollingbery:

Ministers have travelled to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Details of Ministers' overseas travel are published quarterly and are available on GOV.UK.

Details of business expenses incurred by senior officials include domestic and international travel. This information is also published quarterly and is available on GOV.UK.

■ Overseas Trade: Northern Ireland**Tom Brake:**[\[179071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the Government plans to devolve aspects of trade policy to the Northern Ireland Executive in the event that the UK leaves the EU.

George Hollingbery:

International Trade is a reserved matter and the Department for International Trade is, and will remain, responsible for the UK's future trade policy. As I set out in my Oral Statement on 16th July 2018, we will work closely with the Devolved Administrations on an ongoing basis to deliver an approach that works for the whole of the UK.

JUSTICE■ **Bedford Prison**

Richard Burgon: [\[178347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if the Government will publish its review into the concerted indiscipline at HMP Bedford on 15 and 16 September 2018.

Richard Burgon: [\[178348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of damage caused by indiscipline at HMP Bedford on 15 and 16 September 2018.

Edward Argar:

HM Prison and Probation Service are currently conducting a regional investigation into the disturbance at HMP Bedford on 15 and 16 September. These investigations are carried out to help us understand the circumstances surrounding such an incident so that appropriate action can be taken and any lessons can be learned. They are not intended for publication.

No structural damage was caused in this incident and so no additional costs have been incurred.

We have published an action plan to stabilise HMP Bedford. Additional experienced officers will be brought in, we've reduced the number of prisoners and are providing special training for newer members of staff - all of which will ensure order is restored and maintained in the long-term.

More perimeter patrols, new windows with grilles and increased searches on staff will stem the flow of drugs entering the establishment, and staff will be working much closer with the police to disrupt the drugs trade into the prison. A programme of treatment and recovery for inmates with an existing drug dependency will also be developed.

■ **Berwyn Prison: Sexual Offences**

Richard Burgon: [\[178354\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of men with convictions for sexual offences held at HMP Berwyn.

Edward Argar:

HMP Berwyn opened in February 2017 and has a current role as a training prison designed to hold sentenced, category C, adult males. As part of the training function the prison delivers a wide range of rehabilitative and educational courses and activities which enable prisoners to gain essential skills as they work towards their release. Although a wide variety of interventions are provided at Berwyn, there is no rehabilitative provision for men convicted of sexual offences. As such, as at Friday 12 October, of the 1,189 prisoners held at HMP Berwyn, none were serving a sentence for a current sexual offence.

■ Birmingham Prison: Prisoners' Transfers

Richard Burgon:

[178353]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, to which prisons prisoners from HMP Birmingham have been moved to; and for each of those prisons (a) how many prisoners have been moved there, (b) whether those prisons apply CNA standards and (c) what the total population at those prisons now is.

Edward Argar:

HMP Birmingham is a 'local' prison and its primary function is to serve courts in the area and hold short-sentenced prisoners as they approach their release. As such, the onward allocation of sentenced prisoners to other establishments so they can progress with their respective sentence plans is normal for this type of prison. On 20 August HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) announced that there would be a temporary reduction in Birmingham's capacity by 300 places. The capacity reduction was carefully managed and we worked closely with Governors across the estate to mitigate the impact elsewhere. The reduction in places was delivered through end of sentence releases, the diversion of court allocations to other prisons in the region and routine allocations of men to other establishments as part of their sentence progression. Men were transferred under the same criteria as all prison moves, taking into account a range of factors such as security category, resettlement needs and release address, offending behaviour needs and personal circumstances. Establishments which have received prisoners from HMP Birmingham since 20 August include: Brinsford, Dovegate, Featherstone, Garth, Lowdham Grange, Oakwood, Parc, Stoke Heath, Sudbury, Swaleside and Swinfen Hall.

Details of prisons' population levels and capacity (including Certified Normal Accommodation) in England and Wales are published monthly and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-population-figures-2018>

■ Capital Punishment: Crimes of Violence

Mr John Hayes:

[178235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to reintroduce the death penalty to tackle violent crime.

Edward Argar:

The government opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances and has no plans to reintroduce it. We are also actively advocating for the global abolition of the death penalty. This includes meeting with foreign delegations, who have the death penalty, to set out our alternative sentencing framework. There is no evidence that capital punishment acts as a deterrent to violent crime. Furthermore, the reintroduction of the death penalty would bring with it the very real risk that some innocent people would die.

■ Disability Living Allowance: Appeals

Maria Eagle: [\[177611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2018 to Question 170701 on Disability Living Allowance: Appeals, what the timeframe is for the completion of training for the judicial office holders.

