



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 3 June 2019 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:52 P.M., 03 June 2019). 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

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Boilers: Natural Gas

Alex Chalk:

[\[256315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to implement the Government's proposed ban on the installation of gas boilers in new homes in 2025.

Chris Skidmore:

By 2025, the Government will introduce a Future Homes Standard for new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world leading levels of energy efficiency, to create healthy homes that are fit for the future, have low energy bills, and are better for the environment. We will explore the details of the planned introduction of the Future Homes Standard within the 2019 consultation on the energy efficiency standards of the Building Regulations.

■ Climate Change: Public Consultation

Catherine West:

[\[257072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a citizens assembly on tackling climate change.

Chris Skidmore:

Climate change is one of the most urgent and pressing challenges we face, and we firmly welcome the national conversation on climate change now underway.

We engage with citizens issues through a variety of channels, including as part of the first ever Green GB Week, which was held in October 2018 to showcase the benefits, opportunities and challenges of tackling climate change and driving clean growth. We look forward to the second Green Great Britain Week on 4 November 2019 as an opportunity to engage businesses, scientists, entrepreneurs and the public, across the country.

■ Companies: Registration

Jo Platt:

[\[256394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an exemption from the Companies House SR01 form fee for the removal of a home address from public record on grounds of public safety.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government has no current plans to introduce an exemption to the fee for removing a home address from the public record. Companies House operates on the basis of cost recovery.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Brexit**Mr David Lammy:**[\[256198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Andrew Stephenson:

In the run-up to the 29th of March deadline, the Department temporarily reprioritised 532 people to further support critical EU-exit work. In light of the Article 50 extension to the 31st of October, the Department has reevaluated its portfolio work and is in the process of deprioritising these people. Of the original 532 people, 167 continue to support this critical EU-Exit work as of the 28th of May. During this time BEIS continued, and still continues, to deliver on its diverse portfolio.

■ Energy Companies Obligation: Insulation**Caroline Flint:**[\[256225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the rate of delivery of insulation measures under the Energy Company Obligation.

Chris Skidmore:

The Department keeps delivery progress in constant review. ECO3 is a three and a half year scheme and obligated suppliers may deliver the obligation at any time during the obligation period. Historically, delivery has been low at the start of each scheme while suppliers end one obligation period and start to build up momentum under the new scheme rules.

The scheme allows participating Local Authorities to determine eligibility and refer households to obligated suppliers, and in those cases removing the need for suppliers to target eligible households. This is a voluntary mechanism for suppliers to use, and it equates to up to 25% of ECO.

The regulations have been in force for less than six months, and there is time for suppliers to increase delivery rate up to the end of the scheme in March 2022.

Almost 2.5m insulation, heating and other measures have been delivered since ECO began in 2013. Of those 66% were for insulation. Under ECO3, so far over 54k measures have been installed. Of those, 55% were for insulation.

Caroline Flint:

[\[256227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households have been fitted with (a) cavity wall and (b) loft insulation under the Energy Company Obligation since the beginning of the ECO3 obligation period on 3 December 2018.

Chris Skidmore:

Since the start of the ECO3 obligation, 14,983 cavity wall insulations and 10,951 loft insulations have been installed in homes up to the end of March 2019.

■ Energy Performance Certificates: Housing

Caroline Flint:

[\[256226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of progress towards its ambition of ensuring that all homes achieve an Energy Performance Certificate rating of Band C by 2015, as set out in the Clean Growth Strategy.

Chris Skidmore:

For the purpose of this response, I assume that the question is referring to the ambition for homes to reach Band C by 2035, rather than 2015. Good progress has already been made improving the energy performance of our housing stock, with 30% of homes in England at Band C or above, with a further 51% already at Band D, according to the 2017 English Housing Survey. This is up from 7% and 40% respectively in 2007.

Since the publication of the Clean Growth Strategy we have:

- Reformed the Energy Company Obligation to focus on those households in or at risk of fuel poverty
- Issued a call for evidence on building a market for energy efficiency, on which we will set out more detail in the forthcoming Green Finance Strategy and Energy White Paper
- Introduced regulations on 1st April 2018 which require landlords to bring their properties to EPC Band E or above, and amended these further to require a contribution of up to £3,500 from landlords towards the cost of improvements from 1st April 2019.
- Launched supply chain pilots in six local areas focusing on building capacity and reducing costs
- Launched a new digital service, Simple Energy Advice, to provide impartial and tailored advice to homeowners and tenants.
- Worked with industry to launch a new quality mark for home energy improvements, implementing the recommendations of the independent Each Home Counts review
- Established a £10 million innovation project to reduce the cost of whole house retrofit.

■ Fossil Fuels: Surveying**Henry Smith:** [\[256969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Oil and Gas Authority's proposed supplemental guidance for the Disclosure of certain Geophysical Survey Data (created or acquired under an Exploration Licence pre-2018) published in March 2019, whether the impact assessment included a full assessment of the effect of that guidance on geophysical companies based in the UK.

Henry Smith: [\[256970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Oil and Gas Authority's proposed supplemental guidance on the disclosure of certain Geophysical Survey Data (created or acquired under an Exploration Licence pre-2018) published in March 2019, what assessment his Department has made of the compatibility with the rule of law of the retrospective application of that guidance.

Chris Skidmore:

The treatment of legacy geophysical survey data is a matter for the independent oil and gas regulator, the Oil and Gas Authority, which ran a consultation exercise on the issue to which it will respond later this year.

■ Iron and Steel**Frank Field:** [\[256236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of tonnes of coal required to produce steel at current levels in the next five years.

Andrew Stephenson:

Finished steel products are produced in the UK through a mixture of the blast furnace route, which requires coal and iron ore, and through the electric arc furnace route, which does not require coal. We have not estimated the tonnes of coal required for current production of UK finished steel products.

The Government has long supported the UK steel industry to exploit opportunities and plan for future demand with wide-ranging action.

For the first time this year we have published information from departments and their arm's-length bodies on how much steel they have procured over the last financial year and how they have applied the steel procurement guidance.

The Government has also published details of upcoming steel requirements for national infrastructure projects. The data shows how the Government plans to use over three million tonnes of steel until 2021 on infrastructure projects such as the construction of Hinkley Point, and the maintenance and upgrading of the UK's motorway network.

We recently as a Department signed up to the UK Steel Charter. We want to acknowledge and support this initiative from industry. We have been encouraging the

UK steel sector to strengthen their engagement with all existing and potential domestic steel consumers, maximising opportunities to benefit from the £3.8 billion a year by 2030 high market value opportunities we have identified.

The Government has provided more than £291m in compensation to the steel sector since 2013 to make energy costs more competitive, including over £53 million during 2018. And last year we announced the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund, worth up to £315 million, to support businesses with high energy use to transition to a low carbon future and to cut their bills through increased energy efficiency.

■ Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

Colin Clark:

[\[257099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the cost to his Department has been of the Renewable Heat Incentive, and what assessment he has made of the value for money of that incentive.

Chris Skidmore:

Payments to participants on the Renewable Heat Incentive are funded through Annual Management Expenditure (AME) rather than Department Expenditure (DEL). Once all heat readings are submitted, we expect the cumulative AME spend on the RHI to the end of 2018/19 to be approximately £2.68bn.

Ofgem e-Serve administers the scheme on behalf of the Department alongside a number of other schemes. Funding for delivering those schemes was just over £19 million in 2018/19.

In relation to value for money, this is assessed as part of regular Impact Assessments, the last of which was published in February 2018.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Mobile Phones

David T. C. Davies:

[\[256251\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will provide a list of the brands of mobile phone which Cabinet ministers are advised not to use.

Mr David Lidington:

It is for individual Government departments to manage their own technology and telecommunications requirements in accordance with their business and security needs, including equipping their Ministers with appropriate ICT equipment. HMG takes the secure use of mobile phones very seriously and advice on how to securely manage mobile devices is published by the National Cyber Security Centre. Such information includes recommending the use of Android devices on the Android Enterprise Recommended (AER) list and for iOS, using supported devices with a Secure Enclave.

DEFENCE**■ Body Armour: Procurement**

Ruth Smeeth: [\[257146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what progress she has made with the procurement process for new body armour; and which companies have been shortlisted.

Stuart Andrew:

A project is under way to procure and support a range of ballistic and training plates to fit the VIRTUS body armour and load carriage system. It is currently in the assessment phase with tender returns due over the next three months. I am withholding the company names as their disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

■ Centre of Excellence for Human Security

Hilary Benn: [\[256242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps she has taken to establish a Centre of Excellence for Human Security; where she plans to locate the centre; how UK academic institutions can contribute to the centre; and if she will make a statement.

Mark Lancaster:

We are considering options on the full scope of this centre and suitable location. As part of the development process we will engage civil society and academic institutions to ensure the centre makes best use of national and international expertise.

■ Defence Equipment and Support: Small Businesses

Ruth Smeeth: [\[257145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the policy priorities are for Defence Equipment and Support with respect to procuring with domestic SME's in emergent markets.

Stuart Andrew:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD), including Defence Equipment and Support, has a responsibility to get the right capability for our Armed Forces and to ensure value for money for the taxpayer in the goods and services that we buy.

The MOD is committed to making it easier for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to do business with defence. In March 2019, we published our SME Action Plan which explains how we will increase our spend with SMEs, and addresses behavioural, policy and process change.

I also chair SME Forums around the UK to understand the issues facing SMEs, the most recent of which was held on 9 May 2019 in Broughton.

■ Defence Medical Services: Termination of Employment

Mrs Madeleine Moon:

[\[256981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Defence Medical Service doctors have (a) taken early retirement and (b) left the armed forces as a result of pension taxation changes in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

Voluntary Outflow (VO) is defined as all exits from trained UK Regular Forces which are voluntarily generated by the individual before the end of their agreed engagement or commission period.

Between 1 April 2017 and 31 December 2018, the latest period for which figures are available, 60 Defence Medical Services (DMS) Medical Officers and 20 DMS Dental Officers were VO exits. These figures have been rounded to the nearest five.

Information about VO exits as a result of pension taxation changes is not held in the format requested.

■ Defence: Procurement

Ruth Smeeth:

[\[257142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment she makes of the potential merits of retaining sovereign capabilities when undertaking procurement contracts with SME suppliers; and where retaining sovereign capabilities ranks on the MOD Procurement scorecard.

Stuart Andrew:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has a responsibility to procure the right capability for our Armed Forces and to ensure value for money for the taxpayer in the goods and services that we buy, regardless of the company's size.

We are clear that international competition is at the heart of our approach. This allows our Armed Forces to secure the best equipment from an open, global marketplace to meet evolving threats. We also recognise, however, that defence procurement needs to protect UK freedom of action and operational advantage. These strategic considerations shape our procurement strategies. Our refreshed Industrial Policy sets out the basis on which we will develop specific sector approaches to protect national security.

There is no single MOD procurement scorecard. Once we have launched a commercial competition, the MOD considers a wide range of factors when awarding our contracts to obtain the best value for money outcome for defence and the taxpayer.

■ HMS Victory**Sir Hugo Swire:**[\[256235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons the wreck of HMS Victory was gifted to the Maritime Heritage Foundation.

Mark Lancaster:

Following a 2011 report on the public consultation in relation to potential options for the management of the HMS VICTORY 1744 wreck site, it was decided to place responsibility for the future management of the site with a charitable trust.

In 2012, the Maritime Heritage Foundation was considered to be suitable for the management of the site.

■ Ministry of Defence: Brexit**Mr David Lammy:**[\[256207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many officials in her Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of her Department.

Mark Lancaster:

A total of 257 Ministry of Defence (MOD) civil servants were augmented to Other Government Departments (OGDs) as preparation for the UK to leave the EU. This figure includes those who were augmented in support of Operation Yellowhammer. As at 23 May 2019, 254 had returned to the MOD. Three MOD civil servants remain augmenting OGDs as preparation for the UK to leave the EU. In addition, a total of 61 MOD civil servants were moved internally to work on EU Exit within MOD, of which 54 had returned to non-EU specific roles as at 23 May.

The MOD continually reviews workforce plans, reprioritising and assessing changing needs, which includes identification and cessation of non-priority work where appropriate. We have accelerated our plans, and at the same time, the civil service as a whole is working to ensure that EU Exit implementation is carried out to a high quality without impacting public service delivery across the whole of Government. The MOD continues to meet all its current commitments, keeping the country and its interests safe. The augmentation outlined above has had no impact on Defence outputs; as at 1 April 2019, 318 augmentees represented 0.55 per cent of the MOD civilian personnel strength (full time equivalent).

■ New Zealand: Military Alliances**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[257023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps she is taking to build defence and security co-operation with New Zealand.

Mark Lancaster:

New Zealand is a close defence partner. We work together on operations and defence capabilities, including the P8 Poseidon, while maintaining regular exchanges of personnel. HMS Montrose visited Auckland in January 2019. This relationship is further underpinned by regular meetings between senior officers and officials. We are also partners under the Five Power Defence Arrangements and as part of the Five Eyes Community.

■ **Trident Missiles****Caroline Lucas:**[\[257003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the United Kingdom's Future Nuclear Deterrent: The Dreadnought Programme 2017 Update to Parliament published 20 December 2017, what the procedure will be for taking the decision on replacing the warhead in this Parliament; if she will make it her policy for there to be a vote in Parliament on the decision; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

As set out in the 2017 and 2018 updates to Parliament, work is continuing to refine options and technical solutions to inform the Government's decision on replacing the warhead. We will continue to provide updates as appropriate.

■ **University Officer Training Corps****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[257022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps she is taking to promote the university officer training corps at UK universities.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:**Royal Navy**

The Royal Navy continues to engage with universities in a myriad of ways as part of wider recruiting efforts but also to increase awareness amongst the graduate population as to the presence and purpose of the Navy. A University Royal Naval Unit (URNU) opened in Devon in 2017, making 15 URNUs in total, and the Navy continues to review opportunities to expand this footprint further. The Captain of Navy Recruiting (CNR) delivers three-day awareness packages at a variety of universities which last year resulted in 600 expressions of interest. CNR also runs the Undergraduate Leadership Programme, which this year will offer six-week long placements to 15 successful candidates from 900 initial applications. Lastly, changes to the way the Services recruit their engineers will mean that, under the new STEM Graduate Inflow Scheme, those individuals who have been selected to be Engineer Officers in the Royal Navy, and are sponsored through university as a result, will be able to attend any university, thus broadening even further the exposure of the wider university population to the Royal Navy.

Army

The Army has a total of 15 University Officers' Training Corps (UOTC) and two Officer Training Regiments (OTRs), which welcome enquiries from any individual enrolled in a higher education course at any university or college across the UK. Each training corps regularly engages with the higher education sector through Military Education Committees, the formal mechanism for engagement with affiliated universities. Additionally, the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst engages nationally on their behalf with the Council of Military Education Committees.

UOTCs are actively promoted by the Army online, through the use of the official Army website and via approved social media accounts run by each individual unit. More direct engagement activities are conducted by the UOTCs themselves, along with the Army's specialist engagement teams, within various higher education establishments, such as appearances at freshers' fairs, open evenings and through the delivery of leadership events. UOTCs are also promoted during school and cadet unit visits, to ensure that young people are aware of the opportunities available to them, should they go onto higher education.

Royal Air Force

The Royal Air Force (RAF) currently has 15 University Air Squadrons (UAS) comprising a membership of around 900 undergraduates, from 118 affiliated universities, throughout the UK. The UAS regularly liaise with Military Education Committees; they will also attend university freshers' fairs and use the internet to encourage university student participation. The RAF welcomes enquiries from students and actively encourages students, throughout their university journey, to join the organisation.

■ **Yemen: Military Intervention**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[256992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether her Department has interviewed Oxfam about attacks on the (a) water supply system and (b) cholera treatment centres that Oxfam supports in Yemen which were hit by Saudi-led coalition air strikes in (i) April and (ii) June 2018.

Mark Lancaster:

The Ministry of Defence has not interviewed Oxfam about these incidents.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **5G**

Dr David Drew:

[\[256919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment has been made of the potential effect of 5G on (a) plants, (b) animals and (c) insects.

Margot James:

Electromagnetic radiation (EMR) has the potential to impact the movement of insects and some species of animals, but there is currently no evidence that human-made EMR, at realistic field levels, has population level impacts on (a) plants, (b) animals or (c) insects.

■ Council of Europe**Tom Brake:**[\[255254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what funding the Government provides to representatives from the British Youth Council who sit on the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

Mims Davies:

As a 'major contributor' to the Council of Europe, the UK pays over €32 million annually, which includes a contribution to the European Youth Foundation.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Brexit**Mr David Lammy:**[\[256199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Margot James:

As part of the department's preparations for the possibility of leaving the EU without a deal, around 110 officials were seconded away from their normal duties to support on EU Exit work. In addition, a significant number of officials had their work re-prioritised to include EU Exit work whilst remaining in their primary roles.

■ Tourism**Sir David Evennett:**[\[256954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to help increase tourism to the UK after the UK leaves the EU.

Jeremy Wright:

We are working with the tourism and hospitality sector to ensure it remains globally competitive.

Whether the UK leaves with a deal or not, the UK and the EU have proposed reciprocal visa-free travel arrangements to enable UK and EU citizens to continue to travel freely for tourism in the future. The Government has also confirmed that EU nationals can continue to travel on a national ID card until December 2020 and use e-gates when travelling on a passport. The Home Office has also announced this week that the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore and South Korea

have been added to the list of countries whose nationals are eligible to use ePassport gates to enter the UK.

For those visitors who need a visa, the UK Visas and Immigration service (UKVI) aims to deliver a world-class customer experience that is competitive, flexible and accessible. UKVI have a number of projects underway that will deliver significant customer service improvements this year.

The proposed tourism sector deal, which is in formal negotiations, has a strong focus on competitiveness through boosting connectivity (both transport connections and digital connectivity) and working with destinations to build quality tourism products that meet visitors needs and expectations. A key focus is also making the sector more attractive to UK nationals through investment in skills, career development and retention policies.

VisitBritain are also working hard to promote the UK as a destination, using targeted marketing in Europe, increasing work with partnerships such as EasyJet and increasing press engagement in the tourism market, featuring activities for visitors to do in the UK this summer.

■ Tourism: Historic Buildings

Sir David Evennett:

[\[256953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage an increase the number of annual visits to historic houses throughout the UK.

Jeremy Wright:

In 2018 historic properties responded to a VisitEngland survey of visitor attractions in England, indicating that there were approximately 70m visits to historic properties in 2017. Of these, the most popular types of historic attractions were historic houses, making up 43% of all heritage visits. VisitBritain use historic houses in their promotional material to promote our heritage abroad and incentivise visits to the UK.

VisitEngland also administer the £40m Discover England Fund which helps create innovative, bookable tourism product across England and markets them at international audiences. Products which focus on historic houses include the England's Originals project, The Great West Way and the Explorers Road.

In addition, Historic Houses work in partnership with the GREAT campaign. The GREAT Campaign use images and events throughout their international marketing campaigns to stimulate tourism and project a positive image of British national heritage abroad.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices: Pay****Angela Rayner:**[\[256316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department published an apprentice pay survey in (a) 2017 and (b) 2018; and when the next such survey will be published.

Anne Milton:

The most recent Apprentice Pay Survey (APS) was published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in 2017. The government has merged aspects of its APS with certain aspects of the Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey (AES). Fieldwork for the latest APS was conducted in late 2018 and early 2019. As with previous years, the Department for Education is responsible for publishing the latest AES, and BEIS is responsible for publishing the latest APS. Reporting for the surveys is underway, and both will be published in due course.

■ Children and Young People: Mental Health**Dr Sarah Wollaston:**[\[257064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the effectiveness of cross-departmental work to tackle the referral of children and young people with (a) depression and (b) mental health issues.

Nick Gibb:

The Department for Education has a joint programme of work with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Health Education England to deliver the proposals set out in the green paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision'. This includes setting up and running Mental Health Support Teams linked to groups of schools and colleges. The teams will be made up of additional, trained, mental health workers, supervised by suitable NHS staff working closely with other professionals such as educational psychologists, school nurses, counsellors and social workers.

The first teams will be set up in 25 trailblazer areas this year, which will be evaluated to inform the subsequent roll-out. The Department has put in place a small regional implementation team to work alongside NHS England to support delivery of the green paper commitments and lead and model effective partnership working for education and health.

The Government is also taking action to support specific vulnerable groups of children. In May 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission began inspecting local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling the new duties on education, health and social care services to provide for children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). All 152 local areas in England will be inspected over a period of five years. The inspections are identifying how effectively access to mental health provision is working as part of the SEND provision locally.

The Department is also piloting new mental health assessments for looked-after children to ensure young people are assessed at the right time to support more effective access to mental health provision, with a focus on meeting their individual needs as they enter care.

■ Children: Day Care

Neil Coyle:

[\[256327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing financial assistance to enable (a) low-income and (b) single-unit families to cover childcare costs during the school summer holidays.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The government has taken significant steps to raise the living standards of low-income and single-unit families. This includes raising the minimum wage, raising the personal tax allowance and improving financial incentives to work.

To support parents into work, the government spends £6 billion on childcare each year:

- Doubling free childcare to 30 hours a week for nearly 400,000 working parents of 3 and 4-year olds.
- Introducing tax-free childcare, worth up to £2,000 per child per year.
- With Universal Credit, parents can claim up to 85% of their childcare costs back compared to 70% on the legacy benefit system.

We recently announced £9 million of funding for the 2019 summer holidays where we will be exploring how the local coordination of the provision of nutritious food and enriching and healthy activities can help more disadvantaged pupils to access free high quality holiday club provision during the school holidays in 11 areas across the country.

■ Children: Social Services

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[256376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many adopted children have (a) a child in need plan and (b) a child protection plan.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[256377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children cared for under a special guardianship order have (a) a child in need plan and (b) a child protection plan.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The information requested is not held centrally in the form requested. The department publishes information on the number of children who have ceased to be looked after through adoption or under a special guardianship order each year in table D1 of the Statistical Release 'Children looked after in England including adoptions: 2017 to

2018', available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>.

This data does not include information on children in need or child protection plans. Information on children in need and child protection plans is collected separately as part of the children in need census.

■ Children's Play

Dr Sarah Wollaston: **[257060]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons children's play is not prioritized in the five foundations for building character.

Dr Sarah Wollaston: **[257062]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the audit of out of school activities will include playing outside.

Nadhim Zahawi:

World-class education is not only about having the highest standards in academic and technical education, it also means ensuring that education builds character and resilience.

We want all children and young people to have opportunities to develop the key character traits of believing that they can achieve, being able to stick with the task in hand, seeing a link between effort today and reward in the future, and being able to bounce back from the knocks that life inevitably brings to all of us. Character must also be grounded in positive values such as kindness, generosity, fairness, tolerance and integrity.

The 5 Foundations for Building Character announced on 7 February by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education are sport, creativity, performing, volunteering and membership, and the world of work. Each of these areas covers a very wide range of activities that children and young people can enjoy doing. In developing key character traits, research suggests that high-quality delivery of the 5 foundations should take a structured approach, occur over a sustained period of time, and be self-directed by the child or young person. Through the support of teachers, coaches or other professionals, children and young people are more likely to receive a higher level of challenge and develop the traits that can help them achieve their goals.

Play can provide benefits to children and young people through physical activity and promotion of wellbeing, but the audit of the availability of out-of-school activities across the country does not currently include playing outside as that activity does not provide the structured and high quality elements that are required in character building activities as proposed in the 5 Foundations for Building Character.

■ Department for Education: Brexit**Mr David Lammy:**[\[256197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Anne Milton:

The department constantly reviews its capabilities and allocation of resources in order to effectively deliver the government's agenda. We have accelerated our plans, and at the same time, the Civil Service as a whole is working to ensure that EU Exit implementation is carried out to high quality without impacting public service delivery across the whole of the government.

It is therefore only sensible that we make use of the resources and expertise we have available to make sure that the UK is prepared for all Brexit scenarios. This includes departments sharing staff and working together on joint projects.

Internal transfers and loans are agreed locally, so the department does not hold this information centrally.

■ Education: ICT**Nic Dakin:**[\[256262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the new EdTech Leadership Group will be convened; and how the leadership group will be selected.

Nick Gibb:

The EdTech Leadership Group is due to convene for the first time before summer recess.

Members of the group have been selected on the basis of their experience and ability to influence either the education technology industry or the education sector to further the aims of the Government's education technology strategy. Members were also selected to ensure a balance of experience between the technology industry and education sectors (ensuring representation across different age-phases of education).

■ Females: Apprentices**Stephen McPartland:**[\[256297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to encourage more women into apprenticeships.

Anne Milton:

Women are well-represented in terms of overall apprenticeship starts. In the first half of 2018/19, 47% of apprenticeship starts were by women, which is an increase from 45.8% for the equivalent period in 2017/18.

However, we also want to make sure that more women are able to access apprenticeships in traditionally male-dominated fields as well as in fields that offer the highest returns. Starts by women in the construction, planning and the built environment sector increased by 36.7% in the first half of 2018/19, compared to the same period in 2017/18, from 790 starts to 1,080 starts.

Through the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN), we are championing gender representation in apprenticeships amongst employers in industries where improvement is needed. This includes making sure that more women can access science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) apprenticeships and it is encouraging to see the progress that is being made. For example, ADCN member GlaxoSmithKline are well ahead of their aim to achieve 25% of women representation in their STEM apprenticeships. Women now make up 47% of their UK intake. The ADCN has recently published an update on its work which can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/802200/ADCN-Report-2019-LR-v2.pdf

Furthermore, we are working to raise awareness of apprenticeships and the benefits that they bring to people of all backgrounds. Our 'Fire It Up' communication campaign seeks to change the way that people think about apprenticeships and to demonstrate that they are an aspirational choice for anyone. 'Fire It Up' advertising features apprentices from a diverse range of backgrounds and showcases female apprentices in STEM occupations.

■ National College Creative Industries

Jon Trickett:

[\[256932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Departments policy is on providing prospective partners different EOI submission dates for the opportunity to partner the National College Creative Industries.

Jon Trickett:

[\[256933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the studio space occupied by the National College of Creative Industries (a) is hired out to commercial clients and (b) comprises an income-generating business.

Jon Trickett:

[\[256934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will commission a review of the (a) effectiveness and (b) value for money of the National College of Creative Industries.

Jon Trickett:

[\[256935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students have undertaken work-based learning opportunities on commercial projects at The Backstage Centre in each of the last 12 months.

Anne Milton:

The National College of Creative Industries (NCCI) has undertaken a structure and prospects appraisal to identify potential partners. Submission dates were set so that every prospective partner had the same opportunity: 5 working days to submit their expression of interest to the NCCI.

NCCI has 6 studio spaces which are shared between the learners and commercial clients on a timetable which enables training and work experience for the learners and a commercial space for the local community and commercial clients. The hire of studio spaces is part of the income that the college receives, along with the funding for students and the levy payments from employers for apprentices.

A process evaluation of the National College programme, including NCCI, is underway and is due to be published by the end of the year.

Data supplied by the college's own records shows that all learners (167 learners over the last 12 months, although the breakdown data by month is not available) have undertaken work-based learning opportunities on commercial projects as an essential component of their qualifications. To clarify, the college is based in the Backstage Centre, which is a commercial production, rehearsal and training venue owned by the college.

■ **National Vocational Qualifications: Nottinghamshire**

Ben Bradley:[\[257068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of pupils achieved a NVQ3+ or equivalent in Nottinghamshire in 2018.

Anne Milton:

Level 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2018 was published in April 2019 in the following national statistics release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/level-2-and-3-attainment-by-young-people-aged-19-in-2018>.

The table below gives the proportion of pupils aged 19 in 2018 who had achieved a level 3 qualification. Proportions are for those educated in the state sector at age 15.

COHORT OF PUPILS AGED 19 IN 2018	PUPILS ATTAINING LEVEL 3 BY AGE 19
Nottinghamshire local authority	51.8%
East Midlands	52.4%
England	57.2%

Level 3 includes A levels (including Applied A levels, Vocational A levels and Pre-U principal subjects), International Baccalaureate, AS levels, Advanced Apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications and Vocationally Related Qualifications and other qualifications, including the level 3 diploma.

■ Overseas Students: EU Nationals**Catherine West:** [\[257033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to support the attendance of EU students at UK universities after the UK leaves the EU.

Chris Skidmore:

EU students and staff make an important contribution to our universities and it is testament to our system that so many students from abroad choose to come and study here.

I know that students, staff and providers are concerned about what EU exit means for study and collaboration opportunities. To help give certainty, in July 2018, we announced guarantees on student finance for EU nationals. These guarantees are not altered if the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

EU nationals who start a course in England in the 2019/20 academic year or before will continue to be eligible for 'home fee' status and student finance support from Student Finance England for the duration of their course, provided they meet the residency requirement. We recognise how important it is that students and institutions have information on eligibility for student support before applications for courses open.

Applications for courses starting in academic year 2020/21 do not open until September 2019. We will provide sufficient notice for prospective EU students on fee arrangements ahead of the 2020/2021 academic year and subsequent years in the future.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism**Chuka Umunna:** [\[256253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children were absent from school in the 2018-19 academic year due to mental health problems.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not held centrally.

The Department published data on absence due to illness, but not on type of illness, in table 2 of the annual "Pupil absence in schools in England" statistical release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-2017-to-2018>.

■ Pupils: Autism**Dr Sarah Wollaston:** [\[257063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of children with autism spectrum condition who have been (a) excluded and (b) isolated in schools in the last 12 months.

Nick Gibb:

Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: 2016-2017 can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2016-to-2017>.

Permanent and fixed period exclusions by type of special educational need can be found in national table 6.

The information requested, on the number of children with autism spectrum condition who have been isolated in schools in the last 12 months, is not held centrally.

As part of Ofsted inspections, however, schools will be asked to provide records and analysis of any use of internal isolation. Ofsted inspectors will expect schools to have clear and effective behaviour policies that promote high standards of behaviour and are applied consistently and fairly. In reaching a judgement on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, inspectors will take account of a range of information, including schools' use of internal isolation.

The Department's behaviour and discipline guidance to schools makes clear that schools must act lawfully, reasonably and proportionately when using isolation, and must take account of any special education needs or disabilities pupils placed in isolation may have.

■ Pupils: Mental Health**Dr Sarah Wollaston:**[\[257065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the effect on children's (a) wellbeing and (b) development of changes in the time available for break-time over the last 20 years.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has no plans to assess the impact of any changes in the length of school break times. Schools have the autonomy to make decisions about the structure and duration of their school day to suit their own circumstances. However, the Department is clear that pupils should be given an appropriate break and expects school leaders to make sure this happens.

The Government recognises the importance of physical activity in schools to improve physical and mental wellbeing and support attainment. The Department's childhood obesity strategy reflects the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines that primary age children should get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day and the aim that 30 minutes of that should be during the school day.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[257004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the funding per pupil allocated to each (a) primary and (b) secondary school in Havering in the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

The revenue funding allocated for schools for each financial year from 2015-19 for Havering local authority are shown in the attached table. For financial year 2019-2020, only the dedicated schools grant (DSG) has been allocated at this time, though this makes up the bulk of schools funding. The DSG for Havering this year is £218.2 million. Other grants will be allocated at later points in the year.

Attachments:

1. 257004_Table
[257004_Revenue_amounts_primary_and_secondary_education_Havering.xls]

Schools: West Midlands**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[256282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in advance of the spending review on increasing school funding in the West Midlands.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, meets ministers from HM Treasury regularly to discuss matters of shared interest, including funding for schools.

Students: Finance**Sir David Evennett:**[\[256941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the Graduate Contributions Statement proposed by the Russell Group and MoneySavingExpert; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Skidmore:

The government is always looking for ways to improve communications with borrowers, and we welcome this contribution to the post-18 review of education and funding from the Russell Group and Martin Lewis from Money Saving Expert on the Graduate Contributions Statement. Work on the review is still ongoing. The independent panel will report before the government concludes the overall review.

The current student loan statements are fit for purpose, providing borrowers with the relevant information about their accounts, including loans balance, repayments made and interest accrued over the previous tax year. Student loan borrowers currently receive account statements annually. We are continually working to improve the repayment system for borrowers and are currently exploring how students taking out a student loan can have better online access to much more up to date information on their repayments.

Teachers: Training**Paul Farrelly:**[\[256958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that all education professionals are adequately trained to deal with epileptic seizures.

Nick Gibb:

The Children and Families Act (2014) places a legal duty on schools to support children with health conditions, including epilepsy. The Department has published clear, statutory guidance on how to do so in the document 'Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions'.

Pupils with medical conditions should have an individual healthcare plan drawn up in partnership with a healthcare professional, parents and the pupil themselves. Individual healthcare plans should include details of the support a pupil requires, what needs to be done, when and by whom. It should also contain details of any training required to ensure school staff are competent and confident in their ability to provide the support needed.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Products: Imports****Martyn Day:**[\[257046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 December 2018 to Question 196260 on Animal Products: Imports, what guidelines are used to establish whether there is detrimental impact on the sustainability of endangered species before the UK Government issues a permit for trophy hunting imports.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government takes the conservation of endangered species seriously.

Imports of hunting trophies into the UK are subject to strict controls under the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations, which apply in the UK. All applications for permits to import hunting trophies into the UK are assessed to make sure that the import would not have a harmful effect on the conservation status of the species or on the extent of the territory occupied by the relevant population of the species. In addition, the applicant must provide documentary evidence, in the form of an export permit that demonstrates that the specimens have been obtained in accordance with the legislation on the protection of the species concerned.

There are import suspensions in place at the EU level for countries where hunting of the species concerned is not considered to be sustainable. The need for any further suspensions is kept under active review.

The Government recently hosted a stakeholder roundtable to hear views from all sides of the debate. We are reviewing existing evidence surrounding trophy hunting and its impact on species and rural communities.

■ Canoeing: National Parks

Chris Williamson:

[\[256983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of uncontested access on water within National Parks for canoeing; and how many successful access arrangements there are within National Parks that facilitate access on water for recreation.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

There has been no departmental assessment of the adequacy of uncontested access on water within National Parks.

The department does not hold information on access agreements within National Parks.

■ Canoeing: River Derwent

Chris Williamson:

[\[256982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of negotiating an equitable and practical access arrangement for canoeing with all riparian owners and stakeholders along the 106km of the River Derwent in Derbyshire.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

There has been no assessment by the department into the feasibility of access agreements on the River Derwent.

■ Carbon Emissions

Paul Farrelly:

[\[256232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the UK's carbon footprint is not exported to countries with weaker targets in place.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government publishes annual estimates of the UK's carbon footprint on a consumption basis. The latest statistics were published on 11 April and show the footprint for years 1997 to 2016: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uks-carbon-footprint. Carbon footprint measured in this way refers to emissions that are associated with the consumption spending of UK residents on goods and services, wherever in the world these emissions arise along the supply chain, and those which are directly generated by UK households through private motoring etc. These emissions are often referred to as 'consumption emissions' to distinguish them from estimates relating to the emissions 'produced' within a country's territory or economic sphere.

As stated in the Resources and Waste Strategy, the Government's goal is to maximise the value of the resources we use, minimise the waste we create, cut emissions and help create a cleaner, greener, healthier planet. In the Strategy we

have committed to measures that will improve resource efficiency, prevent waste and cut carbon consumption emissions.