Edward Argar:

Training takes place for groups of appointments of new judicial office holders, once they have been recruited from the competitions run by the Judicial Appointments Commission. Disability Members receive two training days and Medical Members three because they also deal with Employment and Support Allowance as well as Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance. The most recently appointed Disability Qualified Members completed their induction training in October. Once the members are trained they are eligible to sit straight away.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Domestic Violence

Richard Burgon: [\[178340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of domestic violence have been refused legal aid when applying for a non-molestation order in each of the last five years.

Richard Burgon: [\[178341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of domestic violence have been refused legal aid when applying for an occupation order in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

Figures for non-molestation orders:

YEAR	CASE TYPE	TOTAL APPLICATIONS	REFUSED
2013-2014	Non-Molestation orders	15,261	68
2014-2015	Non-Molestation orders	14,120	130
2015-2016	Non-Molestation orders	13,460	133
2016-2017	Non-Molestation orders	13,271	246
2017-2018	Non-Molestation orders	13,444	314

Figures for occupation orders:

YEAR	CASE TYPE	TOTAL APPLICATIONS	REFUSED
2013-2014	Occupation orders	208	15
2014-2015	Occupation orders	215	8
2015-2016	Occupation orders	243	12
2016-2017	Occupation orders	355	28
2017-2018	Occupation orders	310	25

Victims of domestic violence will never be refused legal aid on financial grounds as there is a dv waiver in place.

Applications will be refused based on consideration of whether the circumstances of the case indicate that the court is unlikely to grant a non-molestation / occupation Order. This includes whether there is an alternative remedy available (warning letter, police involvement) or whether the victim is already sufficiently protected (bail conditions, remanded in custody).

■ **Parc Prison: Prison Officers**

Richard Burgon: [\[178352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 19 September 2018 to Question 173602 on Parc Prison: Prison Officers, which organisation holds data on the number of Prison Custody Officers certified to work each private prison.

Edward Argar:

In privately managed prisons the responsibility for ensuring the availability of sufficiently trained and experienced staff to maintain safe and decent prisons lies with contractors. The figures we have provided on several occasions included the number of funded posts for fully certified staff in privately managed prisons.

Each privately managed prison has a full-time on-site Controller, Deputy Controller and Assistant Controller, all employed by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) that hold regular review meetings with contractors against a range of performance indicators.

The performance of all providers continues to be robustly managed and we will not hesitate to take action if and when standards fall short.

■ **Prisons: Crime**

Richard Burgon: [\[178350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his speech entitled Justice Secretary launches fresh crackdown on crime in prison, published by his Department in

July 2018, over what time period the £30 million investment in prisons announced in that speech is planned to be used.

Richard Burgon: [178351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to his speech entitled Justice Secretary launches fresh crackdown on crime in prison, published by his Department in July 2018, what proportion of the £30 million investment in prisons announced in that speech (a) will come from current budgets in his Department and (b) is new money from the public purse.

Edward Argar:

The current planned time-period for the £30m capital investment in prisons is over financial year 2018-19, and due to complete end of March 2019.

The £30m capital investment in prisons, is part of the Department's current HMPPS 2018-19 change programme budget.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Office: Brexit

Seema Malhotra: [177721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether she plans to publish her Department's preparations for no deal.

Mr Shailesh Vara:

We firmly believe it is in the interests of both the EU and the UK to strike a deal. That remains the goal on both sides and we are confident that this will be achieved. But it is the job of a responsible Government to prepare for all scenarios, so we have already carried out very significant 'no deal' preparations for the unlikely event that we reach March 2019 without agreeing a deal.

We have already published over 100 technical notices so that businesses and citizens have time to prepare in the event of a 'no deal' scenario. These are available on Gov.uk in a centralised location that is easy for people to access and use.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Northern Ireland

Layla Moran: [177809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in her Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

Mr Shailesh Vara:

In the last 12 months, Ministers have visited the border. Details of Ministers' engagements are published quarterly and available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The information requested for all officials in the Northern Ireland Office is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Prime Minister: Northern Ireland

Layla Moran: [\[177798\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, how many times (a) she and (b) officials in her office have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

Mrs Theresa May:

I visit all parts of the United Kingdom regularly. Details of my visits within the United Kingdom are published on the gov.uk website.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Northern Ireland

Layla Moran: [\[178370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

David Mundell:

Neither I, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland in that capacity or officials in my department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months.

Details of Ministerial visits and overseas travel are published quarterly and are available on GOV.UK.