Climate change is a global challenge. The UK is a world leader in cutting emissions while creating wealth. Between 1990 and 2017, the UK reduced its emissions by over 40 per cent while growing the economy by more than two thirds. We have met our first two Carbon Budgets and are on track to meet the third. In addition, our consumption emissions are falling. Greenhouse gas emissions on a consumption basis fell by 6% between 2015 and 2016; and by 21% between 2007 and 2016.

UK International Climate Finance (ICF) plays a crucial role in addressing this global challenge. Three government Departments (DFID, BEIS and Defra) have responsibility for investing the UK's £5.8bn of ICF between 2016 and 2021. These investments aim to support international poverty eradication now and in the future, by helping developing countries to manage risk, adapt to and build resilience to the impacts of climate change; promoting low carbon development at scale; and supporting sustainable management of natural resources and reducing deforestation. Between 2011/12 and 2017/18, it is estimated that ICF programmes have reduced or avoided 10.4 million tonnes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (tCO₂e).

Energy and trade intensive businesses create particular challenges, where ambitious climate change targets could risk carbon leakage. As the Clean Growth Strategy sets out, we remain committed to carbon pricing as an emissions reduction tool whilst ensuring energy and trade intensive businesses are appropriately protected from any detrimental impacts on competitiveness.

During Phase IV negotiations on the EU Emissions Trading System the UK supported the provision of free allocation as a precaution against the risk of carbon leakage; as the UK leaves the EU our preferred position is to have a UK ETS that is linked to the EU ETS and in that scenario, as set-out in our recent consultation on the future of carbon pricing, we propose to continue the provision of free allocation to industry to help ensure a smooth transition and continued protection against carbon leakage.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Brexit

Mr David Lammy:

[\[256200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

David Rutley:

Over 80% of Defra's agenda is affected by the UK's departure from the EU and as a result many roles across the Defra group are now supporting exit related work, either directly or indirectly.

Departments continually review workforce plans and reprioritise and assess changing needs, which includes identification and cessation of non-priority work where appropriate. The Civil Service as a whole is working to ensure that exit

implementation is carried out to a high standard without impacting public service delivery across the whole of Government.

■ **Fish: Disease Control**

Jim Shannon:

[\[256403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent ulcerative dermal necrosis in fish.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

The Fish Health Inspectorates, the official services for the control of diseases of aquatic animals in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, investigate reports of outbreaks of ulcerative dermal necrosis (UDN) in wild fish, and suspicion in farmed fish. There have been no confirmed reports of UDN in the UK since 2012, and UDN is not subject to official disease control measures.

■ **Greyhounds: China**

Jim Fitzpatrick:

[\[256194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports that UK-born and trained greyhounds are being kept in poor conditions for breeding in China; whether his Department has plans to prevent the future export of greyhounds from the UK to China; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The Government takes the welfare of all racing animals very seriously, including once their racing careers have ended.

The Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA), which grants certification for the commercial exports of dogs and records information regarding the commercial movement of animals, has confirmed that they do not have any records of greyhounds being exported to China for commercial purposes during 2017 or 2018.

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain have made clear that they do not support the export of greyhounds to countries where welfare standards cannot be verified. They keep records of all dogs running and once a dog is retired the owner or trainer is required to state where the dog will be relocated to.

■ **Lions: Africa**

Tracey Crouch:

[\[256998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of wild lions there will be in Africa by 2025 if the current rate of hunting continues.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government has not made an assessment of future numbers of African lions in 2025 if current hunting levels continue.

■ Lions: Hunting

Tracey Crouch: [\[256999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what evidence there is that wild lion trophy hunting has contributed to the conservation of the species.

Tracey Crouch: [\[257000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what evidence there is that sustainable hunting has led to an increase of wildlife in African trophy hunting concession areas.

Tracey Crouch: [\[257001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether there is evidence that rural communities in (a) Tanzania, (b) Zambia and (c) Zimbabwe have benefited from lion trophy hunting in those countries.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government has previously commissioned a report by Professor Macdonald on Lion Conservation with Particular Respect to the Issue of Trophy Hunting. This report found that the primary benefit associated with trophy hunting is the protection of wildlife habitat by reducing the major threat of habitat loss. Lion trophy hunting enables land to be maintained under wildlife-based land use and often prevents the conversion of the area to other forms of land use such as agriculture. This habitat protection is also important for many other species, including endangered species. The report notes that a total area of around 1.4 million km² was conserved for trophy-hunting in sub-Saharan Africa, which exceeded the area of national parks in those countries by 22%. The report also cited studies on the number of jobs supported by trophy hunting.

Environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) take different views on trophy hunting. My Hon. friend may be interested in the evidence cited by the

IUCN (

https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/iucn_informingdecisionsontrophyhuntingv1_1.pdf)

WWF (

https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/wwf_policy_and_considerations_re_trophy_hunting_july_2016_.pdf),

and **Save the Rhino (**

https://www.savetherhino.org/assets/0001/7279/What_is_trophy_hunting.pdf).

■ Pigeons: Pest Control

Jim Shannon: [\[256418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help farmers control wood pigeon.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

This is a devolved matter and the following answer applies to England only.

Farmers may operate under the new general licence issued by Natural England on 3 May to control wood pigeons to prevent serious damage to crops. If the circumstances in which they wish to act are not covered by the new licence they may apply to Natural England for an individual licence using the online application system.

The government issued a call for evidence on 4 May to help inform its future decisions on general licences relating to the purposes covered by the three revoked general licences and will set out its next steps shortly.

■ Plastics: Packaging**Catherine West:**[\[257073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of supermarket chains on the reduction of single-use plastics for product packaging.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government is currently working with retailers and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to encourage their efforts to reduce waste and to explore the introduction of plastic-free supermarket initiatives in which fresh food is sold loose, giving consumers the choice.

The Government recently consulted on reforms to the packaging producer responsibility system to ensure that packaging producers meet the full cost of managing and recycling packaging waste. This provides a strong incentive to producers to reduce the amount of packaging they use and to make packaging that is more easily collected and recycled.

Industry is already taking action. In April last year, WRAP and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation launched their world-leading UK Plastics Pact, with support from the Government, and all the major supermarkets have signed up to it. The Pact brings these organisations together with four key targets for 2025 that aim to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated, which include action to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use plastic packaging items. Our proposed reforms will support supermarkets in achieving those targets.

Catherine West:[\[257074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to restrict the use of (a) polystyrene and (b) PVC in plastic packaging.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

In our Resources and Waste Strategy we committed to reform our current packaging producer responsibility system. We recently consulted on measures to ensure that producers pay the full costs of disposal for packaging they place on the market, as well as mechanisms to incentivise producers to make better, more sustainable

decisions at the design stage and point of manufacture. This includes making producers pay more if their products aren't easily recyclable.

We will consider legislative proposals as necessary in achieving our objective.

■ **Plastics: Recycling**

Catherine West:

[\[257075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with businesses on the use of detectable black pigment in plastics to facilitate the recycling of plastic.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra Ministers and officials have met industry representatives to highlight the importance of increasing the recyclability of materials, including black plastics. As part of our proposals to reform the UK packaging producer responsibility system, we have outlined options that provide a financial incentive for producers to move towards using more easily recycled packaging materials and formats. We expect these initiatives by industry, combined with our reforms, to work together to eliminate from use the problematic and difficult to recycle plastic packaging.

Industry has committed to taking action on implementing solutions to prevent black plastic waste going to landfill and encourage recycling. In April 2018, WRAP and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation published its Plastics Pact with support from Defra and 80 businesses, NGOs, government organisations and service providers. The Pact brings these organisations together with the aim of making 100% of plastic packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025. A number of UK Plastic Pact members, including Waitrose, Aldi and Lidl have committed to reducing or eliminating black plastic packaging, while other companies are using detectable pigment that enables black plastic to be recycled.

■ **Wildlife: Conservation**

Vernon Coaker:

[\[255654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the efficacy of measures to protect wildlife habitats in the Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill 2018; and if he will make a statement.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Our published draft Environment (Principles and Governance) clauses form part of our broader Environment Bill.

The draft clauses set out the environmental principles and the creation of a policy statement together with a new system of green governance for when we leave the EU.

Further measures being planned for the Environment Bill will help us take action to enhance our environment, including wildlife habitats.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

■ **Borders: Northern Ireland**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[257006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what recent assessment he has made of the viability of technological solutions for arrangements to replace the backstop when the UK leaves the EU.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to having a future relationship in place with the EU by the end of December 2020. However, even if the full future relationship is not in place by the end of the implementation period, the Government's objective is to ensure that the backstop is replaced by alternative arrangements. Both the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration emphasised the shared determination of the UK and the EU to replace the backstop with an agreement on alternative arrangements.

In anticipation, the Government intends to establish three domestic advisory groups: an expert group on trade and customs, a business and trade union group, and a parliamentary group. These groups will engage widely, including with the institutions established under the Belfast Agreement, to ensure the UK's input is informed by a broad and inclusive range of voices domestically. Amongst other facilitations, the groups will consider work drawing on cutting-edge technological solutions designed to streamline and modernise border controls and support engagement with customs and regulatory processes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ **Afghanistan: Taliban**

Liz McInnes:

[\[256386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the increased Taliban presence in Afghanistan; and whether the security situation in Afghanistan remains a priority for his Department.

Mark Field:

The British Government continues to closely monitor the security situation in Afghanistan. Our analysis is that the Taliban cannot win this conflict. The British Government believes a political peace settlement, between the Afghan government and the Taliban, is the only way to achieve lasting stability and security in Afghanistan. We welcome the progress made towards starting a credible peace process by the US Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad. We continue to urge the Taliban to take advantage of the current opportunity for peace, and to begin a genuine dialogue with the elected government of Afghanistan.

Her Majesty's Government, along with our North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies and other partners, also remains committed to supporting The Afghan Government and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. This is vital to protect the Afghan population from the conflict and from terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Daesh Khorasan Province. It is also an essential effort to ensure that Afghanistan does not again become a safe-haven for international terrorism.

■ Azerbaijan: Foreign Relations

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[257020\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to improve the diplomatic relationship between the UK and Azerbaijan.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The United Kingdom and the Republic of Azerbaijan have enjoyed a strong diplomatic relationship for over a quarter of century. Through regular political and economic dialogue we work together to increase cooperation in all areas of mutual interest. Our annual strategic dialogue, which I last co-chaired in October 2018, provides opportunity for discussion of bilateral relations, multilateral issues and human rights.

Our regular UK-Azerbaijan Joint Intergovernmental Commission, which is co-chaired by the Minister of State for International Trade, was last held on 22 May. This is a forum for in-depth discussion of the UK and Azerbaijan's energy and trade relationship, and sets the agenda for future cooperation in new economic sectors.

We also strengthen bilateral relations through regular high-level visits, most significantly when the Prime Minister welcomed President Aliyev to the UK in April 2018. We have forged close partnerships in the educational, cultural and creative sectors. Every year we welcome new Chevening scholars from Azerbaijan to the UK, and thousands of Azerbaijani students have studied at UK universities.

■ Brunei: British Nationals Abroad

Chuka Umunna:

[\[256252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to safeguard (a) British armed forces personnel and (b) British citizens based in Brunei from strict new laws against homosexuality and adultery in that country.

Mark Field:

The British government has been in close consultation with the Government of Brunei and has ensured the necessary protections are in place with the Government of Brunei to mitigate against any issues that might arise from the introduction of the final phases of the Sharia Penal Code. British Forces have been instructed to conform to all Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice. We encourage all British passport holders visiting Brunei to read the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's travel advice pages which are updated on a regular basis.

On 5 May, the Sultan of Brunei confirmed that the de facto moratorium on the death penalty will apply to the Sharia Penal Code and committed Brunei to ratifying the United Nations Convention Against Torture. We have welcomed these announcements. The Sultan's assurances confirm the value of addressing sensitive issues such as this, through respectful dialogue and diplomacy and, in that vein, we continue to encourage Brunei to remove corporal and capital punishments from its statutes. Brunei's commitments regarding the death penalty and United Nations Convention Against Torture go a significant way to addressing our anxieties about the human rights situation in Brunei.

■ **Cameroon: Humanitarian Aid**

Liz McInnes:

[\[256384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the humanitarian crisis in the Anglophone region of Cameroon.

Harriett Baldwin:

The UK remains deeply concerned at the worsening humanitarian situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon and reports of human rights violations and abuses committed by both security forces and armed separatists. Violence is driving people from their homes and impacting on the lives of ordinary civilians, particularly women and children. The UN assesses that over 530,000 people have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict and has recorded over 35,000 refugees in Nigeria. The UK is providing lifesaving assistance to thousands of people following a £2.5m contribution in December 2018 to the UN emergency appeal to address the crisis.

The UK welcomes the visit to Cameroon by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Cameroon's reported openness to working with the UN to address the severe humanitarian and human rights situation in the Anglophone regions. It is imperative that urgent action is now taken by the Government of Cameroon, with the support of regional partners and the wider international community, to prevent further escalation of the crisis. This includes the establishment of a credible political dialogue to address the root causes of the crisis. The UK stands ready to support.

The British Government regularly raises concerns about Cameroon at the highest levels including at the UN Security Council on 13 May and when I met with Cameroon's High Commissioner to the UK on 30 April. The UK continues to call for unhindered humanitarian access to affected populations, an end to violence on all sides and investigations into all reports of human rights violations and abuses.

■ Cameroon: Internally Displaced People

Liz McInnes:

[\[256385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of the findings of the UN human rights high commissioner that there is a window of opportunity to arrest the crises that have led to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people in Cameroon.

Harriett Baldwin:

The UK remains deeply concerned at the worsening humanitarian situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon and reports of human rights violations and abuses committed by both security forces and armed separatists. Violence is driving people from their homes and impacting on the lives of ordinary civilians, particularly women and children. The UN assesses that over 530,000 people have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict and has recorded over 35,000 refugees in Nigeria. The UK is providing lifesaving assistance to thousands of people following a £2.5m contribution in December 2018 to the UN emergency appeal to address the crisis.

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■ China and India: Diplomatic Service

Sir Oliver Letwin:

[R] [\[256907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many diplomatic staff employed by his Department on matters relating to (a) India and (b) China are stationed in (i) London, (ii) India and (iii) China.

Mark Field:

In London as at 30 April 2019, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has 20-39 FCO diplomatic staff that work within South Asia and Afghanistan Directorate (SAAD) which includes India, and 40-59 diplomatic staff that work within Asia Pacific Directorate (APD), including China. This does not include home civil servants. We are unable to offer numbers working on individual countries within these Directorates. In addition, there are officers in other areas of the FCO whose work relates to China or

India but we do not hold this level of detail on our central Human resources management systems.

The Her Majesty's Government networks in India and mainland China are two of the largest in the world. There are nearly 700 UK government staff nationwide in China and around 1,000 UK government staff in India, in both cases representing a number of British government departments.

■ Elections: Monitoring

John Mann:

[\[256940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans he has for UK participation in non-European country election monitoring after the UK leaves the EU.

Mark Field:

UK officials and private citizens take part in electoral observation missions organised by international organisations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Commonwealth and the EU. The Government does not organise such missions unilaterally. After the UK has left the EU, UK officials and private citizens will continue to take part in electoral observation missions organised by international organisations of which the UK is a member or is otherwise eligible to participate.

■ Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Brexit

Mr David Lammy:

[\[256205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Sir Alan Duncan:

Since the Referendum, 65 FCO staff have been transferred to work in other government departments to support EU Exit preparations. The FCO continues to keep its EU Exit staffing levels under constant review to ensure that they are appropriate to deliver the Government's objectives. The Civil Service as a whole is working to ensure that EU Exit implementation is carried out to a high quality without impacting public service delivery.

■ India: Hate Crime

Liz McInnes:

[\[256388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of changes in the level of hate crimes against Muslims in India.

Liz McInnes:

[\[256389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of India's adherence to Article 18 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mark Field:

India has a strong democratic framework and constitutionally enshrined protections for freedom of religious belief, but faces some challenges enforcing these due to its size and social and economic development. The situation for religious minorities in India varies, depending on location, socio-economic background and proportion of religious minorities.

We maintain a continuous assessment of the human rights situation across India. We engage with India on the full range of human rights matters, both bilaterally and through the European Union. We work with Union and State Governments, and with Non-Governmental Organisations, to build capacity and share expertise to promote human rights for all. The British High Commission in New Delhi, and our Deputy High Commissions across India, also run projects promoting minority rights and regularly meet religious representatives, as well as official figures such as the Chair of the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Minorities. Recent project work included 'Empowering Muslim youth' which reached 150 youths, 20 teachers and over 100 educational institutions.

■ **Israel: Palestinians**

Colin Clark:

[\[257106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the key obstacles to peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that act as key obstacles to peace and undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, demolitions in the West Bank and the dire situation in Gaza.. We continue to believe the best way to achieve this is through direct negotiations between the parties, supported by the international community, leading towards a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

■ **Sudan: Demonstrations**

Liz McInnes:

[\[256387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the recent use of live ammunition by Sudanese security forces against protesters in Khartoum.

Harriett Baldwin:

The UK is extremely concerned by the use of live ammunition by Sudanese security forces against protestors in Khartoum on 13 and 15 May, and by reports of injuries and fatalities. We call for those responsible to be held to account. Since protests began in December 2018, the UK has consistently raised our concerns at the use of violence in response to peaceful protests. As part of the Troika (US, UK and Norway) we made a statement on 21 May calling for a swift, orderly and peaceful civilian-led transfer of power that respects the will of the Sudanese people.

■ Togo: Foreign Relations**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[257019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what diplomatic steps he has taken to develop the UK Government's relationship with Togo.

Harriett Baldwin:

The British Government does not have diplomatic representation in Togo. Our non-Resident Ambassador – the British High Commissioner to Accra – provides our diplomatic representation and recently received accreditation from the Government of Togo. In March, our Honorary Consul also received accreditation. This progress demonstrates the strengthening of our bilateral relationship with Togo and enables us to progress our relationship further.

Our non-Resident Ambassador has discussed how the UK-Togo relationship can expand with President Gnassingbé, specifically concerning economic development and improved trade links.

■ Women's Rights**Mr Ivan Lewis:**[\[256949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to promote women's rights issues at the forthcoming G7 summit in Biarritz.

Mark Field:

The French Government has chosen to focus on inequalities throughout their G7 Presidency this year. We are working across the G7 workstreams to ensure continued progress on gender equality, particularly in the Sahel and across Sub-Saharan Africa. We will push for ambitious Summit outcomes that tackle violence against women and girls, promote girls' education and women's economic empowerment, and support movements to end child marriage and FGM. Our focus is on accelerating the pace of change to ensure that all women and girls are empowered and play an active part in all aspects of society.

■ Yemen: Military Intervention**Richard Burden:**[\[255648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the bombings at (a) a Sanaa school on 7 April 2019, (b) a Save the Children-supported hospital on 26 March 2019 and (c) other bombings of civilian infrastructure in Yemen, what discussions he has had with his Saudi counterpart on the timeframe for the conclusion of the Saudi-led Coalition's investigations into those incidents; and whether the results of those investigations will be made publicly available.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We are deeply concerned by reports of an alleged airstrike on a petrol station at a hospital facility on 26 March 2019. Our officials have been in contact with Save the Children, who fund the hospital, about this alleged incident and have raised this matter with the Saudi-led Coalition, who have announced an investigation.

We are also deeply concerned at reports of an explosion at a warehouse near two schools in Sa'wan on 7 April 2019. We have raised the incident with the Coalition who have announced an investigation in line with standard practices. We endorse the statement of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General of 9 April and continue to call on all parties to the conflict in Yemen to exercise restraint, comply fully with international humanitarian law and implement the Stockholm Agreement without delay in order to improve the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Richard Burden:[\[255649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help ensure that deconflicted (a) hospitals and (b) schools in Yemen are protected from bombing.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We have been clear that all parties to the conflict in Yemen must comply with international humanitarian law. We continue to call on all parties to exercise restraint and implement the Stockholm Agreement without delay in order to improve the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Emily Thornberry:[\[256987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of damage to facilities funded by British NGOs of the bombing campaign by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Emily Thornberry:[\[256988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he has taken to respond to reports from Oxfam of airstrikes against their facilities in Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We take all reports of facilities damaged by airstrikes in Yemen very seriously and regularly meet with NGOs to discuss their concerns. We use every opportunity to

raise the importance of complying with international humanitarian law with the Saudi Arabian government and other members of the Coalition, including requesting investigations into alleged incidents of concern. Most recently we raised concerns about the airstrikes in Sana'a on 16 May and the Coalition confirmed they are taking steps to investigate the incident.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[256991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department has investigated reports of attacks on (a) an Oxfam-supported water supply system and (b) Oxfam-supported cholera treatment centres in Yemen by Saudi-led coalition air strikes in (i) April and (ii) June 2018; and whether the UK Government has passed reports of those incidents on to the Joint Incidents Assessment Team for investigation.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We take all reports of alleged incidents very seriously and monitor them using all available information. On the 16 January the Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) publicly released a report on the incident in June 2018 relating to the Cholera Treatment Centre incident. We have requested JIAT examine the case further to address concerns about the report raised by Medecins Sans Frontieres. With respect to the incident in April 2018 on the Water Supply System we are seeking further details and will follow up with the Saudi Arabian government.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ 5G

Dr David Drew:

[\[256910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) health-and-safety research and (b) risk assessments his Department has (i) undertaken and (ii) commissioned on 5G technology.

Dr David Drew:

[\[256911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has (a) undertaken and (b) commissioned a regulatory safety testing on 5G radiofrequency radiation.

Dr David Drew:

[\[256912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to undertake (a) health-and-safety research and (b) a risk assessments before 5G is adopted in a localised test area.

Seema Kennedy:

Public Health England (PHE) has published a webpage about exposure to the radio waves from mobile phone base stations, including those for 5G networks, at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health>

This explains the health-related reviews and assessments have been performed, as well as the practical measures that are in place to protect public health.

PHE advises that the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) should be adopted and there is no convincing evidence that radio wave exposures below the ICNIRP guideline levels cause adverse health effects. The guidelines apply to exposures at frequencies up to 300 GHz, well above the maximum few tens of GHz frequencies anticipated for use by 5G systems.

Health and safety legislation requires companies deploying and operating communication networks to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments, as well as put in place measures to reduce the identified risks so far as reasonably practicable. In controlling risks arising from radio wave exposure, the Health and Safety Executive refer to compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines. Industry has committed to comply with the international guidelines and to provide certificates of compliance with planning applications for base stations.

PHE continues to monitor the health-related evidence applicable to radio waves, including in relation to base stations, and is committed to updating its advice as required.

■ 5G: Health Hazards

Dr David Drew:

[\[256920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what studies have been carried out to evaluate the effect of 5G on (a) pregnant women, (b) babies and (c) young children.

Seema Kennedy:

A considerable amount of research has been carried out on exposure to radio waves over several decades, and evidence reviews have been prepared by scientific expert groups in the United Kingdom and around the world. Among the health topics investigated is whether adverse effects can occur in relation to reproduction and development.

Public Health England (PHE) has published a webpage about exposure to the radio waves from mobile phone base stations, including those for 5G networks, at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health>

Based on the accumulated evidence and reviews, PHE advises that the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) should be adopted and there is no convincing evidence that radio wave exposures below the

ICNIRP guideline levels cause adverse health effects. This includes effects in relation to reproduction and development.

PHE has committed to keeping the emerging evidence under review and to preparing another comprehensive review when sufficient new evidence has accumulated.

■ Allergies

Jim Shannon: [\[256400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have allergies in the UK.

Seema Kennedy:

Data on the number of people who have allergies is not held.

■ Analgesics: Misuse

Jim Shannon: [\[256398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent people from becoming addicted to pain relief medication.

Jim Shannon: [\[256404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to prevent people becoming addicted to opioid painkillers.

Seema Kennedy:

Painkillers including opioids are important to help people manage pain, but they must be treated with caution and the Government is taking action to protect people from addiction and inappropriate prescribing. Public Health England is reviewing problems associated with prescription medicine use, including opioids. In the interim we have introduced prominent addiction warnings for all opioid medicines and are making sure prevention and social prescribing are at the heart of our Long Term Plan to cut down on over-prescribing.

■ Anosmia

Jim Shannon: [\[256415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people in the UK have anosmia.

Seema Kennedy:

Data on the number of people who have anosmia is not held.

■ Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust: Migrant Workers

Andrew Rosindell: [\[257010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many EU nationals have (a) joined and (b) left their jobs at Barking Havering Redbridge NHS Foundation Trust in the last five years.

Stephen Hammond:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups, but not staff working in in general practitioner surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the number of EU27 joiners to, and leavers from, Barking Havering Redbridge NHS Foundation Trust as at September each year since 2014 and to January 2019 (the latest data), headcount.

TIME PERIOD	JOINERS	LEAVERS
September 2014 to September 2015	132	90
September 2015 to September 2016	228	119
September 2016 to September 2017	146	153
September 2017 to September 2018	110	132
September 2018 to January 2019	36	43

Source:

NHS HCHS monthly workforce statistics, NHS Digital.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Jim Shannon:

[\[256410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the urine test for cervical cancer will be adopted by the NHS.

Seema Kennedy:

There are currently no plans to adopt urine testing into the National Health Service Cervical Screening Programme (NHS CSP), the United Kingdom National Screening Committee (UK NSC) has not been asked to assess the evidence for urine testing against its criteria.

Proposals for any major modifications to an existing screening programme, such as a move to offer urine testing as the primary screen test in the NHS CSP would require a formal submission to the UK NSC as per its published review process. Proposals for modifications are accepted by the UK NSC throughout the year. More information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process/appendix-d-how-to-submit-a-proposal-to-the-uk-nsc>

■ Child Rearing

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[256283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to invest in evidence-based parenting support.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

Becoming a parent is an important period and opportunity to offer evidence-based advice and support whilst creating opportunities to support a child's very early development.

Through our new workforce of Mental Health Support Teams, staffed by a new role of Education Mental Health Practitioners, we are providing new capacity for addressing the needs of children and young people with mild to moderate mental health issues. The first cohort of trainees started in early 2019 and the first wave of trailblazer areas will become operational during 2019. The Support Teams will provide evidence-based interventions, which may include family-based behaviour change interventions, which can be successfully delivered to help reduce child conduct problems.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Brexit

Mr David Lammy:

[256204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Stephen Hammond:

The number of individuals who have been transferred or seconded to work in preparations for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union in other Government departments is not recorded.

Across the Department, staff are working on a range of policy areas related to EU Exit. Communications, analytical and legal staff also provide advice as required. Staff may have been redistributed within their directorates to support or undertake work which involves preparations for EU Exit. Officials may also have reprioritised their work to include EU Exit work, whilst remaining in their primary roles.

The Department is continually reviewing workforce plans, reprioritising and assessing changing needs, including identification and cessation of non-priority work where appropriate. The Civil Service as a whole is working to ensure that EU Exit implementation is carried out to a high standard, without impacting public service delivery across the whole of Government.

■ Diabetes: Mental Health Services**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[257108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of including in the mandatory part of every diabetes appointment a question on the mental wellbeing of a patient.

Seema Kennedy:

NHS England has informed us that it has not assessed the case for mandatory inclusion of this question in every diabetes appointment. The NHS Long Term Plan committed to increasing the provision of mental health support for all patients who require it and NHS England is currently taking forward a number of initiatives to deliver this for patients including for those living with diabetes.

Dr Rupa Huq:[\[257109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether an assessment has been made of the potential benefits of including a mental health professional with knowledge of diabetes in every diabetes care team.

Stephen Hammond:

It is for individual clinical commissioning groups to commission treatment and services for people with diabetes and they are best placed to identify what is needed in their local areas.

On 21 March 2018, NHS England and NHS Improvement along with the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health published 'The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Pathway for People with Long-term Physical Health Conditions and Medically Unexplained Symptoms'.

IAPT services provide evidence based treatments for people with anxiety and depression and the services are co-located in existing primary and secondary care physical health pathways. IAPT services will target the needs of people with depression and anxiety disorders who also have long-term conditions such as diabetes.

Ben Bradley:[\[257141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the mental health of people who have diabetes.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

We are committed to improving access to mental health services to all sections of the population in England, including those with diabetes.

On 21 March 2018 NHS England and NHS Improvement along with the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health published 'The Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Pathway for People with Long Term Health Conditions and Medically Unexplained Symptoms'. This provides advice to clinical commissioning groups on how to ensure that Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services

provide people with such conditions with the same access to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence-recommended psychological therapies as other people.

■ **Doctors: Equal Pay**

Paul Farrelly:

[\[256964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to evaluate the potential effect on the gender pay gap in medicine of the Government's decision not to include (a) consultants and (b) specialist and associate speciality doctors in the NHS shared parental leave entitlement implemented in April 2019.

Paul Farrelly:

[\[256965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review his decision not to include (a) consultants and (b) speciality and associate specialist doctors in the eligibility criteria for NHS shared parental leave entitlement implemented in April 2019.

Stephen Hammond:

The shared parental leave arrangements introduced in April 2019 were part of the Agenda for Change pay and contract reform agreement and enacted via changes to the National Health Service Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook.

The provisions were extended to doctors and dentists in training, by virtue of the fact that their contractual arrangements mirror certain non-pay schedules from the NHS Handbook.

The current terms and conditions for consultants and specialty and associate specialist (SAS) doctors do not share these same schedules and therefore the changes do not automatically apply to these staff.

We firmly believe that all members of NHS staff should be treated equally. Established routes for contractual changes are via NHS Employers. Medical trades unions have been invited by NHS Employers to adopt the same non-pay schedules from the NHS Handbook for consultant and SAS doctors as have already been adopted by doctors and dentists in training, including those relating to shared parental leave.

An evaluation on the potential effect on the gender pay gap in medicine of not including consultants and specialty and associate specialist doctors in the NHS shared parental leave entitlement has not been planned.

The Department has commissioned an independent review into the gender pay gap in medicine, chaired by Professor Dame Jane Dacre. The review, which commenced in April 2018, is currently examining qualitative and quantitative evidence which will help identify the impact of cultural, practical and psychological issues that contribute to the gender pay gap in medicine.

The evidence collected and examined will go on to produce a series of implementable recommendations for publication in September 2019.

■ Gender Recognition: Young People

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[256374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps have been taken in the last six months to reduce the waiting time for transsexual youths at the Tavistock Hospital Gender Identity Clinic.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust is working with NHS England to develop and implement measures to reduce waiting times. NHS England has increased funding for the Trust's Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) by around 150% since 2015/16, but the Trust continues to face challenges in recruiting clinical staff in GIDs with significant experience and expertise.

The service has trialled several initiatives to provide support to young people who are referred, this includes - but is not limited to:

- an ongoing recruitment drive;
- initiatives to actively manage the waiting list offering consultations to local services in complex cases while they wait for specialist input;
- consultation sessions with local mental health services and group sessions with children under 10 years of age;
- regularly reviewing communication around the waiting lists to equip young people with information which is as accurate as possible about their wait;
- reviewing policies and procedures around first appointments, for example looking at Did Not Attend (DNA) policies to ensure those offered appointments to take them up;
- giving more attention to clinically appropriate timely transitions between the Trust's gender identity service and adult services; and
- clinician operated 'helpline' for urgent enquiries/concerns from young people, their families and referrers on the waiting list.

NHS England has also committed to reviewing the service specification for GIDS in 2019/20.

■ General Practitioners: Finance

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[257008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister of 27 March 2019, Official Report column 321, when funding for the General Practice work stream of the NHS Getting it Right First Time programme will be in place; and when an announcement will be made on the (a) commencement date and (b) timeframe for that work stream.

Stephen Hammond:

The Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme aims to drive improvements in medical and surgical specialties through clinical leadership and the use of data to

identify and reduce unwarranted variation in practice. By tackling variations in the way services are delivered across the National Health Service, and by sharing best practice between trusts, GIRFT identifies changes that will help improve care and patient outcomes, as well as delivering efficiencies such as the reduction of unnecessary procedures and cost savings.

The GIRFT programme has recently concluded a pilot looking at applying the GIRFT methodology in primary care. The Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement are reviewing the findings of the pilot and will agree the appropriate next steps in the context of the new GP contract and Primary Care Networks currently being established which have an associated improvement support programme.

■ **Health and Care Professions Council: Fees and Charges**

Julian Sturdy:

[\[257083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations he has received from (a) allied health professionals and (b) their representative bodies on the proposed increase in the registration fee for the Health and Care Professions Council.

Stephen Hammond:

A search of the Department's Ministerial correspondence database has identified 79 items of correspondence received since 24 September 2018 on the proposed increase in registration fees for the Health and Care Professions Council's registrants. None of these were from organisations known to represent allied health professionals.

The Department does not routinely record the occupation of correspondents.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[257084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential financial effect on allied health professionals of the proposed increase in the registration fee for the Health and Care Professions Council.

Stephen Hammond:

The Government has made no assessment of the potential financial effect on allied health professionals on the proposed increase in registration fees for the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC is independent of Government and funded by registrants' fees on a cost recovery basis.

■ **Health Centres: Skellingthorpe**

Karen Lee:

[\[256372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the planned closure of Skellingthorpe Health Centre on local provision of health services.

Seema Kennedy:

Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group has received an application from the Glebe Practice regarding the proposed closure of its branch surgery in

Skellingthorpe. It will be carrying out a public consultation and an equality impact assessment will be presented to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee prior to any decision being made.

When a general practitioner practice closes, patients are informed and advised to register at other local practices of their choice within the catchment area in which they live. In some instances, and in consultation with patients and patient groups, patients are allocated to other neighbouring practices with adequate capacity. Commissioners locally will work with their practices to ensure they are only allocated a volume of patients which they have capacity to manage appropriately and effectively.

■ Hormone Replacement Therapy

Justin Madders:

[\[255686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of (a) Evorel and (b) Femseven sequi patches.

Seema Kennedy:

The manufacturer of Evorel transdermal patches has confirmed that supplies of all presentations are currently available. However, they have stated that in some cases supplies are slightly lower than normal and therefore they are applying restrictions on orders as a precaution to ensure limited stock is maintained.

The Department is aware that the supplier of FemSeven Sequi patches is experiencing long term supply issues. As a result, they are expected to be out of stock until late 2019. We remain in regular contact with the company to resolve this as soon as possible.

Supplies of other hormone replacement therapy transdermal patches continue to remain available and patients affected have been advised to discuss these alternative treatment options with their clinician.

■ Infectious Diseases

Jim Shannon:

[\[256407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the spread of superbugs.

Seema Kennedy:

The Government recognises the importance of tackling superbugs. This is why, in January 2019, it published the United Kingdom's 20 year vision for antimicrobial resistance (AMR), accompanied by a five year National Action Plan. The UK wants to see a world in which AMR is contained and controlled by 2040 and recognises that it cannot achieve this alone. It will require coordinated One-Health action across all sectors, all over the world. The UK will continue to play its part by modelling best practice and innovative approaches at home, sharing good practice and learning from others, and supporting progress internationally.

The UK five year national action plan sets out challenging five year ambitions.

■ NHS England: Expenditure

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading NHS Commissioning Board (NHS England) net expenditure.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading NHS Providers net expenditure.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading DHSC Programme and Admin expenditure.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading Local Authorities (Public Health).