Information on business expenses incurred by senior officials, which includes domestic and international travel, is also published quarterly and available on GOV.UK.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports: Noise

Jim Shannon: [\[178308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with major airports on best practice for reducing noise.

Jesse Norman:

Ministers and officials from my Department have regular discussions with major airports to discuss a range of matters, including issues relating to noise. The Government sets overall policy for aviation noise and also sets noise controls at

Heathrow, Gatwick, and Stansted, as these airports are designated under the Civil Aviation Act. At other airports, the Government believes that noise controls, best practice, and mitigations should be agreed locally, taking into account national policy.

■ Buses: Tyres

Maria Eagle: [\[177607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2017 to Question 117278 on buses:tyres, how many tyres over the age of 10 years have been (a) identified and (b) collected by his Department for analysis as part of that research.

Maria Eagle: [\[177608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2017 to Question 117278 on buses: tyres, whether he still plans to publish the preliminary findings of that research by autumn 2018.

Maria Eagle: [\[177609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2017 to Question 117278 on buses: tyres, what progress has been made on that research.

Jesse Norman:

Research commissioned by the Department for Transport is proceeding to schedule and, as the House was advised in June this year, the report should be available early in 2019.

The current research does not include tyres over 10-years of age but work is underway to secure suitable samples that will be added to the programme. Additional funding is being made available to support this extended analysis and the Department is working with the contractor to ensure that any delays to the final report are kept to a minimum.

■ Department for Transport: Northern Ireland

Layla Moran: [\[177807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and which (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department have visited the Irish border in the last 12 months; when those visits took place; and how long they spent at the border in each of those visits.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

a) Details of Ministers' overseas travel are published quarterly and are available on GOV.UK. Ministers have also met MPs from Northern Ireland within the last 12 months.

b) Details of business expenses incurred by senior officials include domestic and international travel. This information is also published quarterly and is available on GOV.UK.

The information requested for all officials in my Department is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ London North Eastern Railway

Andy McDonald: [\[178321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Office for Rail and Road's decision not to authorise any more Intercity Express Programme Class 800/801 for the London and North Eastern Railway until safety issues have been addressed on the introduction of the fleet into traffic in December 2018.

Joseph Johnson:

It is not uncommon when introducing new trains that rigorous test programmes raise issues that must be resolved before passenger service begins. The rail industry's utmost priorities are the safe introduction of services and to ensure passengers on the East Coast route receive the planned benefits of the new Intercity Express Programme.

The Department is working closely with the Office for Rail and Road (ORR), Hitachi Rail Europe (HRE), London North Eastern Railway (LNER) and Network Rail (NR) to address the concerns raised by the ORR and bring the fleet into passenger service as soon as possible.

The full benefits of the Government-led Intercity Express Programme, including increased capacity, improved reliability and more frequent services for passengers on the East Coast route, will be delivered once the full fleet is in service in 2020. But in the meantime each and every train that is introduced will itself improve journeys for LNER customers.

■ Rail Review

Andy McDonald: [\[178318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) terms and conditions, (b) salary and (c) hours of work are for Keith Williams in relation to the Rail Review.

Joseph Johnson:

The Department has used its standard terms and conditions of public appointment, which do not prescribe a set working hours limit. The obligation for Mr Williams, as Chair of the Rail Review, is to fulfil the terms of reference that were announced by the Secretary of State for Transport on 11th October 2018. Keith Williams has committed to the necessary time required to achieve this and is not being remunerated for his work as Chair of the Review.

Andy McDonald: [\[178319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) terms of conditions, (b) remuneration and (c) hours of work are for the panel members of the Rail Review Panel.

Joseph Johnson:

The Department has used its standard terms and conditions of public appointment, which do not prescribe a set working hours limit. The obligation for the members is to assist the Chair, Keith Williams, to fulfil the terms of reference that were announced by the Secretary of State for Transport on 11th October 2018. Members of the panel

will agree with the Chair the necessary time commitment to do this; this may vary across Members and during different stages of the Review. None of the members will be remunerated for their work.

■ Railways: Compensation

Andy McDonald: [\[178320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timescale is for the introduction of the one-click compensation scheme on the railways.

Joseph Johnson:

One-click compensation will be introduced through future UK Government-run franchise competitions. Some operators, such as C2C, have already introduced fast claims systems under their own initiative.

■ Shipping: Young People

Jim Shannon: [\[178307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to provide incentives for careers at sea for young people; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Our seafarers are highly skilled professionals entering STEM related careers and the Department is keen to see more young people entering the industry and taking advantage of the many and wide ranging career opportunities that the maritime sector offers.