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading Public Health England (Executive Agency).

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading Health Education England net.

Jonathan Ashworth: [257116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading Special Health Authorities expenditure.

Jonathan Ashworth: [257117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading Non Departmental Public Bodies net expenditure.

Jonathan Ashworth: [257118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading Arm's Length and Other Bodies (Net).

Jonathan Ashworth: [257119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Spending in Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL) on page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading NHS Commissioning Board (NHS England) financed from NI Conts.

Stephen Hammond:

The figures contained within page 129 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20 show details of the planned resource and capital budgets for each sector of the Department, available at the time of production.

Details of each departmental body's spending plans will be published in their individual business plan.

The Department prepares a Memorandum which is published by the Health and Social Care Committee. This provides further information on the Main Estimates publication. The Memorandum is prepared in accordance with the guidance issued by Parliamentary Scrutiny Unit and can be found at:

<https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/scrutinyunit/reports-and-publications/main-estimates-2019-20/>

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading A: NHS Commissioning Board (known as NHS England).

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading F: Health Education England.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading H: Care Quality Commission.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading H: Health Research Authority.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading H: Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading H: Human Tissue Authority.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[257126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading H: Monitor (known as NHS Improvement).

Jonathan Ashworth: [257127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading H: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

Jonathan Ashworth: [257129]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the table headed Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) expenditure on page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20: Main Supply Estimates, published in May 2019, if he will publish a breakdown of spending under the heading H: NHS Digital (The Health and Social Care Information Centre).

Stephen Hammond:

The figures contained within page 138 of the Central Government Supply Estimates 2019-20 show details of the planned resource, capital and cash budget for each arm's-length body within the Department, available at the time of production.

Details of each departmental body's spending plans will be published in their individual business plan.

The Department prepares a Memorandum which is published by the Health and Social Care Committee. This provides further information on the Main Estimates publication. The Memorandum is prepared in accordance with the guidance issued by Parliamentary Scrutiny Unit and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/scrutinyunit/reports-and-publications/main-estimates-2019-20/>

■ **NHS: BioMarin****Richard Graham:** [256971]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the progress of talks on procuring medicines between the NHS and Bio Marin.

Seema Kennedy:

We have made no such assessment. Discussions about commercial agreements for medicines are rightly held between NHS England as an independent body and the manufacturer concerned. The Department plays no role in such discussions.

■ **NHS: Public Appointments****Stephen McPartland:** [256286]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff appointments are awaiting ministerial sign-off.

Stephen Hammond:

Ministers do not sign-off National Health Service staff appointments. These are managed locally.

■ **Nusinersen****Rosie Cooper:**[\[256254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has held with (a) NICE, (b) NHS England and (c) Biogen on a Managed Access Agreement for SMA treatment Spinraza.

Rosie Cooper:[\[256255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when NICE will publish the outcome of the NICE Evaluation Committee meeting held on 6 March 2019.

Seema Kennedy:

Discussions about managed access agreements for technologies undergoing assessment by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) are rightly held between NHS England as an independent body and the manufacturer concerned. Departmental officials play no role in such discussions, but are in regular contact with NICE and NHS England colleagues about a range of issues, including progress in discussions about a potential managed access agreement for Spinraza (nusinersen) for the treatment of spinal muscular atrophy. Ministers have also held meetings with Biogen, NICE and NHS England on a number of occasions, at which the availability of Spinraza was discussed.

NHS England and NICE have made stakeholders and the public aware of the outcome of its appraisal committee meeting of 8 May and NICE is now able to recommend the use of Spinraza for NHS patients in England, subject to a managed access agreement agreed between NHS England and Biogen which makes Spinraza available to children with the most severe form of spinal muscular atrophy available with immediate effect. NICE's Appraisal Committee's considerations and recommendations will be contained in the final appraisal document which will be published in due course, with final guidance expected in June 2019.

■ **Orkambi and Symkevi****Frank Field:**[\[256233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timetable is for the conclusion of negotiations between NHS England, NICE and Vertex on access to (a) Orkambi and (b) Symkevi for people with cystic fibrosis.

Seema Kennedy:

NHS England provided an update to the Health and Social Care Committee (HSCC) of the House of Commons on 23 May 2019, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Health/Correspondence/2017-19/19-05-23-NHS-England-update-availability-of-Orkambi-on-the-NHS.pdf>

This update informed the HSCC that a revised and improved offer had been made to Vertex Pharmaceuticals. Discussions between Vertex, NHS England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) are ongoing.

The Government fully supports NICE and NHS England in seeking to ensure access for patients to effective and innovative medicines at a price that represents value to the National Health Service, and expects companies to engage realistically with NHS England and NICE regarding pricing issues. Where companies engage positively and show appropriate flexibility, it is possible to find a way to enable access to important treatments in a way that is also cost effective for the NHS.

■ Prescriptions: Fees and Charges

Toby Perkins:

[\[256296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will undertake a review of the list of medical conditions for which patients are exempt from prescription charges to provide a list that is reflective of current health conditions.

Seema Kennedy:

The Department has no plans to review the current system of medical exemptions from prescription charges. Extensive arrangements are already in place to help people access National Health Service prescriptions. These include a broad range of NHS prescription charge exemptions.

To support those with the greatest need who do not qualify for an exemption, the cost of prescription pre-payment certificates has been frozen for another year. A holder of a 12-month certificate can get all the prescriptions they need for just £2 per week.

■ Suicide: Young People

Jim Shannon:

[\[256417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of teenage suicides.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

Although relatively rare, the number of suicides amongst children and young people remains a concern. The National Suicide Prevention Strategy highlights children and young people as a group requiring tailored approaches to mental health to reduce their risk of suicide. We published the first Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan in January this year which sets out an ambitious programme for suicide prevention across national and local government. This workplan highlights steps we are taking across Government to reduce suicides in children and young people. The workplan is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/772210/national-suicide-prevention-strategy-workplan.pdf

■ **Vegetables: Children**

Jim Shannon:

[256416]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage children to eat green vegetables.

Seema Kennedy:

The Government recommends that children over the age of five years eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day as part of a healthy balanced diet. This advice is reflected in the United Kingdom's national food model, the Eatwell Guide at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

Start4Life and Change4Life, Public Health England's social marketing programmes, promote consumption of vegetables, including green vegetables, as part of 5 A Day fruit and vegetable messaging through: the Food Scanner app, Change4Life and Start4Life websites, the fruit and vegetables boost email programme, regular update emails to the Change4Life database of 340,000 families and a public information radio advert.

The school food standards for England state that one or more portions of vegetables or salad must be served every day. The Government's School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme aims to ensure all children in Key Stage 1 in England receive a piece of fruit or vegetables every day.

■ **Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access**

Chris Green:

[257056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the review of the methods for the NICE Technology Appraisal Programme referred to in the 2019 voluntary scheme for branded medicines pricing and access will include support for earlier patient access to innovative medicines.

Seema Kennedy:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is in the process of scoping the review of the methods for technology appraisal and highly specialised technologies evaluations. Scoping will involve patient organisations and other relevant stakeholders, including industry. The Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access sets out the Department's expectation that that any future changes to NICE methods and processes would support faster adoption of the most clinically and cost effective medicines. Additional detail and more information will be made available on the NICE website in due course.

The 2019 Voluntary Scheme also states that NICE will adopt the principle of appraisal timelines for non-oncology treatments matching the faster timescales for

oncology treatments, subject to the evidence base for the product being sufficiently developed to enable a NICE appraisal with the same level of rigour and certainty as would be expected currently.

HOME OFFICE

■ Counter-terrorism: Radicalism

Caroline Flint:

[\[256228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the review of the Prevent Strategy addresses the growing threat of far-right extremism.

Mr Ben Wallace:

Prevent aims to stop vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism and does not target a specific faith or ethnic group it deals with all forms of terrorism. Almost half of those people who receive Channel support are initially referred for concerns related to right-wing extremism. The independent review of the Prevent programme, which was announced on 22 January 2019, will therefore also deal with all forms of terrorism.

Caroline Flint:

[\[256231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to expand mentoring services and support individuals vulnerable to recruitment by far-right organisations.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The Prevent programme is fundamentally about safeguarding and supporting vulnerable individuals to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent addresses all forms of terrorism, including right wing terrorism.

Since 2012, over 1,300 people have been supported through the voluntary, confidential Channel programme. In 2017/18, almost half of those people who received Channel support were initially referred for concerns related to right-wing extremism. The majority of the individuals who choose to participate in Channel leave with no further terrorism-related concerns. The Channel programme continues to expand its cohort of right wing specialist intervention providers that provide bespoke intervention sessions with individuals that have been identified as being vulnerable to being radicalised by far-right organisations and their narratives.

■ Deportation: Females

Jess Phillips:

[\[257036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women removed from the UK were identified by immigration enforcement as a result of reporting a crime to the police in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Jess Phillips: [257037]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women detained for immigration purposes were identified by immigration enforcement as a result of reporting a crime to the police in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Jess Phillips: [257038]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women removed from the UK were identified by immigration enforcement as a result of reporting a crime to the police in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Caroline Nokes:

Whilst the Home Office holds data on the number of individuals referred to Immigration Enforcement by the Police, it does not set out detail of the referral in a reportable manner or how such individuals came to the attention of the Police in the first instance. We are therefore unable to say how many individuals have been referred to Immigration Enforcement as a result of reporting a crime to the Police.

■ **Deportation: India**

Jess Phillips: [257039]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women removed to India disclosed experience of domestic abuse in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Jess Phillips: [257040]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women removed to Pakistan disclosed experience of domestic abuse in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Jess Phillips: [257041]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women removed to Bangladesh disclosed experience of domestic abuse in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Jess Phillips: [257042]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women removed to Brazil disclosed experience of domestic abuse in (a) 2016 (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Jess Phillips: [257043]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women removed to Colombia disclosed experience of domestic abuse in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Caroline Nokes:

The information requested is not held centrally by the Home Office.

The number of enforced returns from the UK by year and country of nationality is published in table rt_02 (returns data tables, volume 1) in 'Immigration Statistics, year ending December 2018', available from the GOV.uk website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2018/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned>

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Military Decorations**Karen Lee:** [\[257100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence on awarding the Long Service and Good Conduct medal to firefighters working for the Ministry of Defence who are contracted to an external organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

No discussions on this specific issue have taken place.

■ Immigrants: Detainees**Jess Phillips:** [\[257035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women detained for immigration purposes disclosed experience of domestic abuse in (a) 2016, (b) 2017 and (c) 2018.

Caroline Nokes:

The Home Office is unable to report on how many women detained for immigration purposes disclosed experience of domestic abuse, as such detail is recorded on individual Home Office files and to obtain this information would require a manual trawl and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Immigration: Afghanistan**Emma Hardy:** [\[257071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress he has made on amending his Department's country guidance on Afghanistan since 9 January 2019.

Caroline Nokes:

Country policy and information notes are published on the gov.uk website. They are kept under constant review and updated periodically. The updated information note on Afghanistan was published on 22 May 2019.

■ Immigration: Applications**Stephen Morgan:** [\[257070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who secured indefinite leave to remain in the last 12 months (a) obtained legal advice and (b) did not obtain legal advice on their applications.

Caroline Nokes:

Information on the number of applicants who were granted with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) who obtained legal advice as part of their application is not collated centrally as part of the production of the quarterly Immigration Statistics.

The published statistics on leave to remain applications that have been processed within service standard can be found in the migration transparency data release

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/in-country-migration-data-february-2019>

at: InC_02: Percentage of In-Country visa applications, for each Route, processed within Service Standards

It is open to applicants to obtain legal representation from a qualified UK immigration adviser. In the UK, the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) regulates immigration advisers. The OISC website www.gov.uk/find-an-immigration-adviser provides a list of immigration advisers

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Theft

Dr David Drew: [\[256214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he plans to take tackle cargo theft from HGVs.

Dr David Drew: [\[256215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate he has made of the level of cargo theft from HGVs in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Government is committed to tackling all forms of acquisitive crime. The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service chaired the first meeting of a new Taskforce on 15 January 2019 which brings together the police, industry and others to look at what more can be done to tackle vehicle theft.

■ Migration Advisory Committee: Public Appointments

George Eustice: [\[256976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 May 2019 to Question 250476, whether the Home Office requests (a) a curriculum vitae, (b) information on previous experience and (c) information on previous employment as part of the recruitment process for appointments to the Migration Advisory Committee.

George Eustice: [\[256977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 14 May 2019 to Question 250476, whether the two candidates who declared that their principal employment was in the private sector but were not appointed were considered appointable by (a) advisory appointments panel and (b) the Minister.

Caroline Nokes:

Any appointment to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) is made in line with the Cabinet Office Governance Code on Public Appointments:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578498/governance_code_on_public_appointments_16_12_2016.pdf

The most recent MAC appointments were made in 2017. The criteria for those appointments and the information to be submitted by candidates were set out in the

advertisement on the HM Government Public Appointments website:

<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/migration-advisory-committee-member-2/>.

Under the Code, Ministers decide which applicants should be interviewed by an independent Advisory Assessment Panel. The Panel reports its assessment to Ministers, including its views on which candidates are appointable. Ministers consider the advice of the panel, but are not bound by its views. Ministers determine merit and make the final appointment decision.

In the 2017 MAC recruitment round, the two candidates not appointed who declared their principal employment was in the private sector, were not considered as appointable by the panel. Ministers considered the report of the panel before deciding which candidates to appoint.

■ Motorcycles: Crime

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[257015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to tackle moped crime in Havering.

Mr Nick Hurd:

Crimes involving mopeds are clearly a concern. That is why we worked with the police, industry and other partners last autumn to develop a comprehensive action plan to tackle them.

Figures from the Metropolitan Police show that this, together with an adapted operational and tactical response by the police, has resulted in a 32% reduction in the theft of mopeds, motorbikes and scooters in the year to March 2019 and a 52% reduction in these items being used in crime for the same period.

■ Passports: Applications

Imran Hussain:

[\[257050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how HM Passport Office staff decide whether to apply additional checks on passport applications.

Caroline Nokes:

On 25 April 2013 the Secretary of State for the Home Department outlined the terms under which passports would be issued, withdrawn and refused by written ministerial statement. Each case is assessed against this and will be dependent upon a number of factors including the information in the application, previous applications, supporting documents or other information obtained as part of the assessment of the application.

■ Passports: Ethnic Groups**Imran Hussain:** [\[257051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 5 March 2019 to Question 225536, what the average length of time is for HM Passport Office to process passport applications from people from a BME background.

Caroline Nokes:

Her Majesty's Passport Office does not require data on ethnicity to be provided as part of the passport application process, and therefore no statistical information is held.

■ Visas: Mental Health**Chuka Umunna:** [\[256324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department takes to safeguard visa applicants from stress and other mental health problems which occur as a result of delayed decisions and other complications in the application process.

Caroline Nokes:

Comprehensive guidance is published on GOV.UK on the visa application process. This includes information regarding our Customer Service Standards (CSS) timescales for processing visa applications.

If an application is complex or delayed for any reason, Visas & Citizenship staff contact the applicant and inform them if it is anticipated that the CSS will not be met.

Applicants can contact V&C should the need arise. Contact details are published on the GOV.UK website here: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk>

If V&C are made aware of any compelling or compassionate circumstances, consideration will be given to expediting assessment of the application, where appropriate and possible.

■ West Midlands Police: Finance**Shabana Mahmood:** [\[256279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans he has to increase funding for West Midlands Police to tackle violent crime.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Government is determined to do everything it can to tackle knife crime and break the deadly cycle of violence that devastates the lives of victims, families and communities.

We are taking action to address these increases on a number of fronts in support of our Serious Violence Strategy. This includes providing the police with the powers and resources they need to take effective action in all areas of the country. Through the Offensive Weapons Act we are tightening the law in relation to knives, including making it an offence to possess certain offensive weapons in private, and stopping

knives being sent to residential addresses after they are bought online unless the seller has arrangements with a delivery company to verify age. We are also introducing new Knife Crime Prevention Orders, requested by the police to help them to tackle young people who are on the cusp of serious violence, to help them make more positive lifestyle choices. We also continue to support the police national weeks of action against knife crime under Operation Sceptre.

The police funding settlement provides the police with the biggest increase in funding since 2010, and in addition we are providing the additional £100 million to tackle serious violence announced in the Spring Statement on 13 March, which includes £80m of new funding from the Treasury. £63.4 million of this funding has already been allocated to 18 police forces most affected by serious violence to pay for surge operational activity, including increased patrols, and £1.6 million to help improve the quality of data on serious violence, particularly knife crime, to support planning and operations. West Midlands has been allocated £7.62m from this fund. A full list of the forces and the funding they have received from the serious violence fund is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/police-granted-funding-boost-for-action-on-serious-violence>.

The remaining £35m from the Serious Violence Fund will be invested in Violence Reduction Units, which will support the local response in a number of areas worst affected by serious violence. VRUs will bring together a range of agencies including health, education, social services and others, to develop a multi-agency approach to preventing serious violence altogether. We are working closely with local partners to develop proposals for Violence Reduction Units, and will be seeking to make announcements on this funding in early June.

We are also raising awareness among young people of the dangers of carrying a knife through our national media campaign - #knifefree – and supporting early intervention through the £22 million Early Intervention Youth Fund, which is already supporting 29 local projects, including around £2m allocated to the Police and Crime Commissioner in the West Midlands to target young people identified as being most at risk, particularly those at risk of exclusion from school, and those already engaged in crime and violence.

We have also introduced the £200 million Youth Endowment Fund, which will be delivered over the next 10 years to support interventions with children and young people at risk of involvement in crime and violence, focusing on those most at risk. The charity Impetus, working in partnership with the Early Intervention Foundation and Social Investment Business, is now operating the Fund.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**Local Government Finance: Birmingham****Shabana Mahmood:**[\[256276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing funding to Birmingham City Council in advance of the spending review.

Rishi Sunak:

The funding available for local authorities is determined in periodic Spending Reviews, and allocated in the main as part of the annual local government finance process. As the Chancellor announced at Spring Statement, if a deal with the EU is agreed in the coming weeks, the 2019 Spending Review will be launched before summer recess and conclude alongside an Autumn Budget. This will provide an opportunity to consider local government spending in the round and preparations are well underway.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Brexit**Mr David Lammy:**[\[256208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Rishi Sunak:

Departments continually review workforce plans, reprioritise and assess changing needs, which includes identification and cessation of non-priority work where appropriate. We have accelerated our plans, and at the same time, the Civil Service as a whole is working to ensure that EU Exit Implementation is carried out to high quality without impacting public service delivery across the whole of government.

A total of 122 MHCLG staff were redeployed from other work on to EU Exit work between December 2018 and April 2019, the majority of whom were redeployed for a short period between 8 and 11 April in anticipation of a possible exit on 12 April.

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service**Sir Edward Leigh:**[\[256923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 8 May 2019 to Question 248581 on the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, for what reason that Answer did not provide the dates on which the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation had discussions with representatives of the (a) Royal Parks, (b) Department of Culture, Media and Sport and (c) Westminster City Council.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

No central log exists of engagements with representatives of The Royal Parks, Department of Culture, Media and Sport and Westminster City Council.

Sir Edward Leigh:[\[256924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 8 May 2019 to Question 248582 on the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, in what form the Government received the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation's recommendation of 13 January 2016 that the Holocaust Memorial and the Holocaust Learning Centre should be located in Victoria Tower Gardens; and if he will place a copy of that recommendation in the Library.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The decision to recommend Victoria Tower Gardens was taken at a Holocaust Foundation Board meeting on 13 January. The Prime Minister accepted that recommendation and announced Victoria Tower Gardens as the chosen location on 27 January 2016. The minutes of the Board meetings are the property of the Foundation which is an independent advisory body.

Sir Edward Leigh:[\[256925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 16 October 2017 to Question 106178 on the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, on what date in autumn 2015 the possibility of locating the Holocaust Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens was first raised officially with the Government by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

Discussions with officials about possible sites took place during the autumn of 2015. The exact date when Victoria Tower Gardens was first discussed is not recorded.

Sir Edward Leigh:[\[256926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answers of 16 October 2017 to Question 106178 and 14 March 2019 to Question 229625 on the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, whether Victoria Tower Gardens was identified by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation as one of the almost 50 sites as a possible location for the Holocaust Memorial between 7 September 2015 and 30 October 2015.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The answer to Question UIN 229625 makes clear that Victoria Tower Gardens was suggested as a possible site after 30 October 2015, once other sites had been dismissed as not meeting the criteria.

Sir Edward Leigh:[\[256928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much is being paid from the public purse to Big Ideas for providing public relations and

publicity services for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; which budget that funding is allocated from; and what the scope is of the services Big Ideas is so providing.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

Big Ideas are supporting public engagement, drawing especially on their experience in reaching groups whose voice is often not heard by decision-makers. A budget of £118,000 has been allocated.

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[256929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 14 March 2019 to Question 229625 on the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, which of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation's criteria of September 2015 for the location of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre the proposed location at the Imperial War Museum was deemed not to meet.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The UKHMF believed that the location close to Parliament of the Memorial and Learning Centre was an important statement about the importance of democracy as a protector against tyrants. Most of the important decisions relating to Britain's reaction to the Holocaust were taken near the site. Consequently no other site came close to Victoria Tower Gardens in symbolism or significance. The Government agreed with the recommendation that Victoria Tower Gardens was the most fitting location.

■ **Religious Freedom**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[257016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with Islamic community leaders on freedom of religion and belief; and what steps he is taking to protect individuals accused of apostasy.

Rishi Sunak:

MHCLG regularly discusses matters concerning Freedom of Religion and Belief with all our faith community partners

The right to change religion, as set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, is absolute and is not subject to any limitations.

The UK has some of the strongest hate crime legislation in the world, which includes protecting people who have been targeted as a result of leaving a faith.

■ **United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation**

Sir Edward Leigh:

[\[256927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on what dates from (a) 26 October 2015 to (b) 13 January 2016 the Prime Minister had meetings with (i) the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation and (ii) members of that Foundation; and which members attended each of those meetings.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The Prime Minister had no meetings with the Holocaust Memorial Foundation in that period but did meet with members of the Holocaust Commission in January 2016 for a one year on progress report.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**■ Department for International Development: Brexit****Mr David Lammy:**[\[256201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Harriett Baldwin:

134 DFID staff have been temporarily seconded from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU. DFID is working closely with other government departments to facilitate the return of staff deployed to other government departments, following the extension of Article 50. As of 21 May 2019, 100 of these staff have returned.

To release staff for deployment, DFID undertook a detailed prioritisation exercise to assess the internal resource required to maintain essential delivery. For DFID, this meant meeting the legal commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI (Gross National Income) on international development in an effective and value for money way and the ability to respond to humanitarian emergencies. All other DFID business is highly important however officials made decisions to slow or pause delivery in order to support the EU exit related resource requirements of other government departments.

■ Females: Equality**Mr Ivan Lewis:**[\[256930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps his Department is taking to improve women's participation in leadership positions.

Harriett Baldwin:

Getting more women into power gives voice to a marginalised section of society, creates female role models and leads to legislative change and policies that tackle gender inequalities and discrimination. Peace settlements are 35% more likely to endure for more than 15 years if women have been involved in negotiations.

Increasing women's political participation and leadership is a foundational pillar of DFID's Strategic Vision for Gender Equality, launched in March 2018, and is a top priority in the current cross-Government National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Just 24% of national parliamentarians around the world are women. DFID programmes are supporting women to participate in politics.

In Nigeria, DFID's 'Women in Politics' programme supports women elected to the National Assembly, including establishing the first women's caucus as a forum for advocacy, policy development and training. In Afghanistan, DFID support has helped women provincial councillors who often face intimidation and violence in their work.

Women's voice and leadership can make a real difference on issues that matter to them.

DFID has supported Amplify Change to fund women-led organisations that help women to claim their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). Grantees have driven change to policies and laws, such as the Registration of Marriage regulation in Afghanistan; improved access to SRHR services, information and products, such as providing 7000 girls in Tanzania with menstrual products; and transformed social norms including significant contribution to the eradication of child marriage in Cote d'Ivoire.

Mr Ivan Lewis:

[\[256931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans he has to increase the proportion of UK aid which has gender equality as a primary or secondary objective as measured by the OECD's gender marker.

Harriett Baldwin:

The UK is recognised as an international leader for our work to promote gender equality. DFID's Strategic Vision commits us to build on our strong foundations of working to end violence against women and girls, support universal sexual and reproductive health and rights, improve girls' education, and enable women's economic and political empowerment. We are also stepping up our support of girls and women in conflict and crises, increasing our focus on adolescent girls, and harnessing the potential of technological innovation for gender equality. Our impact on gender equality is measured by our influence as well as our level of spending.

■ Zimbabwe: Water

James Duddridge:

[\[256986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of clean water provision in Harare.

Harriett Baldwin:

Out of a daily demand of 800 mega litres, the City of Harare is only able to provide 500 mega litres. Through a multi-donor trust fund called ZIMFUND, DFID has, since 2010, supported the rehabilitation of water supply infrastructure to improve waste water treatment capacity and water supply to some areas. Through UNICEF we are supporting the City of Harare with repairing water infrastructures and boreholes in cholera prone areas.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Free Trade: Dominican Republic**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[257026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps he has taken to promote bilateral free trade with Dominican Republic after the UK leaves the EU.

Graham Stuart:

On 4 April, the UK signed an Economic Partnership Agreement with CARIFORUM States, including the Dominican Republic. This will provide continuity for businesses, exporters and consumers as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

The UK is currently designing a package of funding to help businesses in the Caribbean to take full advantage of the market access granted by the EPA.

■ Free Trade: Ethiopia

Andrew Rosindell: [\[257027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps he has taken to promote bilateral free trade with Ethiopian after the UK leaves the EU.

Graham Stuart:

As the Prime Minister set out during her visit to Africa last Summer the Government is committed to advancing our trade relationship with Africa. My Hon. Friend for Stafford, appointed as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Ethiopia in 2016, has taken steps to develop a strong bilateral trading relationship. DIT has set up the Africa Trade Services Unit to act as the single point of contact for UK companies exporting to Africa. The Unit responds to all Africa trade enquiries, including those related to Ethiopia to improve companies' trading capabilities and promote trade.

The Taxation (Cross-Border Trade) Act 2018 enables the UK to put in place a trade preferences scheme for developing countries that maintains duty-free, quota-free access to Least Developed Countries, including Ethiopia.

■ Free Trade: Guyana

Andrew Rosindell: [\[257028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps he has taken to promote bilateral free trade with Guyana after the UK leaves the EU.

Graham Stuart:

On 22 March, the UK signed an Economic Partnership Agreement with CARIFORUM States, including Guyana. This will provide continuity for businesses, exporters and consumers as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

The UK is currently designing a package of funding to help businesses in the Caribbean to take full advantage of the market access granted by the EPA.

■ Poultry Meat: USA

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[256265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment he has made of the compatibility with the rules of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of a restriction in a trade agreement with the US on the import into the UK of poultry washed with (i) chlorine and (ii) other disinfectants.

George Hollingbery:

Where a measure conforms with the provisions of the Agreement to the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) it is presumed to also conform with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade under Article 2.4 of the SPS Agreement.

The existing food safety provisions regarding chlorine and other pathogen reduction treatments for poultry will be transferred into UK law by the European Union (Withdrawal) Act.

JUSTICE

■ Birmingham Prison: G4S

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[256271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what changes he has implemented at HMP Birmingham following the cancellation of the G4S contract at that site.

Robert Buckland:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) exercised its right under the contract with G4S to 'step-in' in August 2018 and took over the running of HMP Birmingham. The 'step-in' meant that HMPPS could provide additional resources and support to directly address the areas of failure identified. The additional cost of the 'step-in' action, including additional HMPPS staff has been recovered from G4S in accordance with the terms of the contract.

There has been good progress since the 'step-in' however, the department and G4S have mutually agreed to formally return the prison to HMPPS in July 2019. G4S staff at Birmingham will transfer to HMPPS contracts on 1 July and they are being supported through the transition.

This change will continue to drive the long-term improvements that are required at the prison.

We have made no changes since G4S remain contractually responsible for the prison until 1st of July 2019.

■ Cremation Act 1902

Shabana Mahmood: [\[256272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to make an assessment of the effectiveness of the provisions in the Cremation Act 1902; and if he will make a statement.

Shabana Mahmood: [\[256273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the merits of the Cremation Act (1902).

Shabana Mahmood: [\[256274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of whether crematoriums are being constructed (a) less than two hundred yards from a dwelling house, (b) within fifty yards of a public highway and (c) in the consecrated part of a local authority burial ground.

Shabana Mahmood: [\[256275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many times Section 5 of the Cremation Act (1902) has been invoked to reject a planning application in each of the last 10 years.

Paul Maynard:

The Ministry of Justice is defending an application for permission in judicial review by the owners of a proposed crematorium, challenging our decision not to appoint a medical referee to the crematorium while it remains in breach of the provisions of section 5 of the Cremation Act 1902. It would be inappropriate for Ministers to comment on issues relating to this matter during the course of litigation.

■ Insurance Companies: Civil Proceedings

Joseph Johnson: [\[256671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that greater numbers of insurance cases are resolved before they reach court proceedings.

Paul Maynard:

The vast majority of claims against insurers in the civil justice system settle before court proceedings stage, as reflected in the statistics published by the Compensation Recovery Unit.

Settlements are a matter for the parties to an individual dispute to reach agreement on, but the Government seeks to promote pre-court settlement – for example by the development of pre-action protocols.

In terms of road traffic accident related personal injury claims under £5,000, the Government is introducing a new IT Platform, in April 2020, which will enable such claimants to communicate effectively with the at-fault insurer to efficiently progress and settle their claim during the pre-action stage without the need for court proceedings.

■ Ministry of Justice: Brexit

Mr David Lammy:

[\[256195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Edward Argar:

Departments continually review workforce plans, reprioritise and assess changing needs, which includes identification and cessation of non-priority work where appropriate. We have accelerated our plans, and at the same time, the Civil Service as a whole is working to ensure that EU Exit Implementation is carried out to high quality without impacting public service delivery across the whole of government.

39 Ministry of Justice staff were seconded to work in other departments from December 2018 as part of the no-deal preparations co-ordinated by Cabinet Office. 34 staff have since returned, with extensions agreed for the remaining 5 staff.

Between January and April 2019, 62 Ministry of Justice staff volunteered to work in the MoJ Departmental Operations Centre (DOC) to assist with no deal preparations. These volunteers worked a small number of shifts in the DOC and were chosen from different teams across the department to minimise any disruption to business as usual work.

■ Nottingham Prison: Prisoners' Release

Ben Bradley:

[\[256342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners were released from HMP Nottingham into homelessness in each month since June 2017.

Robert Buckland:

Data from October 2017 until March 2018, based on published statistics, are provided on the attached table. Please note that data for April 2018 onwards is due for publication in July.

Figures for January to September 2017 are not included as this would require assuring unpublished statistics which could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

It is vital that everyone leaving prison has somewhere safe, stable and secure to live. Having somewhere stable to live acts as a platform for ex-offenders to be able to access the services and support needed to turn their back on crime for good.

Overcoming the many barriers offenders face to securing suitable accommodation is something that Ministry of Justice cannot do in isolation.

The Secretary of State for Justice and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government are both members of the cross-Government Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Taskforce and the Reducing Reoffending Board. Homelessness of ex-offenders is a key issue that is discussed at these meetings.

We are investing up to £6.4m in a joint pilot scheme to support individuals released from three prisons, namely Bristol, Leeds and Pentonville. We have now launched our Invitation to Tender, to secure suppliers in the three pilot areas. This is a concrete step in our commitment to tackling rough sleeping.

Attachments:

1. Table for PQ 256342 [Table for PQ 256342.xlsx]

■ **Personal Injury: Compensation**

Joseph Johnson:

[\[255672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to establish an ombudsman with legal powers to enforce decisions on third party personal injury claims before court proceedings are initiated.

Paul Maynard:

The Government has no plans to bring forward such proposals.

It is for parties to personal injury claims to resolve their differences in the first instance, making use of pre-action protocols which put in place procedures designed to encourage earlier resolution of disputes.

Currently there is a portal for lower value road traffic accident (RTA), public liability and employer liability claims which assists in achieving settlement of disputes. In addition, the Government is introducing a new IT Platform, in April 2020, which will enable RTA claimants to communicate effectively with the at-fault insurer to progress and settle their claim during the pre-action stage.

Where disputes cannot be resolved by these means, the claimant has the option to pursue court proceedings.

■ **Prison Service: Corruption**

Imran Hussain:

[\[257096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department's budget has adequate resources to fund the prison anti-corruption taskforce without decreasing spending on other departmental responsibilities.

Robert Buckland:

The Counter Corruption Unit was launched in April this year. It monitors prison and probation services across England and Wales, with 29 specialist staff split into one national and five regional teams. The new unit will help protect prison and probation staff raising awareness amongst staff of the threat from corruption, encouraging staff to report any suspicions of wrongdoing and working closely with the police to pursue cases of suspected corruption. Funding for the unit has been met in full within existing budgets and without a decrease in spend on other areas of prison and probation services.

■ Prisoners: Crimes of Violence

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[256367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been (a) charged and (b) convicted of an offence under Section 24 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 for throwing excreta at prison staff in each of the last 10 years.

Robert Buckland:

In 2017 the Crown Prosecution Service issued guidance that potting offences (throwing of excreta) to the face or head should be prosecuted under Section 24 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.

It is not possible to identify court proceedings made for the specific offence of throwing excreta at prison staff from within the broader offence of "Cause administer poison/noxious things with intent to injure/aggrieve/annoy" (nor is it possible to distinguish who was the victim of the offence). Detailed information may be held on court record but to be able to identify these cases we would have to access individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

■ Prisoners: Death

Imran Hussain: [\[257093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department imposes penalties on private prison operators following deaths in prison.

Imran Hussain: [\[257094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what oversight process is in place for private prison operators following deaths in prison.

Robert Buckland:

HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) does not impose penalties for deaths in custody. We do, however, monitor and assure the use of the Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) case management procedures for prisoners identified as being at risk of self-harm or suicide.

All prisons are required to comply with chapter 12 of PSI 64/2011, which sets out the required action following a death in custody. All such deaths are independently investigated by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) and subject to an inquest. All prisons, including those that are privately managed, are required to respond to PPO recommendations and any Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) reports issued by Coroners.

Privately managed prison performance is closely monitored by robust contract management processes. Each privately managed prison has an on-site controller, employed by HMPPS. Controllers, together with regional contract managers review performance against indicators set out in the contract. Any improvement action identified may include a requirement for urgent improvement and/or financial deductions. The controller will monitor the provider's actions when there is a death in custody and the provider's compliance with any actions set out in responses to PPO

reports and/or PFD reports from Coroners. In the event there were serious failings highlighted at the prison, the Authority would look to manage the Contractor's poor performance through utilising the appropriate contractual levers.

■ Prisoners: Mental Illness

Imran Hussain:

[\[257097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department centrally collects figures on how many prisoners are prescribed medication for mental health issues.

Robert Buckland:

The Ministry of Justice does not hold information on how many prisoners are prescribed medication for mental health issues.