Government incentivises careers at sea by supporting approximately 30% - 50% of the cost of Seafarer Training through the Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) scheme. To create further training opportunities, SMarT Plus was announced earlier this year which will see SMarT funding doubled to £30m over the next seven years and training places increased to 1200 per year. In addition to SMarT, a continual supply of training opportunities are made available through the UK's tonnage tax regime which requires a tonnage tax company to recruit and train one trainee officer (or ratings equivalent) for every 15 officer posts in its fleet.

As apprenticeships policy is devolved, the Department continues to support the sector in developing maritime apprenticeships in England, opening opportunities for careers at sea to all. There are currently 3 seafaring apprenticeships available for use with the levy. The Department also continues to support a number of initiatives promoting careers at sea to young people, including Seafarers Awareness Week, Maritime UK's Maritime Careers Forum, the Women in Maritime Taskforce and the Year of Engineering.

■ Taxis: Licensing

Steve McCabe:

[\[178226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring individuals applying for a private hire vehicle licence to undertake disability equality training before such a licence is granted.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) provide a vital service for many disabled people. However, as of March this year, only 38% of licensing authorities required drivers to complete disability awareness and equality training; I would urge the remainder to use their existing licensing powers to ensure that all taxi and PHV drivers have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide every passenger with the assistance they require.

Next year we will consult on revised best practice guidance for taxi and PHV licensing authorities which will recommend that authorities require drivers to complete disability awareness and equality training and take robust action against those found to have discriminated against disabled passengers.

■ Train Operating Companies: Pay

Andy McDonald:

[\[178322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what advice he provided to train operating companies on the measure of inflation to be used for future pay negotiations.

Joseph Johnson:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) to support the industry in developing an approach to move towards adopting CPI as the inflation measure for future pay deals. We have made a similar request of the trades unions, with the aim of ensuring that the railway is affordable for the fare paying and tax paying public for decades to come.

It may be appropriate to have above inflation pay where there are productivity or similar improvements.

■ Transport: Disability

Jim Shannon:

[\[178309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with the Northern Ireland administration as part of the Access for All programme to ensure parity of disabled access in the UK.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Access for All programme does not extend to Northern Ireland as rail matters, including accessibility, are entirely devolved and run by Northern Ireland Railways. There have been no recent discussions about standards.

TREASURY■ **Air Passenger Duty**

Henry Smith: [\[177668\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will model the effect on the UK economy of (a) a 50 per cent reduction in and (b) the abolition of Air Passenger Duty.

Robert Jenrick:

The government monitors all taxes, including Air Passenger Duty. The aviation sector in the UK continues to grow, with passenger numbers up by over 15% since 2010.

APD raises over £3 billion in revenue every year. Abolishing or cutting APD would put pressure on the government to increase taxes elsewhere.

Henry Smith: [\[177669\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the Frontier Economics report finding that Britain's airports could gain up to 65 connections in the event that air passenger duty is abolished.

Robert Jenrick:

The government takes new evidence into consideration when making policy decisions. The aviation sector in the UK continues to grow, with passenger numbers up by over 15% since 2010.

APD raises over £3 billion in revenue every year. Abolishing or cutting APD would put pressure on the government to increase taxes elsewhere.

■ **Beer: Excise Duties**

Julie Cooper: [\[177747\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will undertake a review of the Small Brewer Relief scheme to remove barriers to growth for small and medium sized brewers.

Mel Stride:

The government is aware of the challenges that Small Brewers Relief currently poses to growing brewers and we have engaged extensively with the industry in this regard.

We are ready to assist but industry must take the lead in agreeing reforms it thinks would be effective in encouraging growth and avoiding market distortion, whilst limiting costs to the public finances.

Julie Cooper: [\[177748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the progressive beer duty regime to ensure that the excise duty system supports growth in British beer exports.

Robert Jenrick:

The government is engaging with industry on Small Brewers Relief, but any action to encourage exports must be part of a wider, industry-led reform of the Relief and must respect our obligations under the relevant European Union law.

■ Credit: Interest Rates

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[177763\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what Steps his Department is taking to ensure that the Financial Conduct Authority enforces rules on affordability checks for payday loans.

John Glen:

The Government has fundamentally reformed regulation of the consumer credit market, transferring regulatory responsibility to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on 1 April 2014.

Although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is an independent body.

The FCA has tough enforcement powers – criminal, civil and regulatory – to protect consumers and to take action against firms and individuals that do not meet its standards. In 2017, the FCA issued total fines of £229 million. Since the transfer, the FCA has taken a proactive approach on consumer credit, to ensure that all consumers who use high-cost credit products are treated fairly.