NHS England has statutory and financial responsibility for providing health care in English prisons, including prescribing medication.

■ Prisoners: Radicalism

Caroline Flint:

[\[256230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what interventions his Department is making to tackle the ideologies of far-right offenders within the prison system.

Robert Buckland:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) works closely with a range of partners to tackle extremism of all ideologies in prisons, including ideologies held by far-right offenders. An HMPPS and Home Office Joint Extremism Unit (JEXU) was established in April 2017 to be the strategic centre for all counter terrorism work in prison and probation and have oversight of delivery across the end-to-end offender management process.

Prisoners identified as being of extremist concern, or who have shown signs of being vulnerable to extremism, are managed actively as part of a comprehensive case management process. Over 22,000 prison staff have received specialist extremism awareness training, to enable them to identify, report and challenge extremist views.

HMPPS uses a wide range of interventions as part of its management of extremist offenders in prison. These range from assessment tools, such as the Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ and Extremism Risk Screening, to rehabilitative measures such as the Healthy Identity Intervention, Developing Dialogues, and the Desistance and Disengagement Programme. Interventions play an important role in helping to encourage and facilitate desistance and disengagement from extremism, support reintegration into society, and reduce the risk of further offending. All of these interventions are available to far-right offenders, if required.

■ Prisons: Private Sector

Imran Hussain:

[\[257095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the expiry date is of the contract for each private sector prison.

Robert Buckland:

The expiry date for each private prison is listed in the table below.

PRISON	END DATE
HMP Thameside	31/12/2036
HMP Bronzefield	16/06/2029
HMP Altcourse	31/05/2023
HMP Ashfield	31/10/2024
HMP Forest Bank	19/01/2025
HMP Peterborough	13/02/2028
HMP Dovegate	08/07/2026
HMP Parc	14/12/2022
HMP Rye Hill	20/01/2026
HMP Lowdham Grange	15/02/2023
HMP Birmingham	1/07/2019
HMP Oakwood	23/04/2027
HMP/YOI Doncaster	30/09/2026
HMP Northumberland.	01/12/2028

■ Prisons: Radicalism

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[257013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to tackle the spread of far-right extremism in prisons.

Robert Buckland:

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) works closely with a range of partners to tackle extremism of all ideologies in prisons, including ideologies held by far-right offenders. An HMPPS and Home Office Joint Extremism Unit (JEXU) was established in April 2017 to be the strategic centre for all counter terrorism work in

prison and probation and have oversight of delivery across the end-to-end offender management process.

The number of far-right offenders in prison and being managed by probation has grown in recent years. Our dedicated, specialist teams manage the risks presented by all terrorists and extremists, including Right Wing Terrorists and far-right offenders, in prison and the community. We are working across Government to review and develop our capability to manage this cohort and safeguard the wider offender population.

Prisoners identified as being of extremist concern, or who have shown signs of being vulnerable to extremism, are managed actively as part of a comprehensive case management process. Over 22,000 prison staff have received specialist extremism awareness training, to enable them to identify, report and challenge extremist views.

HMPPS uses a wide range of interventions as part of its management of extremist offenders in prison. These range from assessment tools, such as the Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ and Extremism Risk Screening, to rehabilitative measures such as the Healthy Identity Intervention, Developing Dialogues, and the Desistance and Disengagement Programme. Interventions play an important role in helping to encourage and facilitate desistance and disengagement from extremism, support reintegration into society, and reduce the risk of further offending. All of these interventions are available to far-right offenders, if required.

■ Social Services: Prosecutions

Mrs Madeleine Moon:

[\[256268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions of social care workers there have been for abusing older adults in care in each of the last five years.

Robert Buckland:

It is not possible to identify the number of social care workers that were prosecuted for abusing older adults in care in each of the last 5 years from the broader offences:

- Care provider ill-treat / wilfully neglect an individual or breach duty of care
- Ill-treatment or neglect of a person lacking capacity by anyone responsible for that person's care

The offences do not specify whether or not the defendant was a social worker nor do they specify the age of the victim. Detailed information may be held on individual court records but to be able to identify these cases we would have to access these individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND**■ Construction: Scotland****Hugh Gaffney:**[\[256364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on employment levels in Scotland's construction sector.

David Mundell:

I have regular discussions with the Scottish Government on a range of issues on Scotland's economy, including those which span both devolved and reserved matters.

TRANSPORT**■ Blue Badge Scheme****Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[257058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February to Question 218834, what progress has been made in revising the statutory regulations on the Blue Badge scheme; and what the timetable is for publishing the associated guidance.

Andrew Jones:

On 30th April, the Department for Transport laid The Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 2019 No. 891). The changes being introduced under the expanded Blue Badge eligibility criteria for non-physical disabilities will come into force on 30th August 2019. The Department for Transport is currently finalising the guidance necessary for local authorities to assess the new types of applications, which it plans to publish shortly.

■ Department for Transport: Brexit**Mr David Lammy:**[\[256202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many officials in his Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of his Department.

Chris Grayling:

The Department has not historically collected information on the internal movement of staff to work on EU Exit and therefore does not hold this information centrally.

The Department continually reviews workforce plans, reprioritises and assesses changing needs, which includes identification and cessation of non-priority work where appropriate to ensure the effective delivery of both EU Exit work and wider organisational priorities.

■ Electric Vehicles: Fuel Cells**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[257018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles on UK roads.

Andrew Jones:

Hydrogen fuel cells in vehicles is an exciting technology with the potential to revolutionise transport. Though the number of hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles on UK roads is still in the early hundreds, we have seen some exciting developments with the technology.

The Mayor of London recently announced the first fleet of hydrogen double decker buses in the world and a number of companies are also developing hydrogen fuelled trains which may one day run up and down our network. We are committed to working with industry to identify how we can use hydrogen-powered vehicles to decarbonise our future transport system.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions**Caroline Lucas:** [\[256295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2018 to Question 125528, Motor Vehicles: Carbon Emissions, for what reasons different systems are in place for tackling smoky and excessive exhaust emissions from (a) lorries and buses and (b) private cars and motorcycles.

Andrew Jones:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) reporting system outlined in the answer of 5 February to Question 125528 applies to lorries and buses, because some of DVSA's powers and responsibilities are specific to lorries and buses. For example; the DVSA has powers in respect of the enforcement of commercial road transport offences but does not have the same enforcement powers in respect of private cars or motorcycles. In all cases it remains the user's responsibility to ensure the vehicle continues to meet these emissions standards at all times while in use.

■ Network Rail: Property**Andy McDonald:** [\[257103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the potential administrative costs that will be incurred by Network Rail in its ongoing relationship with the new owner of the railway arches property portfolio.

Andrew Jones:

The historic cost of securing access to property for inspection and maintenance work related to the operation of the railway has been around £1 million a year. These costs are expected to continue.

■ Newmarket Station

John Mann:

[\[256939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the horse racing industry on the expansion of Newmarket railway station.

Andrew Jones:

Discussions have taken place between DfT and Greater Anglia (GA) the local train operating company (TOC) about the rail capacity on race days. Currently 1, 2 and 3 car trains service the Ipswich to Cambridge route. GA will have new 4-carriage bi-mode trains on this route by the end of the year, which will provide even more flexibility and capacity for all passengers on this route including race days.

■ Roads: Deer

Jim Shannon:

[\[256419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent accidents on the road as a result of deer.

Andrew Jones:

Local authorities have the power to erect traffic warning signs in environments which could pose a road safety risk, including to warn of the presence of large wild animals such as deer. It is for local authorities to determine if a sign is required at individual locations.

■ Safety Belts

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[256936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to increase seat belt wearing; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Jones:

Since wearing seatbelts became mandatory in 1983, there has been a sharp fall in the total number of people killed while driving. Seat belts save lives and the laws we have in place requiring people to wear seat belts are there to save lives. We are grateful to PACTS for looking in considerable detail at what lies behind the disproportionately high number of people incurring fatal injuries while not wearing seat belts. We are currently considering their recommendations and the range of tools at our disposal to increase seatbelt wearing.

■ Shipping

Andy McDonald:

[\[256392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 15 May 2019 to Question 252654, if he will list all Port Connectivity Study case study projects that are being progressed through the (a) Road Investment Strategies 1 and 2, (b) Control Period 6, (c) the Major Roads Network and (d) other funding route processes; and what the stage of development is for each scheme.

Andrew Jones:

(a) The schemes listed below, mentioned in the “A Study of England’s Port Connectivity” report and “9 Regional case studies” report are being progressed through the current Road Investment Strategy:

SCHEME NAME	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
A1 North of Ellingham	Under construction
A19/A1058 Coast Road	Opened March 2019
A19 Testos	Under Construction
A19 Down Hill Lane Junction Improvement	In Development
A19 Norton to Wynyard	In development
M62 J20-25	In development
A1 Leeming Bar and Barton	Opened to traffic in March 2018
A63: Castle Street Hull	In development
A160/A180 Improvements to Immingham	Opened to Traffic in March 2017
A47 Wansford to Sutton	In Development
A47 North Tuddenham to Easton	In Development
A47 Blofield to North Burlingham	In Development
A47 Acle Straight	Completed
A14 Cambridge to Huntington	Under Construction
A12 Chelmsford to A120	In development
M25 Junction 30 (A13)	Opened for traffic December 2016
M2 Junction 5 (A249)	In development
A20 access at Dover	Completed
A27 Worthing and Lancing	In development
A31 widening at Ringwood	In development
M271/A35 Redbridge roundabout upgrade	In development
M27 Southampton Junctions	In development
M3 Junction 9 Improvements	In development
A34 Oxford Junctions	Options Development

SCHEME NAME	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
M49 Avonmouth junction	Under Construction
A30 Temple to Carblake	Opened for Traffic July 2017
A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross	In development
M6, M60 and M62 smart motorway	Opened for traffic July 2018
M6 Junctions 10a-13	Opened to traffic February 2016
M6 Junctions 16-19	Opened to traffic March 2019
M6 Junctions 21A-26	In Development
M60 Junctions 24-27 and Junction 1-4	In Development
M6 Junctions 2-4	Under Construction
M62 Junctions 10-12	Under Construction
M62 Junction 20-25	In Development
M6 Junction 22 Upgrade	Options Development
A5 Dodwells to Longshoot widening	In Development
A5036 Princess Way – Access to Port of Liverpool	In development
Lower Thames Crossing	In development

In addition, the following two schemes are being funded through Highway England's congestion relief fund:

- A63: Garrison Road
- A69 Junction improvements

The A120 improvement scheme has been developed by Essex County Council to be considered for potential inclusion in the second Road Investment Strategy.

The Government intends to announce its decisions on further enhancement schemes in the second Road Investment Strategy later this year.

1. The table below details schemes progressed through Control Period 6:

SCHEME	REGION	STATUS
Diversions access for Teesport	North East Ports	Teesport – Northallerton Gauge: in development

SCHEME	REGION	STATUS
Gauge clearance schemes to W12, connections to Immingham Port	Humber Ports	In delivery
A range of capacity and gauge options identified along the Felixstowe to West Midlands corridor	Haven Ports	Ely Area Capacity Scheme, Haughley Junction, Ely – Soham redoubling and Leicester area capacity are all in development
Felixstowe branch line	Haven Ports	In delivery
Thames Haven level crossing improvements	London and Medway Ports	Mucking level crossing: in delivery. Other interventions are in development
Improved connections to Southampton maritime terminal	Solent area Ports	In delivery
Gauge clearance to W10 Bristol/Birmingham	Bristol and south west ports	In development (to Bristol / Cardiff – not Birmingham)
Gauge clearance infill to W12	Bristol and South West Ports	Some sections completed in CP5 in conjunction with GWEP electrification works. Further locations in development in CP6.
Bootle branch line improvements	Mersey and North West Ports	In delivery

(c) No Major Road Network schemes are included in the Port Connectivity Study.

(d) The following schemes are being progressed or have been progressed through other funding route processes:

FUNDING ROUTE	PROJECT NAME	PORT	STATUS
Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund	Wirral Dock Bridges	Birkenhead	Completed June 2018
Large Local Majors	Lake Lothing Third Crossing	Lowestoft	DCO in preparation

FUNDING ROUTE	PROJECT NAME	PORT	STATUS
Large Local Majors	Great Yarmouth Third Crossing	Great Yarmouth	DCO in preparation
Local Growth Fund	Port of Workington Road Access	Workington	In Preparation
Local Growth Fund	A185/A194/A19 Traffic Movements (A194/A185 The Arches Junction)	Port of Tyne	Completed
Local Growth Fund	A19/A194/A1300 Lindisfarne Roundabout	Port of Tyne	Completed Summer 2017
Local Growth Fund	A19 to North Bank of Tyne Improvements	Port of Tyne	Expected to be in construction in 2020
Local Growth Fund	Rail Gauge Enhancements - Port of Immingham to ECML at Doncaster	Immingham	In progress, expected completion date of 2021
Local Growth Fund	South Bank Wharf roundabout and access improvements	Teesport	Business Case being prepared
Local Growth Fund	A565 North Liverpool Key Corridor	Liverpool	Start of Construction Spring 2017 and expected completion in 2019
Local Growth Fund	Port of Poole Infrastructure – Poole Bridge Approach Spans	Poole	Work completed and bridge reopened January 2018
Local Growth Fund (DfT 'tail' major scheme)	A180/A18 Link	Immingham	Completed June 2016
DfT 'tail' major scheme	Heysham-M6 Link Road	Heysham	Completed October 2016

FUNDING ROUTE	PROJECT NAME	PORT	STATUS
Local Growth Fund (DfT Portfolio Scheme)	Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor (Low Carbon Zone to City Centre to Port) – New Wear Bridge to City Centre	Sunderland	Construction due to begin spring 2019, Estimated completion 2021
Local Growth Fund (DfT Portfolio Scheme)	Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor - New Wear Crossing	Sunderland	Opened 28 August 2018
Regional Growth Fund	Western Gateway Infrastructure Scheme	Port Salford	Completed December 2017
Local Growth Fund (DfT portfolio scheme)	Newhaven Port Access Road, Parker Pen & East Side	Newhaven	Under construction
Local Growth Fund (DfT Portfolio Scheme)	Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor (Low Carbon Zone to City Centre to Port) – New Wear Bridge to City Centre		Construction due to begin spring 2019, estimated completion 2021
Local Growth Fund (DfT portfolio scheme)	Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor - New Wear Crossing	Sunderland	Opened 28 August 2018
Local Growth Fund (DfT portfolio scheme)	A13 Widening	London Gateway	Advance works commenced. Estimated completion Winter 2020/21.
Regional Growth Fund	Western Gateway Infrastructure Scheme	Port Salford	Completed December 2017

■ Transport: West Midlands

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[256278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to increase spending on transport infrastructure in the West Midlands.

Andrew Jones:

The Government is investing heavily in better transport infrastructure for the West Midlands.

We have committed around £115 million to two 'large local major' schemes, which are now under construction – the A4440 Worcester Southern Relief Road (Carrington Bridge) and the Birmingham Centenary Square tram extension - with more than £400m committed to a further nine road and public transport schemes in the West Midlands.

HS2 is already playing a huge part of the Midlands' success story, with work well under way at over 60 sites including major development at Curzon Street and Washwood Heath. It will put Birmingham at the heart of Britain's new high speed network, including two stations within the Birmingham area.

We have allocated £321.5m from the Transforming Cities Fund to West Midlands Combined Authority who are using it to build the Brierley Hill tram extension.

On the strategic road network, Highways England has just started construction on widening the A500 Etruria Valley, a £17.5m investment.

In Rail Control Period 5, we funded a number of schemes in the West Midlands, including the redevelopment of Birmingham New Street, upgrade and electrification of the Chase Line, and extension of the Cross City Line from Longbridge to Bromsgrove.

We also provided £5m to Midlands Connect to develop a strategic outline business case for the Midlands Rail Hub programme. We expect this to be submitted to the Department in June 2019.

In November 2018, the Infrastructure and Pipeline Authority published their Analysis of the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline. The regional analysis of the pipeline shows that over the period of 2018/19 - 2020/21, the West Midlands will receive £255 per person on average each year of planned central government transport investment, which is the 4th highest of the 9 regions and ahead of London.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Child Maintenance Service****Angela Crawley:****[257081]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much the Child Maintenance Service has spent on consolatory payments in each of the last three years.

Will Quince:

Child Maintenance Group (CMG) have only recorded Compensation Payment details for CMS separately since 2017/18, so we are unable to identify CMS only costs prior to that financial year.

For 2017/18 and 2018/19 the CMS figures are as follows:

	2017-18	2018-19
Consolatory Payments	72,099	79,556

■ **Children: Maintenance**

Angela Crawley: [\[257080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many consolatory payments have been made by the Child Maintenance Service in each of the last three years.

Will Quince:

Child Maintenance Group (CMG) have only recorded Compensation Payment details for CMS separately since 2017/18, so we are unable to identify CMS only costs prior to that financial year.

For 2017/18 and 2018/19 the CMS figures are as follows:

	2017-18	2018-19
Consolatory Payments	£72,099	£79,556

However the data for the volume of consolatory payments is not routinely recorded.

■ **Children: Maintenance: Motherwell and Wishaw**

Marion Fellows: [\[256408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) liability and (b) deduction from earnings orders have been issued in the Motherwell and Wishaw constituency in each year for which information is available.

Will Quince:

This question had been interpreted as relating to actions taken by the Child Maintenance Service.

The information requested regarding liability orders is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The exact information requested regarding deduction from earning orders issued is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost. However, you may find the following table useful: this provides the number of paying parents on the Child Maintenance Service Collect & Pay service who, at the end of each calendar quarter:

- were paying Child Maintenance via a Deduction from Earnings order; and
- had an address in the Motherwell and Wishaw constituency.

Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.