■ Electric Vehicles

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[\[177586\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of incentives to increase the uptake of electric vehicles.

Robert Jenrick:

The government currently offers a range of incentives to support the shift to ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs). Today there are more than 160,000 ULEVs in the UK and, in 2017, the UK was the second largest market for ULEVs in the EU.

The vehicle tax system incentivises the uptake of cars with low CO₂ emissions with favourable rates of Vehicle Excise Duty and company car tax. We are also investing nearly £1.5 billion to support the uptake of ULEVs. This investment includes grants for cars, vans, lorries, buses, taxis and motorcycles, and schemes to support charge point infrastructure at homes and workplaces and on residential streets.

■ Overseas Loans: Disclosure of Information

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[\[177587\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the UK plans to (a) support and (b) seek a G20 commitment to provide transparency and disclosure of all loans made by governments and multilateral institutions.

John Glen:

The UK strongly supports the transparent and sustainable lending practices to sovereigns, particularly low-income countries (LICs).

In 2017, the G20 agreed Operational Guidelines for Sustainable Financing to promote transparent and sustainable lending to LICs from G20 members. The UK is working with G20 partners to ensure the ongoing implementation of the Guidelines.

In April 2018, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group (WBG) announced a joint multi-pronged approach to promote debt transparency and sustainability in LICs. The UK will continue to work with other G20 members to monitor the progress of this work programme which is led by the multilateral institutions.

■ Treasury: Staff

Seema Malhotra: [\[177703\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what change there has been in staffing levels in his Department since June 2016.

Robert Jenrick:

Between June 2016 and June 2018, the headcount at HM Treasury increased by 140. The headcount is published quarterly by the ONS via this link:

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

WALES

■ Wales Office: Staff

Seema Malhotra: [\[177740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what change there has been in staffing levels in his Department since June 2016.

Mims Davies:

In the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales the staffing levels increased by six staff between June 2016 and September 2018.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment: Young People

Giles Watling: [\[177823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of youth employment since 2010.

Alok Sharma:

The youth labour market is performing well, according to data recently released by the independent Office for National Statistics.

The number of 16-24 years olds in employment level is currently 3.833 million (June-August 2018), this is an increase of 120,000 since 2010.

The youth unemployment is currently at a new record low of 10.8% - with the number of young people who are unemployed down by over 50% since 2010.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations**

Karen Lee:

[\[177817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has in place to avoid unnecessary repeat assessments for benefit applicants with special needs.

Sarah Newton:

Since September 2017, Employment and Support Allowance claimants who have the most severe/lifelong conditions and that meet the Severe Conditions Criteria are not required to attend further routine reassessments. Furthermore, in August 2018, we introduced updated guidance for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) case managers which will ensure that those who receive the highest level of support under PIP, and whose needs are unlikely to change or may get worse, will now receive an ongoing award with a light touch review at the ten year point.

■ **Social Security Benefits: Payments**

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[\[177588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what procedures her Department has in place for when a claimant requests weekly rather than monthly payments of benefits; what advice her Department issues on whether claimants should be informed that they can request weekly payments of benefits that would usually be paid monthly; how many and what proportion of such requests from claimants were (a) granted and (b) refused in each of the last five years.

Alok Sharma:

The payment arrangements for Universal Credit are designed to mirror the world of work through a single monthly award.

Our staff works closely with claimants, ensuring they can identify any vulnerability, such as financial hardship, at an early stage; and tailor support according to their individual needs. This includes a conversation with every claimant to establish any financial or budgeting support required.

The Government recognises that the move to a single monthly household payment is a significant change for some claimants and where it is identified that a claimant is finding it difficult to budget monthly, it may be possible to have their Universal Credit divided over the month so it is paid more frequently, for example: twice monthly or, in exceptional circumstance, four times a month. These More Frequent Payments (MFP) are explained under the Alternative Payment Arrangements heading within 'Universal Credit and You' (paragraph 7.2), which is available to claimants via their online account.

Universal Credit and You can be accessed at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-you/universal-credit-and-you-a>

Around 2 per cent (20,000) of households on Universal Credit received a MFP in this way in June 2018, including those that have chosen to be paid more frequently via Universal Credit Scottish Choices.

These figures will be updated in the next release of households on Universal Credit, on 13 November 2018. We do not hold information on the type of MFP these households receive and do not hold data on the number of refused applications for MFP. Further information can be accessed at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-29-april-2013-to-9-august-2018#>