QUARTER ENDING	PAYING PARENTS
Mar-17	45
Jun-17	45
Sep-17	45
Dec-17	50
Mar-18	60
Jun-18	80
Sep-18	80
Dec-18	80

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Brexit**

Mr David Lammy:

[\[256203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many officials in her Department have been seconded away from their normal duties to work on the UK's withdrawal from the EU; and what effect that secondment of staff has had on the effectiveness of her Department.

Will Quince:

The Department for Work and Pensions have transferred/assigned 127 volunteers to other departments to support EU Exit related work, to date 125 have returned. The remaining 2 volunteers will continue to support another department with EU Policy related activity until June/July 2019.

All assignments are carefully planned and as such there has been no impact on the Department's effectiveness.

■ **Homelessness**

Paul Farrelly:

[\[256221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report entitled The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019 published by Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, what recent assessment he has made of the correlation between the freeze in local housing allowance and the increase in homelessness.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made. There are many factors that contribute to homelessness, and these factors are varied and complex.

■ Pension Credit

Chris Elmore:

[\[256424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to raise awareness of the changes to pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

The change to the Pension Credit rules was legislated for in the Welfare Reform Act 2012. The Government announced on 14 January that the mixed age couple policy change will come into force on 15 May. Following that announcement, we have implemented comprehensive plans to raise awareness of the change among people who may be affected.

The Department has written directly to mixed age couples who are already in receipt of Pension Credit or Housing Benefit for pensioners to ensure they know about the change and how they could be affected if their circumstances change on or after 15 May. Importantly, the letters explained that the change will not apply to mixed age couples already claiming Pension Credit and/or Housing Benefit for pensioners at the point of change for as long as they remain entitled to either benefit.

This was in addition to providing information on GOV.UK and through existing departmental channels. The Department's staff in Pension Centres and Jobcentres including visiting officers are able to provide information about the change, as are staff in Local Authorities who administer Housing Benefit. The Department has also worked with relevant organisations such as Age UK and Citizens Advice, including providing them with a fact sheet to ensure that accurate information is available in the places where people are most likely to seek it.

Anyone who would be eligible for the pension age benefits under the previous rules but have not claimed before 15 May will have up to 13 August to make a backdated claim to 14 May and we encourage them to do so.

■ Pension Credit: Females

Chris Elmore:

[\[256422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to her Written Statement of 14 January 2019, Official Report HCWS1249, what assessment she has made of the potential effect on women's incomes of changes to pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

The Pension Credit change was legislated for in the Welfare Reform Act 2012. It was announced on 14 January 2019 that the change would take effect from 15 May 2019. It will not apply to couples already claiming Pension Credit and/or Housing Benefit for pensioners immediately before the 15 May implementation date for as long as they remain entitled to either benefit. Furthermore, couples who would be eligible for the pension age benefits under the previous rules but have not claimed before 15 May will have up to 13 August to make a backdated claim.

There has been ongoing equality analysis of the mixed age couple change, including the publication of a research and analysis paper relating to mixed age couples estimated to be affected by the change in policy on 28 February 2019.

The analysis shows that the vast majority of mixed age couples comprised a male and female partner. There is no indication that the change will have a disproportionate impact on the basis of sex.

The analysis can be viewed here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/mixed-age-couples-benefit-impacts-of-ending-access-to-pension-credit-and-pension-age-housing-benefit

■ Pension Credit: Wales

Chris Elmore:

[256421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Written Statement of 14 January 2019, Official Report HCWS1249, how many mixed-age couples will be affected by the change to pension credit in (a) Wales and (b) Ogmogre.

Guy Opperman:

The mixed age couples change that came in on 15 May 2019 will not affect couples who were entitled to Pension Credit and/or pension age Housing Benefit immediately before May 15, unless their entitlement to both those benefits subsequently ends. Anyone who would be eligible for the pension age benefits under the previous rules but have not claimed before 15 May will have up to 13 August to make a backdated claim to 14 May and we encourage them to do so.

The specific information requested about the number of mixed age couples that are estimated to be affected by the forthcoming changes in (a) Wales and (b) Ogmogre is not available.

Chris Elmore:

[256423]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Wales currently claim pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

The information is published and available at: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance for users is available at: <https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The latest data (as at November 2018) shows that in Wales, there are 100,065 people claiming Pension Credit.

■ Severe Disability Premium

Faisal Rashid:

[256335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the timeframe is for compensation to be made available to people who were entitled to a severe disability premium payment and who claimed universal credit before 16 January 2019.

Justin Tomlinson:

Since the introduction of The Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) (SDP Gateway) Amendment Regulations 2019, which came into force on 16th January 2019, claimants who are entitled, or have been within the last month, to an award of an existing benefit that includes SDP have not been required to move to Universal Credit; even if they have experienced a relevant change in their circumstances. The draft Universal Credit (Managed Migration Pilot and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019, which are currently before Parliament, make provision for SDP transitional payments for those eligible claimants who have already moved to UC and for moving existing legacy claimants onto Universal Credit and implementing transitional protection.

We are currently considering the court judgment handed down on 3 May 2019.

■ Social Security Benefits**Hugh Gaffney:****[256366]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the benefits freeze on the incomes of households with children.

Will Quince:

An Impact Assessment of the benefit freeze was published in 2015, this is available in the link below.

<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/impact-assessments/IA15-006C.pdf>

The Welfare Reforms such as the benefit freeze were designed to incentivise parents to choose to move into and progress in work. Evidence shows that work is the best route out of poverty. Children in workless households are five times more likely to be in poverty than those in households where all adults were working. Since 2007/08, the incomes of the poorest fifth have increased by over £850 above inflation, whereas the incomes of the richest fifth have increased by around £650.

Marion Fellows:**[256373]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 20 May 2019 to Question 254839 on Social Security Benefits, whether claimants of (a) personal independence payments and (b) employment and support allowance whose claims were subject to a review by her Department's Quality Team are entitled to access any feedback on their claim from Quality Team reviewers.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department has one quality team who check all benefits, any feedback from this team, on individual claims, can be requested through a Right to Access Request.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Chris Ruane:

[256249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many three year sanctions were issued by her Department to social security benefit recipients in each of the last 10 years.

Alok Sharma:

Information on the number of three years' sanctions is recorded on our systems and we centrally collate some Management Information. However, the total number cannot be calculated as it is collected across different benefits on different systems and is not centrally collated in a way that allows analysis to be undertaken easily. An extensive interrogation of our systems would be required in order to provide the information requested, which would incur disproportionate cost.

Nevertheless, from the Department's quarterly sanctions publication, in table 1.7 of the [supporting data tables](#), 2,904 individuals have received three (or more) high level JSA sanction failures, from October 2012 to January 2019. It is not possible to readily unpick how many of these were 3 year sanctions (if two high level sanctions received by an individual were more than a year apart then that would mean they would not have been escalated up to a 3 year sanction duration after their 3rd high level failure). The published data on individuals that received a third high level JSA sanction cannot be split by year. This is because the data is not structured in a way to readily analyse this.

Neil Coyle:

[256326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of a moratorium on benefit sanctions for (a) low-income and (b) single-unit families during the school summer holidays.

Alok Sharma:

The Department works to design and deliver a compassionate approach that supports claimants on Universal Credit and other benefits.

The Department has not made an assessment of the potential merits of a moratorium on benefit sanctions during the school summer holidays for a) low-income and (b) single-unit families, as we are in the process of reviewing the effect of sanctions on work incentives.

There are a number of measures designed to help the claimant's financial situation. Hardship payments are available to eligible claimants who will face hardship as a result of a sanction. Additionally, we have recently announced that the length of the maximum single sanction any benefit claimant could face will be reduced from three years to six months.

■ Social Security Benefits: Suicide**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[256220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information she holds on the suicide rate of people whose claims for (a) universal credit, (b) employment support allowance and (c) personal independence payment are declined.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department recognises that suicide is a tragic and complex issue; one which we take extremely seriously. This Government is fully committed to reducing the incidence of suicide and supporting people to get the help they need.

The Department does not centrally collect the reason for claimant deaths.

■ State Retirement Pensions**Mrs Madeleine Moon:** [\[256266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many state pension forecasts have been revised down after people have raised discrepancies with their statements in each of the last five years.

Mrs Madeleine Moon: [\[256267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure the accuracy of state pension forecasts.

Guy Opperman:

State Pension Forecasts are based on the National Insurance record at the time the State Pension Forecast is produced. If the National Insurance record changes subsequently this will affect the forecast. The DWP does not hold data in relation to changes to State Pension Forecasts following discrepancies being raised by customers. Where discrepancies are identified the DWP refers to HMRC for investigation.

■ Universal Credit**Stephen Timms:** [\[254086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what response her Department makes when notified by a local authority of an error in a resident's universal credit calculation.

Stephen Timms: [\[254088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department provides to local authorities to help (a) identify and (b) remedy errors in universal credit calculations.

Alok Sharma:

[Holding answer 20 May 2019]: It is not clear whether the questions relate to the Local Authority as the provider of housing or as the administrator of Housing Benefit and Council Tax. This answer therefore responds on both counts.

Local Authority as landlord:

The Local Authority use the 'Landlord Portal' to provide details of a claimant's rent and tenancy details. When the information provided does not match what the claimant has given, the claimant will then be able to accept or reject the information uploaded by the Local Authority by logging into their Universal Credit account.

If the claimant accepts the information provided by the Local Authority no further action is required. If the Local Authority has provided information that is rejected by the claimant, the claimant is advised to make contact to resolve this. This could require a subsequent housing declaration to be provided. The 'Landlord Portal' has a summary screen that allows the Local Authority to confirm or change the information they are about to provide before it has been submitted.

This process applies whenever there is a rent change, including annual uprating of rent. The Landlord Portal is the streamlined communication tool which allows the Local Authority to disclose the rent thus highlighting errors in the claimants Universal Credit.

Local Authority as administrator of Housing Benefit and Council Tax:

Once a claim to Universal Credit has been made, the Local Authority will receive a notification if the claimant is in receipt of Housing Benefit. This will inform the Local Authority of the claim to Universal Credit so they can take the action to close the Housing Benefit claim where needed. The Local Authority will inform Universal Credit of the action they have taken and if there is any payment to be offset within the first assessment period.

Additionally, during the Universal Credit claim process, the claimant will be asked if their name is on the council tax bill. If the claimant answers 'yes', they are asked if they have applied for a reduction in their council tax. If the claimant answers that they have applied or will apply for a Council Tax Reduction, their details will be shared with the Local Authority. This is a one-way communication which allows for the Local Authority to take the appropriate action regarding an application for a Council Tax Reduction.

Steve McCabe:[\[254734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 5 May 2019 to Question 249847, what assessment of a universal credit claimant's financial situation is made when calculating what percentage of their payment will be deducted in order to repay an advance.

Alok Sharma:

[Holding answer 20 May 2019]: The maximum amount a claimant can receive as a new claim advance payment is 100 per cent of their total indicative Universal Credit award. The claimant can decide the length of repayment period when they request the advance. This can be up to a maximum 12 months. The rate of repayment is decided by dividing the total advance amount by the agreed repayment period.

Affordability is managed by ensuring the recovery rate is not more than the equivalent of 40 per cent of the standard allowance and help is available for those struggling to meet the recovery rate once recovery begins. In many cases, because claimants choose to repay advances over many months, advance repayments constitute less than 40% of a standard allowance. In exceptional circumstances, recovery can be deferred for up to 3 months from the start of the recovery period.

Advances are not loans; they are an interest free advance payment of benefit, available to help people who need immediate financial support, which is then recovered over an agreed period. The Department has taken a number of steps to ensure that advances meet the needs of claimants and that recovery arrangements are personalised and reasonable. From October 2019 we are reducing the maximum rate of deductions to 30 per cent and from October 2021 we are increasing the maximum recovery period for advances from 12 to 16 months.

Neil Coyle:

[256328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the compatibility of universal credit implementation with the socio-economic duty in Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department published an Equality Impact Assessment for Universal Credit (UC) in 2011, which stands overall, although in line with Ministers' legal duties equality impacts have been considered on all major changes to UC. This can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-equality-impact-assessment>

An Equality Impact assessment is currently being produced to cover details of the selection of Move to UC claimants to take part in the first phase of the pilot.

Luke Pollard:

[256351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the timeframe for fixing problems with GOV.UK Verify in respect of universal credit claims.

Alok Sharma:

Design and delivery of the GOV.UK Verify platform is the responsibility of the Government Digital Service (GDS) and its partners. The Department for Work and Pensions, along with other government departments is a user of this service, and provides feedback to GDS about its operation, recognising that people wanting to claim Universal Credit, or check their State Pension, can choose to use it to confirm their identity. The Department has no access to this information and claimants have direct contact with identity providers (also called 'certified companies').

The Department will continue to consider options to provide the easiest and most secure digital services for our claimants.

There are various ways in which a claimant can verify their identity for Universal Credit purposes: in person using primary and secondary ID verification or; by using biographical questions, for those who do not have identity documents.

Luke Pollard:

[\[256352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will change the rules on universal credit joint applications to enable couples to verify their ID in person at separate times.

Alok Sharma:

At present, there are various ways in which a claimant can verify their identity for Universal Credit purposes: online using the gov.uk verify service; in person using primary and secondary ID verification or; by using biographical questions, for those who do not have identity documents.

If an appointment is needed to verify a claimant's ID in person, both members of a "couple claim" are not required to attend at the same time. The current process is that separate appointments will be arranged for each partner, at a time that is convenient for them.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[257005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of a five-week wait for a first payment of universal credit on trends in the level of food bank usage.

Will Quince:

No Universal Credit (UC) claimant has to wait five weeks for their first payment and there are many reasons why people use foodbanks.

If required, advances of up to 100 per cent of their expected UC award are available to claimants from day one of their claim. Advances are paid back over a maximum of 12 months and in the Autumn Budget 2018, we announced that from October 2021, the payback period for these advances will be extended further, allowing claimants up to 16 months.

This is just one of a number of measures the Department has put in place to support claimants such as paying those claimants moving from Housing Benefit onto UC a two week 'transitional housing payment'. We are also introducing a two-week run on for eligible claimants of Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance from July 2020.

■ Universal Credit: Disability

Neil Coyle:

[\[256375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to consult (a) disabled people and (b) the organisations that represent disabled people to ensure that her digital by default programme for universal credit is compatible with the assistive technology that many disabled people rely on to access online services.

Justin Tomlinson:

All Department for Work and Pensions' digital services are designed and built in line with Government Digital Service guidelines, and international standards for IT accessibility (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1). The intention is to make the services usable by as many people as possible without the use of assistive technology, and to be compatible with screen reading and magnifying tools for those people requiring them.

To ensure that they meet these standards, the services are tested during the development process and prior to implementation. This includes both a range of technical tests and assessment of their usability by intended end users.

Feedback from users of the services is encouraged and acted upon.

Specifically, for Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS), we continue to work closely with service users and their representatives and have recently completed our second external Audit that provided WCAG AA accreditation. The Department has a dedicated team ensuring that user experience (and accessibility is key to this) is at the heart of the way we develop the service.

For people unable to access or use digital services, assistance to make and maintain their claim is available via the Freephone Universal Credit helpline. Face-to-face support is also available in Jobcentres. In exceptional circumstances, a home visit can be arranged to support a claimant in making and maintaining their claim.

From 1 April 2019 Citizens Advice (England and Wales) and Citizens Advice Scotland are delivering the new 'Help to Claim' support to claimants making a new Universal Credit (UC) claim or moving from a legacy benefit to UC because of a change of circumstances. The Citizens Advice Help to Claim offers tailored, practical support to help people make a UC claim up to receiving their first full correct payment on time. It is available online, through web-chat, through a Freephone number and face to face through local Citizens Advice services.

■ Universal Credit: Private Rented Housing**Luke Pollard:**[\[256349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on issuing guidance to landlords who wish to rent to tenants who receive universal credit.

Luke Pollard:[\[256350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many landlords are not able to rent to tenants who receive universal credit because of their landlord insurance policies.

Will Quince:

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has regular dialogue with other Secretary of States in the course of normal ministerial business, which includes discussion surrounding aspects of Universal Credit.

The Department maintains guidance on GOV.UK, relevant for private and social sector landlords, with information about Universal Credit. This helps landlords to understand what they can do to help their tenants prepare for: a) their move to Universal Credit and b) making payments of their housing costs (rent) direct to their landlord themselves. This can be accessed at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-rented-housing--2/universal-credit-and-rented-housing-guide-for-landlords

The Government does not collect data on how many landlords are not able to rent to tenants who receive universal credit because of their landlord insurance policies.

■ Universal Credit: West Midlands

Shabana Mahmood: [\[256280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the introduction of universal credit on trends in the level of household debt in the West Midlands.

Alok Sharma:

We do not hold data on the levels of household debt.

The Government is committed to ensuring that people, especially those who are experiencing financial difficulties, have access to the information and guidance they need to make effective financial decisions throughout their lives.

Once fully rolled out, Universal Credit is forecast to be £2 billion per year more generous than the legacy system it replaces.

The Money and Pension Service has replaced three providers of government-sponsored financial guidance – the Money Advice Service, the Pensions Advisory Service and Pension Wise – which has brought together the provision of debt advice, money guidance and pension guidance for the first time, streamlining the services offered and reducing confusion for members of the public on who they should contact.

Shabana Mahmood: [\[256281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the correlation between increasing food bank dependence in the West Midlands and the roll-out of universal credit.

Will Quince:

Whilst we have always said that there are many reasons people use Food Banks and that their growth cannot be linked to a single cause, we have long acknowledged that there were issues with the early roll out of UC. We have listened to feedback on how we can support our claimants and acted quickly, making improvements such as extending advances, removing waiting days, and introducing housing benefit run on. These changes are giving support to vulnerable people who need it most, whilst at the same time helping people get into work faster.